

Some Reflections on the Phenomenon "BREXIT"

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Abstract

The study presents some ideas and opinions on the withdrawal process of the United Kingdom from the European Union (called Brexit) according to Article 50 in the Lisbon Treaty on the EU. This process has had deep roots in the British post-war history and, in the end, was initiated by a referendum on this issue in June 2016. Victory of Brexit supporters in the referendum clearly confirmed that Britain refused to join its own future destiny with the Union. The study is discussing some aspects of British in/out-referendum, some Brexit reasons, facts on the Brexit politico-legislative process, further, occurrence of democracy deficit accompanying this process, British Euro-scepticism as a main reason of leaving the Union and, finally, consequences of Britain's leave by 31 January 2020.

Key words: European Union, United Kingdom, British referendum, Brexit, democracy deficit, Euro-scepticism, Brexit consequences

1 Introduction

Great Britain's exit (Brexit) became the first step backward in the European Union (EU) expansion. The Brexit was originally recognized by the referendum on 23 June 2016 and was followed by Theresa May, new Prime Minister of British Government. It is an outgoing process that not only has challenged the British and European institutions, but also has explored the position of the United Kingdom (UK) in Europe and its relations with the EU in the future. Thus, Brexit raises political, economic and social questions whose outcome remains to be determined while negotiations have been being held. Brexit became one of the top-priority cases in the EU and Europeans can wonder how it evolved since its announcement. Moreover, Brexit created some new issues on a European level but has entered also into consideration questions peculiar to the UK such as the claim for the Scotland's independency declared by the present regional government represented by the Scottish National Party (SNP).

The British referendum vote in favour of leaving the EU was considered by many right-wing and Eurosceptic media outlets and politicians to be a "victory for democracy". The popular tabloid the Daily Express, on the day following the vote, encouraged other European nations to follow the United Kingdom and "free [them]selves from the shackles of the dying European Union" (Daily Express 2016). Boris Johnson, a prominent Conservative Party Brexiter or Tory "Leave" campaigner (i. e. a Conservative supporter of Britain's leaving the EU) regarded the vote as a defining moment in Britain's democratic history, whilst former Prime Minister David Cameron described the referendum itself as "a giant democratic exercise – perhaps the biggest in our history". Although, unlike B. Johnson, D. Cameron did not regard the actual result as a victory for democracy, but he accepted that the will of the people "must be respected", thus implicitly linking respect for democracy to popular sovereignty. Politicians who supported "Leave" were particularly keen to make this link. B. Johnson, writing just a few days after the referendum, attempted to explain the result, stating that the "number one issue" was "control – a sense that British democracy was being undermined by the EU system, and that we should restore to the people that vital power: to kick out their rulers at elections, and to choose new ones". The former UK Independency Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage also suggested that the vote to leave the EU was about popular sovereignty, about "the ordinary people" revolting against the elites and "big politics" to regain control and be an "independent, self-governing" nation. (Bell E. 2017: 52)

Closely linked to this concern to give control back to the people was the desire to restore full parliamentary sovereignty so that their views could be fully expressed and respected via the mechanisms of representative democracy. The need to guarantee sovereignty of the British Parliament has been a long-standing concern ever since the UK had entered into the European Communities (EC) in 1973.

Yet, the result of the referendum reflected the widespread belief that only an exit from the EU will be sufficient to restore the apparent loss of UK parliamentary sovereignty and thus to revive democracy in the UK. Such a viewpoint betrays a rather narrow understanding of democracy, limited to restoring the freedom of British parliamentary institutions. Popular sovereignty is confounded with parliamentary sovereignty, overlooking the fact that the British electoral system and political institutions themselves are often profoundly undemocratic, denying the effective participation of ordinary people in decision-making processes and failing to protect their interests.

Brexit really revealed a turning point both for the UK and the EU. The article judges complexities in politico-legislative process within Brexit, some aspects of democracy deficit and Euro-scepticism going along with Brexit and its transitional period, possible continuation of the disintegration process at the European level caused by Britain's withdrawal from the EU and its possible consequences on the UK and Union and on their future mutual relations.

2 Reflections on the British referendum and some Brexit reasons

In general, whatever Member State of the EU, if it firmly wants, can democratically take decision on its leaving the Union according to Article 50 of the Treaty on the EU (TEU) in Lisbon wording. In a case of the UK, British people, supporting the idea of the UK's divorce from the Union and reclaiming „full sovereignty “for its country, are often called as the Brexiters or Leavers.

This unprecedented move in the EU, affecting one of its bigger Member States, raises a number of questions about both the British polity and future of the European project, which has been confronted with an equally unprecedented number of crises since the late 2000s, starting with the financial crisis in 2007-2008, followed by the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis in 2010-2011. Wars in the Middle-East led to a refugee crisis in 2015 which was a challenge to countries such as Greece, Italy, Germany or Austria, to a pandemics of the new coronavirus COVID-19 hitting mainly developed Western democracies (such as Italy, Germany, Spain, France and others), further, increased mutual tensions between Member States and, in the end, between some Members and European institutions. In the background to these challenges, and fuelled by them, lay the deeper and unresolved question of the growing disconnect between European citizens and elites, reflected in the rise of populist anti-EU political parties across the whole Continent.

It is not too early to assess the long-term impact of Brexit on future of European Integration. But a number of questions on the impact of the vote can already be addressed. Is it the start of