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**European Migrant Labour for the  
Post-Brexit Capitalist Industry in the  
UK**

Konstantin Manyakin

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for the Post-Brexit  
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## Abstract

The academic piece examines the implications of Brexit for EU citizens seeking to reside and work in the UK during the Withdrawal Period from 2016 to 2020. The research focuses on how two major factors – *public attitude among British employers* and *British capitalist economy* – directly and indirectly affected the outcomes of the ‘Soft-Brexit’ Withdrawal Agreement, finalized by the end of 2020, by investigating expectations, concerns, and reactions of British managers from various economic sectors towards the EU workforce whom they hire. Indeed, this academic piece shows that, despite the growing nativist backlash in the UK, the continued demand for an EU workforce among local hiring managers to benefit various British capitalist industries helped secure the final agreement that generally preserved EU denizens’ rights to reside and be employed in the post-Brexit period through EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme). Thus, the UK would continue to embrace diversity within large European diasporas, while no nationalist sentiment among local Britons can persist as long as British economic growth relies on a vibrant EU workforce that contributes to its prosperity.

## Keywords

European Migrant Workers; British Capitalism; British Hiring Managers; EU Denizenship; Brexit

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## The Research Focus

As immigration and free movement of EU foreign nationals always played a fundamental role in the EU integration (Dennison & Geddes, 2018: 1150; Guma & Jones, 2019: 1), the UK faced a dilemma during Brexit and its withdrawal period until 2020. From one hand, British side faced benefit from the economic and capitalist advantages provided by the EU market and immigration, as the economic dimension highlighted the influence of the demands of British capitalist industries to make a maximum profit from the EU workforce. And on the other, Britain faced a nativist rhetoric among Leavers, amid the increasing public discomfort regarding the presence and control of EU immigration, who live and work in Britain (Bhambra, 2017: S215; Goodwin & Heath, 2016: 324; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2017: 171; Hearn, 2017: 22; Lee et al., 2018: 144, 145 & 149; Nolke, 2017: 231).

The article emphasizes the impact of Brexit on the denizen status of EU workforce in the UK, and how their EU-treaty based rights to to reside and getting employed were contested towards an attempt to recover sovereignty and control over EU immigration. It focuses on how two major factors - *public attitude among British hiring managers* and the very notion of *British capitalist economy* - directly and indirectly affected the outcomes of the 'soft-Brexit' Withdrawal Agreement by investigating expectations, concerns and reactions of local employers from all economic sectors towards the EU workforce whom they hire. Therefore, this academic piece will debate the main **research question** about why 'Soft Brexit' consensus was reached to keep certain EU foreign-born nationals as 'segmented reserve labour' which is beneficial for prosperity and existence for the British capitalist industry and its hiring managers in the post-Brexit diversity (Toszek, 2020: 157).

As the approval of EU immigrants among Britons is generally driven more by the economics and profit of EU membership and integration rather than by identity or politics, it is important to emphasize how the mainstream in the UK coped towards millions of Eastern Europeans who live and work in local industries during the Withdrawal Period between 2016 and 2020 (McGowan, 2017: 18). The wider social climate and expressions of hostility and violence towards migrants can further determine whether migrants utilize their mobility power and choose not to work in the UK (Rolfe, 2017: 631). For that reason, British employers (of all job sectors) continue to demonstrate themselves as remarkable agents of public attitude who affect politics to formulate new arrangements for EU denizens, while the rise of nativism could not fully reverse an overall liberal direction of EU reform strategies, especially regarding the liberalization of its labor market (Lesinska, 2014: 38).

Despite that the research analysis deals only with the negotiations period between 2016 and 2020, it won't cover about the status and conditions of millions EU denizens beyond EU Withdrawal Agreement 2020, approved bilaterally by late 2019 and *de jure* enacted on January 31st 2020, which took full effect on January 1st 2021, and beyond the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (Bermejo, 2021: 390) until its finalization and ratification by May 1st 2022. Nonetheless, this milestone will be an important and comfortable determinant for other researchers who aim to understand about how British capitalist industry and attitude among British employers affected on the status of millions EU denizen workers and their dependants (registered with *pre-settled* and *settled* scheme under EU Settlement Scheme) in the following post-Brexit years and decades, amid the turbulence and unpredictability, such as post-COVID aftermath, the Middle Eastern war, and Donald Trump re-election in 2024. Thus, this research should be applicable as long as the Withdrawal Agreement is replaced by some new accord between the EU and the UK.

## **Methodology**

This academic journal adopts primarily qualitative research that examines academic materials and opinion surveys in the UK as those provide a rich source of information for understanding the various layers of factors underpinning the status of EU denizens in the UK in terms of free movement and residence right, and right to work (Somekh et al., 2005: 10). As this research uses specifically document analysis, no independent quantitative research is required, as no direct interviews were conducted with any EU individuals about practicing specific rights or with any British nationals on how they react to the presence of European denizens working and living in the UK, during the research. Also, the qualitative research method is based on the collection and analysis of relevant texts and documents (Bryman, 2012: 383) that serve as general sources of arguments and facts to support research arguments that are collected from relevant reports, news articles, data, scholarly books and academic journals that cover relevant issues, from academic and research institutes, law agencies, firms and think tanks, in order to develop a holistic picture about the EU denizens' rights were affected. One important point to note is that the uniqueness of this thesis is that it thoroughly investigates the academic and media materials to formulate whether or not the Brexit event and its aftermath indeed deliver any real shift of status among EU nationals in the UK.

For the supplementary quantitative materials, all materials were accessed from the research databases, mass-media outlets and from some relevant independent (and research-oriented) sources (Bryman, 2012: 550). Thus, statistical reports and surveys are used to illustrate and support the main arguments discussed. Surveys, opinion polls and statistical data from population reports of British, the EU and other official statistical institutions and research centres, such as Migration Advisory Committee and The Migration Observatory of the University of Oxford, were retrieved for supportive evidence. These supportive findings can outline the outcomes and extend the scope of these policies and treaties that affect the status and rights of these EU denizens. In the same manner as qualitative materials, quantitative results interpreted on summary of findings, tables and graphs can also help researchers to evaluate political discourse and existing content provided in official reports (ibid: 557).

## **Migration and Capitalism**

In order to illustrate a flexible approach regarding how the evolution of capitalism impacts the denizen status and rights of workforce among the EU nationals living and working in the UK, this section provides some background about how capitalism keep the exploitative system flourishing through immigrant labor hired by British managers and owners of firms (Liebig, 2003: 8-9 & 20-21; Meyers, 2000: 1248- 1249). Through the Marxist lenses, the capitalist systems create divisions within the labor market to maximize profit and maintain control over workers, resulting in segmented labor. In this context, denizens often find themselves within the segmented labor market, within the broader framework of capitalist modes of production and class dynamics. As mentioned, the UK has joined the EU market to boost its capitalist industries by importing 'segmented reserve labour' among EU migrant workers. More vulnerable denizens in the UK labor force can be advantageous for employers as it reduces workers' bargaining power and allows the British bourgeois to exert downward pressure on wages, thereby increasing their profits. Marxist migration theory effectively reflects that immigration is an organic part of capitalist development and of the international division of labor after decolonization and amid the emergence of neoliberal globalization. Furthermore, the Marxist approach correctly predicts the short-term correlation between the economic cycle and immigration policies, which is explained by the law of supply and

demand (Hollifield, 1992: 22; Meyers, 2000: 1247-1248). These cycles influence the political and policy landscape, including how denizens are treated and perceived, and help to get an additional perspective on the oscillation of denizens' rights in the UK.

Nonetheless, the Marxist theory alone, which focuses on the one-sided economic dimension of capitalism may not be enough to research the nature of the constant reshaping of EU denizens' rights and status, as the migration is a multi-sided phenomenon (Nikolinakos, 1975: 5-6) that should also be explored from the views of other migration theories - **Dual/Segmented Labor Market** and **Economic Competition** theories. By covering and integrating these alternative theories with Marxist economic analysis and examining social, political and legal elements, the research aim can better understand the complexities surrounding denizens' rights within the capitalist system.

Another reason to understand and select relevant alternative migration theories is based on aspect that Western capitalism in the UK was constantly altering throughout the historical process from the period of decolonization to the present day. Throughout the decades, by the beginning of the 21st century, the termination of post-colonial Keynesianism and the rise of the free-market ideology is connected with the general political and economic shift called neoliberalism and 'economic globalization'. This has often been presented as a gradual decline of state relevance by the powers of major free-market economic actors (Hearn, 2017: 27) while capital accumulation was becoming increasingly internationalized and later globalized the diminishing idea of the British nation-state and its borders. The decentralized significance of transnational organizations that encourage the notion of cosmopolitan individualism for the sake of the benefit of transnational corporations and the deregulated capitalist EU market programme assures mass immigration and super-diversity, as it further demonstrates the growing insignificance of national borders, sovereignty and nationality itself in a frontier-free community (Barber, 2015: 310-311; Morris, 1994: 139; Sassen, 1998: 58-59).

In this case, the EU eventually takes up the role of treaty-based political entity with an increasing deal of power 'to create and supervise a common economic market, in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured', as originated by Article 7a of Treaty of Rome (Calhoun, 1994: 184; Joppke, 2001: 353). That is why there have been large population flows and rapid growth of permanent foreign residents in host societies, alongside expanding recognition and enforcement of rights among European 'segmented reserve labour' over and above those rooted in membership of a particular nation-state (Morris, 1997: 192). Therefore, the shift of British capitalism from state-interventionist Keynesianism towards global neoliberalism was responsible for boosting the powerful status of migrant 'European Reserve Labour' through EU 'market citizenship', within which the UK was an active player in the EU migration market until Brexit (Modood & Salt, 2011: 6).

**Dual/Segmented labor market** theory emphasizes that local actors in industrialized nation-states, such as local industries and employers, always play an active role in the recruitment of the immigrant workforce. And those actors and agencies utilize lobby their power to exploit foreign workers while holding wages constant in order to keep the system of exploitation functional (Massey et al., 1993: 444; Yinger, 1986: 35). Therefore, this theory acknowledges the segmented nature of labor markets, as it emphasizes that wealthy states' quest for cheap labor from poorer ones plays a key role in opening the borders (O'Reilly, 2015: 27). Therefore, it is very consistent for post-World War II stages include the milestone of withdrawal period of 2016-2020. Thus, EU denizens in the UK, particularly those in the secondary labor market, indeed experience challenges and vulnerabilities regarding their rights, because their status is blended with segmented 'reserve army of commodities' for the means of the British-based bourgeois class and its capitalist industries and enterprises. By examining such segmentation, dual labor market theory provides insights into the dynamics of EU treaty rights in the

UK and in parallel, how EU migration helped employers to create and sustain more flexible and efficient business models to support free movement and aim to recruit 'segmented reserve labour' from other EU countries into the UK (Rolfe et al., 2019: R7-R8).

The Brexit Referendum of June 2016 clearly demonstrated that the public attitude among British people towards EU freedom of movement cannot be ignored. Like capitalist development, democratic trends of the British mainstream population also causes that challenged the conception of the state as a unitary and monolithic source of power (Blackmore & Lauder, 2005: 98) in terms of adoption of specific immigration policy-making that oscillates denizens' rights. Furthermore, socially- oriented domestic politics regarding immigration state that attitudes towards immigrants depend on constantly changing socio-economic factors. Indeed, economic recessions and pressure from migration would deliver more frustration among the mainstream on immigration pressure, while financial stability and growth would demonstrate indifference or even satisfaction from foreign-born workers. That is why the public attitude and Brexit withdrawal period should apply the **Economic Competition Theory** regarding this cost-benefit rationale that periodically varies. It is the most relevant one in understanding public expression regarding the economic benefit or loss from EU citizens and, at the same time, keeping sovereign control over immigration throughout stages of capitalist development and integration of the EU and its market-based system. At the same time, this theory more directly explains how the British mainstream public reacts to EU foreign-born nationals exercising and empowering their rights to live and to work (Blinder, 2011: 8).

### **EU-Market Based Denizenship**

Indeed, massive labor force migration rapidly altered the demographic landscape of Western societies in the late 20th century through the remarkable expansion of the denizenship role. This fulfilled the neoliberal capitalist agenda, where British business elites favoured denizens over citizens "to meet the needs of the flexibility of employment conditions in unstable markets as denizens come without the automatic burden of welfare and pension benefit" (Turner, 2016: 690). According to the original term introduced by an 'Act for Denization' in 1601, a denizen is any foreigner who is awarded citizenship by royal letters patent but is still incapable of inheriting or holding any public office like the British people (Benton, 2010: 12). It contradicts to the complex and changing concept of 'Citizenship' (Osler & Starkey, 2005: 8) that also varies by nation-state and timeframe, which claims a full legal and social inclusion and belonging into some 'society' within the boundaries of a specific 'nation-state' or polity (Bauböck & Guiraudon, 2009: 439; Rubenstein & Adler, 2000: 522; Turner, 1993: 497; Williams, 2007: 241).

After World War II, the very notion of denizenship gradually adopted its form in the context of the EU project when Western European states recruited large numbers of foreign citizens to their domestic labor markets and were then followed by their family members who originally remained in the host states (Freeman, 1995: 892). This led to the occurrence of a new group of denizens who gained a secure residence status but not full citizenship (Schiffner, 2018: 70), who were granted with permanent work and residence permits without any specific time term (Benton, 2010: 47; Hammar, 1990: 21-22). Later on, in the "global compression of time and space" (Joppke & Morawska, 2003: 22), denizenship or 'market citizenship' gradually becomes some "weaker emphasis on individualism and privatization means that the active citizen has become increasingly a passive consumer exercising individual choices in a society dominated by the market and by commercial values" (Turner, 2016: 685).

Cosmopolitanism, as an agent of globalization and moral opposite to *nativism*, eroded the idea of national sovereignty amid growth of post-national citizenship, the emergence of global economic and labor markets. That procedure of legal, political, and cultural globalization stimulated the creation of the European Union along with its EU denizenship (Delanty & Rumford, 2007: 23 & 93-94), enforced by the set of EU-bound treaties, among which the Lisbon Treaty (from December 2009) is the latest and the most 'cosmopolitan'. This eventually altered the notion of denizenship as EU rights status, such as freedom to reside and to work in some other EU member state, becomes necessary for the strengthening of the continental market (ibid: 23).

### **Concerns of Capitalist Industries and Employers on Brexit Referendum aftermath**

According to **Economic Competition Theory**, the cost-benefit rationale was still central in Britain's membership to the EU. Concerns about the economic impact of Brexit were central to the Remain campaign. For example, most managers of UK firms were worried about dependency on foreign-born workers and the difficulty to of replacing them with British-born workers in the short term (Valverde & Latorre, 2019: 208-209). Indeed, employers across sectors have benefited from free movement in the significant supply of skills and labor as EU migrants have met employers' needs across all levels of skill, from very high to low, with different distributions from older and newer Member States (Rolfe et al., 2019: R7 & R9), as EU migration has helped employers to create and sustain more flexible and efficient business models, instead of suppressing native workers (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 53). That is why a large number of employers supported the free movement and aim to recruit migrant labour from other EU countries (Rolfe et al., 2019: R7-R8) for the post-Brexit immigration policy, instead of relying on British native workforce.

Furthermore, amid uncertain economic pressure in the post-Brexit aftermath, ordinary UK nationals became more sceptical regarding reversing the open-armed immigration policy, and British employers were increasingly concerned about hostile public reaction toward their EU workers in the aftermath of the Referendum in 2016 (Rolfe, 2016: 7; Rzepnikowska, 2019: 61-62). Despite that, a substantial British majority still wants immigration limited, as in earlier years, it is still concerned about filling the labor shortages in both high and low-skilled sectors (Rolfe et al., 2019: R10-R11; Rutter & Carter, 2018: 74). According to a new poll, 84% of Britons think EU foreign-born nationals who are also more evenly distributed across the UK should stay after Brexit. Based on the findings of the survey, which ICM carried out for the think-tank British Future, those 84% include the actual Leave voters (Gellér-Lukács et al., 2016: 429). Despite the British mainstream "tended to agree that employed low-skilled migrants should be welcomed in principle, there was more disagreement on whether the number of migrants overall should be reduced" (Bulat, 2019: R55).

Amid those deep concerns that would deliver hard economic outcomes, the capitalist industry did not have any other effective and comfortable arrangements to replace the existing EU treaty rights regarding freedom of movement and employment of the EU workforce. One can reasonably expect that this is going to be the situation of labor deficit in the post-Brexit, amid reports that the Home Office rejects over 28% of Permanent Residency Applications, which serve as an alternative to permanent staying in Britain (Ali, 2020).

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) also once advocated for an end to free movement and recommended a migration system that prioritizes higher-skilled migrants but restricts low-skilled

migrants (except in agriculture) and grants working visas for mid-skilled jobs with £30,000 salary threshold (Clarke & Gregg, 2019: 55-56). Nevertheless, implementation of visa-work restrictions should never be a good alternative for employment agencies, especially for small and medium-sized companies, which would often struggle with the bureaucratically associated work-permit applications, as claimed by the OECD research. Employer sponsorship or point-based systems would only make labor migration longer, more bureaucratic and more expensive for both employers and foreign nationals (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 10; Sumption, 2019: R34). In addition to this, many participants of the Citizen's Panel saw temporary visas as being unfair to migrant workers who had settled in their local communities and fairly wanted to establish themselves in the UK. On the other hand, many immigrant-sceptical participants claimed that the three-year visa program would do little to reduce numbers or minimize negative economic impact in the post-Brexit era (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 77).

Valid evidence also suggests that employers prefer a new immigration system with three aspects. The first one shall allow the recruitment of lower-skilled workers, rather than only those with professional or high-level qualifications, and jobs at low pay levels. The second one is responsive to changes in the labor market and can, therefore, respond quickly to labor and skills shortages. The third one involves visas, which enable migrants to remain in the workforce on a long-term basis to develop skills, experience and company-specific knowledge (Rolfe et al., 2019: R10). As confirmed by the government report of the Migration Advisory Committee, if freedom of movement ends, the migration and hiring of EU workers would be more difficult (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018a: 7). And this would end to 'flexible' labor market, which 'produces' a necessity for an inexpensive and flexible supply of (migrant) labor, according to **dual labor market theory** (McCullum & Findlay, 2015: 434).

### **The Case for EU Workers in Low- and Mid-Skilled Sector**

As mentioned before, the most obvious impact of Brexit would be the end of freedom of movement of EU workers to the UK. Thus, the expected lower supply of those workers has been raised as an immediate concern by employers in the Leave context. In general, EU migrants were overrepresented in lower-skilled employment, with about 21% in elementary occupations, significantly more than the 10% among UK-born workers (Bulat, 2019: R52).

For example, the hospitality sector, which includes hotels and restaurants, has undergone substantial growth in recent years and is one of the largest employers of migrant workers, accounting for 28% of the sector's employees (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 19). Eastern European (EU8 and EU2) migrants have seen the largest increase, together making up 7% of the total UK hospitality workforce by 2014 (ibid: 10-11). The majority of UK construction companies recognize that migration from Eastern Europe has played a major role in filling the construction industry's skills shortage in recent years (Rolfe, 2017: 626-627; Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 16). The study highlighted that the UK agri-food sector in Leave areas will be heavily affected by Brexit because of its integration and dependency on EU migrant labor (Billing et al., 2021: 1579). The same scenario is with the UK's food and drink manufacturing workforce, as EU migrants alone made up 21% in 2014 (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 13 & 18-19). It would face "permanent shrinkage as a failure to address its acute labor shortages leads to wage rises, price increases, reduced competitiveness and, ultimately, food production being exported and increased imports" (Cowburn, 2022).

In a study based on interviews with employers in the low-skilled sectors of food and drink, hospitality

and construction before and after the EU Referendum, Rolfe found out that employers were increasingly concerned about the shortage and that Brexit would limit the flexibility of their workforce and exacerbate existing recruitment problems (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, 2021:14; Rolfe, 2017: 629). According to data from the Longitudinal Small Business Survey (LSBS), increasing amount of job shortages between August 2016 and January 2017 suggests that new immigration policy requires substantial recalibration to ensure that Brexit would not add more pressure to the current and future situation of skill shortages for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Tiwasing, 2021:10). The Construction Industry Training Board research survey found that those directly employing non-UK staff were much more concerned over access to EEA migrant labor than those who did not employ EEA migrant labor (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018b: 40-41). They also wanted any new immigration system to be quick, fair, inexpensive and labor market, and the associated adaptable approach to be unbureaucratic (Green, 2019: R24 -R25), as the option of a point- based system would be very lengthy and costly in order to await EU labor force for the seasonal jobs that those sectors provide (Rolfe, 2016: 10; Rolfe et al., 2019: R9). For example, migrant workers in the construction sector were often more employed on short-term contracts for the duration of a single construction project (Green, 2019: R-20; Rolfe, 2017: 628; Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 44) and assisted office London construction to boom regardless of Brexit uncertainty. This indicated that any negative impact caused by a shortage of additional skilled labor would further exacerbate labor requirements and increase construction costs (Mohamed et al., 2017: 266-267).

During the Brexit Referendum campaign, there was also a pessimistic prediction based on labor market model that if immigrants are, on average, more unskilled than the natives, they would put unskilled UK citizens at a disadvantage and would only benefit skilled ones, as the arrival will induce an increase in the skilled wage and a decrease in the unskilled wage (Facchini & Mayda, 2008: 669). The disadvantaged Leave voters, particularly among White British working class, generally treat denizens and the free movement of their family members “as economically and socially costly” (Gellér-Lukács et al., 2016: 424; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2017: 174). Nevertheless, Britons do not express any genuine interests in taking these low-wage jobs and rather prefer to remain unemployed. Despite the British-born older workers and students were seen as potentially useful and having to meet shortages, have disadvantages in terms of their availability and suitability for the work (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 7). Other than that, more explanation behind refusal of taking migrant jobs is some drew attention to how acquaintances “moaning about migrants stealing jobs” did not apply for any of these jobs, which is equivalent to lazy Brit stereotype (Bulat, 2019: R55). Some argue that mobility, rather than wages, is more valuable to employers and that the most attractive feature of migrant workers is their hard work and flexibility (Bulat, 2019: R54; Rolfe, 2017: 628; Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 44). One British farmer even noted regarding positive contribution of eastern EU workers in fields who are now more likely to be in their forties and speak little English - “I love Bulgarian workers and the problem is there’s only five million of them” (Doward & Baldassari, 2018). Regarding EU job flexibility and expressing preference for longer work, one construction employer said about EU migrants’ preference to work longer: “If I need them to work an extra 10 hours to finish a job – at short notice, they say, ‘okay no problem, boss’ and they do a very good work” (Green, 2019: R20 & R24).

In parallel to this, training young UK-born low- and mid-skilled workers to fill skills shortages may be a strategy in the longer term but employers stated that in the short term, they needed EEA migrants to fill the gap. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) notes that British nationals applying for these kinds of jobs lack “basic numeracy and literacy skills”, while the Eastern European applicants are usually found to be better qualified than required for work (Bulat, 2019: R51 & R55; McGuinness & Hawkins, 2016: 13-14; Migration Advisory Committee, 2014: 280; Valverde & Latorre, 2019: 220-221). This was especially the case in occupations where the training of young British nationals would take many years but some employers in lower-skilled sectors also made this argument (Rolfe and Davies, 2017: 50 and Migration Advisory Committee, 2018b: 11), so they would not provide much immediate assistance to

the sectors where EU migrants are concentrated (Rolfe and Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 7). Recruiting older British workers is also not a better alternative, because these jobs based on physical force is more suitable for EU foreign-born nationals who are younger (Green, 2019: R24-R25). Robots may also not replace all workers at any time soon (Clarke & Gregg, 2019: 57-58) but even if automation existed today, it would also likely require young people to adapt their skills on an ongoing basis (Phillips et al., 2018: 40). In the post-Brexit period, the available reserve army of workers from poorer EU nation-states would still be needed in some sectors like cherry-picking, food processing and agriculture as investment in automation is under-developed in these areas (Goodhart, 2020: 125). The same scenario is with British industrial sectors with larger labor shares, such as textiles, metals, motor vehicles and water transport, which could be the most affected by the fall in immigration since they are labor-intensive (Valverde & Latorre, 2019: 216).

Another economic area that benefited from EU workers was the transport, storage and logistics sector. The majority of employers hire EU foreign-born workers – accounting for up to half of their total workforce - as drivers, porters and loaders, despite the fact that some are employed in skilled roles. One of the reasons behind the relatively high proportion of EU foreign-born workers (aged between 25 and 45) is that the businesses concerned tend to operate across the whole of Europe (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, 2021: 20). That is why employers reacted that “the new immigration point-based system is likely to make the recruiting process a bit more expensive to us, because if we want to employ EU nationals, there will be extra paperwork” (ibid: 23). Some of them even claimed that implementation of restrictions for required transitional workers from the EU would only decrease the number of desirable candidates in the long-term, as only one employer attempted to recruit overseas workers (ibid: 23).

Keeping free movement remained the best option to hire an accessible, hardworking and flexible EU workforce in any job without meeting skill criteria. Low- and medium-skilled industries and enterprises are heavily dependent on EU migrant labour as no one else can replace them. Foreign citizens of other categories were not eligible because of increasingly restrictive policies towards non-EU workers, which David Cameron indeed succeeded in accomplishing (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009: 143; Sumption, 2022: 97). Also, there is a lack of skilled, experienced and effective workforce among young Britons.

## **Brexit and High-Skilled Sector**

This piece illustrates why abolishment of free movement by the implementation of work visas or a point-based system would also deliver difficulties to the prosperity of the high-skilled economic sector. The first arrivals from Eastern Europe after accession in 2004 were indeed proportionally of higher quality and education than the British workforce (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 39), while British people refuse lower-skilled jobs to obtain training for higher wage employment sector (Bulat, 2019: R55). Although 62% of those Britons polled wanted to see a reduction in the number of unskilled migrants coming to the UK, a majority (including Leave voters) did not want to reduce the influx of highly-skilled migrants, such as engineers and doctors (Gellér-Lukács et al., 2016: 429), as well as those undertaking skilled manual work, such as carpenters or electricians (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 50).

### ***Rising Importance of High-Skilled Sector***

The increasingly internationalized economy includes not only the lucrative finance and IT sectors, advanced biotech companies and specialized services (and an uplifting of the urban economy thanks to these businesses) but it also supports a whole spectrum of routine and labor-intensive service industries such as health, security, retail, hospitality, catering, care and construction. High-income and skilled work expands in technical, managerial and financial markets, creating the need for a range of lower-paid and lower-skilled personal and household services. These are often unprotected and poor-quality jobs frequently performed by the weaker participants in the labor markets – young people, women, older low-skilled workers and immigrants who constitute sizeable groups in the population (Soysal, 2012: 7- 8).

The points-based immigration system, introduced on February 19th 2020 but applied from January 1st 2021, reflects the demand to end freedom of movement and to attract only high-skilled immigrants (including foreign-born students) from both overseas and the EU states in order to advance its high-skill sector of the British economy and rely less on cheap labor (Government of the United Kingdom: Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration, 2020). Nevertheless, this does not apply to millions of EU denizens who moved to Britain prior to its final withdrawal by December 31st 2020. Instead, this section concentrates on how soon-to-be settled and pre-settled EU foreign-born nationals under the EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme) scheme positively impacted the high-skilled sector and proved themselves as effective migrant labour that would save British innovation from any potential burden in an uncertain post-Brexit future.

### ***Health and Social Care***

The health and social care sector is a large employer across all the regions in the UK. Of these 79.9% that the independent sector employs in excess of 62,000 people and has a further 23,000 clinicians (mainly doctors) are of British Nationality, 10.9% are from the EEA and 8.1% from other non-EEA countries (Dolton et al., 2018: 13). Social care employers hire the highest proportion of full-time employees of all the sector-specific groups to meet the requirement for regular working patterns and qualified staff. The remainder of the workforce comprises part-time and temporary or agency workers. In parallel, British employers largely use casual workers to cover holiday absence, sickness and vacant posts (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2021: 23). EEA migrants among nurses and doctors contribute much more to the health service and the provision of social care in financial resources and through work than they consume in services and there is no evidence that migration has reduced the quality of healthcare (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018a: 3).

After the Brexit Referendum, medical organizations reported complaints about hostile attitudes and incidents towards EU workers as the main factor behind the consequent fall in nursing and other sanitary applications, as many EU doctors prefer to leave (Dolton et al., 2018: 42; Milner et al., 2021: 2, 3, 5, 6 & 7). Other than that, point-based or temporary visa programs were also seen as jeopardizing continuity of care for patients and were therefore not considered feasible (Dolton et al., 2018: 43). As there is a lack of British-born NHS and private sanitary workers, it would take a long time to get the native professionals, like nine years postgraduate training to become a consultant oncologist, according to the Royal College of Radiologists (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018b: 42). Thus, the sanitary sector (both private clinics and National Health Service) harshly risks itself to demonstrate poor healthcare service and reputation for British large population, if it does not make any effort to safe itself by keeping

EU professionals in the UK, as no significant replacement would be available among natives and Commonwealth. The impact of EU workers leaving the NHS and the inability to recruit the EU workforce in the medical sector as simply as before Brexit would have a disastrous outcome for British health and social care.

### ***Tertiary Sector***

Indeed, service and manufacturing sector employers in banking, finance, law and digital firms were eager to recruit EU foreign-born nationals concentrated in London and South-East England. Those cosmopolitan regions heavily depend on the migration of all levels, all salary levels and all skill levels (Abboushi, 2017: 192; Billing et al., 2021: 1577; Calhoun, 2017: 66). Those regions are also full of cosmopolitan 'Remainers' who regard EU immigration to deliver economic benefits and helping to relieve social burdens caused by the aging population in Britain (Bachtler & Begg, 2017: 748; Calhoun, 2017: 65; Van Der Zwet et al., 2020: 520). Research has shown that the value of services inputs into manufacturing exports that are essential or important for their firms exceed almost £71 billion in 2017 (Borchert & Tamberi, 2018: 1, 3, 4 & 10; Billing et al., 2021: 1576). This means that the British-based tertiary sector is completely globalized and cannot prosper in terms of domestic protectionism at all. Furthermore, as the service and manufacturing sectors are the wealthiest and the most influential, those are supposed to freely lobby the ruling authorities to restrict immigration policies for the effective EU migrant labour as minimum as possible.

After Brexit, it is expected that the demand for highly skilled EU workers will continue in the UK in the long term, which is an aftermath of Globalization and transnational capitalism (Kivisto, 2002: 38; Vertovec, 1999: 452). The era of growing communication technology and cyberspace caused the establishment of a "transnational diaspora that can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination", and plays a major role in the increasing role of migration over time (Lee, 1966: 54; Vertovec, 1999: 451). Most important of all, technological advancements indeed reduced the costs and time in terms of communication and travel and eventually expanded the network between homeland and diasporas (Yuval-Davis, 2004: 221). Nevertheless, the technological revolution pushes British industry to be more concerned about filling its labor shortages (Salt, 2011: 24) among the high-skilled and well-educated labor, which is highly proportionate among the Eastern European denizens (Campos, 2018; Machin & Vaitilingham, 2017: 92). Therefore, managers of multinational and innovative enterprises would continue to play major role for attracting EU talent and expanding service market on global scale for Aerospace, Extractive Industry, Electronics, Pharmaceutical, IT and Consultancy sectors (Salt & Wood, 2011: 91, 94, 96, 98, 100 & 103; Valverde & Latorre, 2019: 220-221). They would opt out of hiring young native British workforce who lack good education and possess one of the lowest literacy and numeracy rates in Western Europe in order to develop the required skills for the job places (Abboushi, 2017: 196). These factors explain why big business associations successfully lobbied the British Conservative government to accept any terms to remain in the EU market of persons and capital (Rolfe, 2016: 8; Rolfe & Davies, 2017: 35).

For example, the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) identified the following professions that an immigration system should attract the brightest and the best - researchers, engineers, academics, business founders (whose characteristics include PhD level roles and Chartered Engineer status), specialist technicians (data analysts, cell culture specialists, A.I. experts, students) and their dependants (House of Commons: Science & Technology Committee, 2018: 8-9 & 25-26). Those two organizations were also successful in accommodating research-related travel outside the UK as an 'important reason' for a continuous residency (ibid: 10).

The rapidly increasing importance of the tertiary sector indicates that professionals among EU foreign-born nationals who request to stay on a permanent basis are indeed in huge demand. Currently, there is a huge deficit of intellectual and innovative force among young Britons. Furthermore, those related British institutions are cosmopolitan enough to accept any foreign-born individual regardless of his/her race, ethnicity, skin colour and religion. The important thing to note is that according to recent studies, British people attach high importance to skills but lower importance to skin colour and religion, while 5% of Britons request no professionals from India and 6% from Poland, contrary to 35% of British demanding no low-skilled workers from Poland and 42% from India (Blinder & Richards, 2020: 6).

Despite the other researchers' claim of little evidence that employers look specifically to recruit EU migrants, they still aim to recruit the best quality applicants among EU denizens (Rolfe & Hudson-Sharp, 2016: 5) because they often report shortages in the highly-skilled sector (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018b: 8; Raji, 2017: 348). People whose origins are from EU14 countries or overseas are more likely to get employed in these jobs compared to their British-born counterparts. Those 39% of workers born in Western Europe were employed in high-skilled occupations in the first quarter of 2016, compared to 27% of UK-born workers and just 8% of workers born in Eastern European and Mediterranean A8 countries (McGuinness & Hawkins, 2016: 12-13). Lack of freedom of movement that provides easier and faster recruitment of highly skilled and educated EU workforce would not deliver prosperity and expansion for the British tertiary sector on a global level.

#### *The Role of Young Europeans in the Research and Innovation Sector*

Jeremy Cliffe once described 'Britain's cosmopolitan future', increasingly shaped by its big cities full of internationally connected young people, with rapidly expanding educational and research sectors (Goodhart, 2020: 216). Universities and sectors of the economy that employ science professionals and workers expressed worry during the UK general elections 2017 in processing and elementary occupations would be most under pressure from attempts to reduce immigration. EU students make up just 5.5% of the student population in British Universities, and demand for higher education in the UK is still very high (Machin & Vaitilingham, 2017: 33-34). Brexit also represented a threat to the reduction of student numbers and damage to the reputation of international-based universities (ibid: 33), which also logically favoured the Remain option (Hearn, 2017: 23). First of all, many universities are highly internationalized and have developed partnerships throughout Europe across multiple dimensions – in terms of research funding, student base and staff recruitment – which are mandatory in the current form of capitalism and post-Brexit period. Second, as major visa sponsors of third-country nationals, both as employees and students, universities are experienced with and have an existing infrastructure to process and monitor staff under migration control and are thus well- equipped to incorporate EU employees into this existing system. Third, EU staff members in universities are among the most highly skilled 'mobile middle' EU migrants (Luthra, 2021: 191). Generally, international students were seen as cultural and economic contributors to British society (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 91). After graduation and several years of living and working in the UK, the EU students would serve up as effective high-skilled replacement force for British innovative industry as the European graduates as they would account 5% of workforce in finance, science and information technology (Machin & Vaitilingham, 2017: 83).

Amid the increasing power of the Internet and Global Media, these graduates among EU denizens who are familiar with and raised by these technologies would also play an active role in boosting online enterprises on the macro-level. As communication and transport technologies help to reproduce transnational connections between homeland and diaspora (Metykova, 2010: 326, Oprea, 2021; Yuval-Davis, 2004: 221), those European students would be relevant big players in establishing contacts and attracting new potential high-skilled candidates and students for supplementary immigration from

Europe into the UK (Beech, 2018: 614; Harvey et al., 2018: 644 & 647).

Young EU denizens are very open and flexible replacements to assist the student employment system, whereas neoliberalism pushes UK universities to commercialize their powers to bring in more students of foreign nationality (Beech, 2018: 612). The increase and encouragement of migration would remain in demand, on the one hand, for workers and students with high skills (such as healthcare and IT), and on the other, for cheap and flexible low-skilled labor. Thus, since students are counted in the total migration figures, any increase in number of foreign students (a major source of revenue for the de facto privatized university system) negates the government target (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2017: 174). In the nationally representative ICM research, some 68% of respondents were happy for the number of international students to be increased or remain at the same level (24% increase and 44% remain at the same level), and the support was evident across all age groups, ethnicities, social grades, political affiliation and places (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 87).

In comparison, young individual British nationals would not be effective choices for establishing and expanding some networks with professionals from abroad. Some critics argue that English individuals are often perceived as closed-off, lacking social and sincere qualities, flexibility and communication skills. It is difficult to know what English people were really thinking “if I don’t like something, I say I don’t like it, but they won’t say it and they only put on a smile”. British natives were also described as living in invisible cocoons, isolated from each other with phrases like ‘don’t touch me’ or ‘don’t talk to me’. While interacting with such modern-day Western ‘individualists’, private and closed-off English people would be difficult to ‘read’ and to know (Ryan, 2010: 371).

The rapidly increasing role of young EU professionals in innovation and research also indicates that the innovative future of the British economy heavily relies on open-door immigration. By choosing tighter restrictions regarding free movement, the UK risks nothing else but a lack of effective networks on a global level and social and technological backwardness. Implementation of a point-based system and/or student visa for both non-EU and EU denizens is a rather costly and lengthy option to attract and recruit a desirable number of young professionals.

## **The Withdrawal Agreement**

This section highlights the rationale behind the Brexit Withdrawal and reached Trade Agreements to safeguard the existing rights of EU-segmented labor and promote a more advantageous ‘Soft Brexit’ option. Other than that, this also reflects that any future EU-UK renegotiations can resume as a former Member State would re-consider novel EU immigration policy agenda under the pressure of circumstances and conditions that affect its capitalist economy.

Amid complex and conflicting negotiations that twice delayed the formal Withdrawal date until January 31st 2020, EU negotiators, UK authorities and the British Trade Union Congress eventually reached some compromise between conflicting interests, which support and oppose European immigration. Brexit Withdrawal Agreement appeals to a certain extent to anti-migrant backlash by abandoning the free movement of post-Brexit EU workers in exchange for the solidarity of allowing extensive rights to remain to all denizen workers who contribute enormous value to society (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2017: 175). That is one of the reasons why, soon afterward, both sides reached and finalized the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement by May 2021 that guarantees sovereign Britain to prevent

a 'Hard Brexit' scenario after the formal withdrawal from the EU single market and customs union.

Despite the fact that Theresa May initially planned to implement a complete end of free movement for the EU foreign-born nationals working and living in the UK, the real argument claims that at times when the authorities or capitalist economies feel they need to get in more people, the immigration rules get softened. When they feel there is a strategic need to reduce the number, they simply tighten up immigration rules at times when it is necessary during economic decline. The EU-denizen labor remains the ideal remedy for the crises of capitalism for three reasons. First, it is very productive in the expansionary phase. Second, it is excludable without difficulty in the recessionary phase, when there is a danger of overproduction. The third and final reason is it consumes little because it reduces inflationary tensions in expansionary periods and cushions the decline in demand in recessionary periods. Indeed, the world system (international) migration approach provides us with a comprehensive explanation of global migration trends (Meyers, 2000: 1249-1250).

## **Conclusion**

Indeed, the prolonged four-year withdrawal negotiations between 2016 and 2020 contested and inevitably affected the status of EU denizens living and working in Britain, after the Brexit case has indicated an excellent instance that liberal nation-states might still be capable of restoring their sovereign power to control their own borders in the era of globalization, despite the fact that modern-day Britain has significantly lost a lot of sovereign power over EU immigrants throughout post-WWII decades (Meyer et al., 1997: 157; Morris, 2006: 87; Auer, 2017: 42). Eventually, the UK has managed to restore control of its EU immigration policies amid growing nationalist agendas and anti-immigration discourse generated and amplified by some political leaders over recent years who advocated for taking back control (Lesinska, 2014: 43; Von Papp, 2018: 282).

The economic dimension of capitalist economy has clearly indicated that despite of Global Recession, which hit in the late 2000s, demonstrated real economic turbulence, in the persisting neoliberal economic order during Withdrawal Period (2016-2020), none of the migrant restrictions could ever fully and indefinitely halt migration flows or erode EU denizens' rights amid the British-based global capitalist market forces. Since Blair's 'New Labour' era, employment agencies and sponsors continue to pursue British authorities on reliable immigration policy and migration patterns as those still require flexible and hard-working EU denizens in segmented and de-territorialized British labor market (Rutter & Carter, 2018: 140; Wright, 2017: 362). Regardless of the formal withdrawal from the EU, the British-based free-market economy is still in demand for effective EU 'segmented reserved labour', registered under EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme), whose market rights effectively help local industries boost their profit. Otherwise, within 'Hard Brexit' scenario, EU citizens settled in the UK would have to apply for either naturalization or 'infinite leave to remain' (Kostakopoulou, 2018: 855). Thus, ruling British authorities would never succeed in tightening free movement controls without the involvement of the private sector (Anderson, 2017: 1529), where at the same time, "weakness of organized labor in the area of labor regulation through collective bargaining and in policymaking" was caused by Thatcherite reforms (Afonso et al., 2020: 537).

In terms of public attitudes among employers, British nationals were happy about the benefit that the EU project has delivered from EU workforce, despite the fact that the 'Europeanization' process did not extend at a significant level to a full transformation of popular native identities in the UK, which remained nationally-oriented and, by EU standards, anomalously non-European (Dennison & Geddes, 2018:

1138). While relying on a cost-benefit rationale, British attitudes towards EU foreign-born nationals vary on the turbulence of economic conditions within the British-based global capitalism that was interconnected with the EU's free market. However, the consequent years after the Brexit Referendum in June 2016 have indeed demonstrated some softened the negative attitude of the British mainstream towards the EU foreign-born nationals, because the real issue is that both low- skilled, mid-skilled and high-skilled sectors strictly demand hard-working individuals from the continent to boost their enterprises and institutions. Therefore, most of the EU denizens were welcome because they are willing to work and contribute to the British capitalist system, instead of taking advantage over state benefits.

Nowadays, amid the ongoing job shortages that were also worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, multinational enterprises would continue to attract and keep the status of these EU nationals and expand the market in the fields of tertiary and quaternary sectors of the British economy (Salt & Wood, 2011: 84, 91, 94, 96, 98, 100 & 103). Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind, that the UK's ongoing struggle with the economic slowdown, inflation and post-COVID circumstances may push British authorities to eventually refocus their attention again on more effective immigration policy. If the immigrant demand remains high, some new accord should be expected to be renegotiated between London and Brussels to enact easier terms for *pre-settled* and *settled* European migrant labour registered under the EUSS scheme regarding freedom of movement and the right to work in the former Member State. Otherwise, if future and ongoing circumstances and factors suddenly push the immigrant demand to become low in the post-Brexit era, then it is expected that nativist rhetoric will prevail in terms of expelling immigrants, including EU nationals.

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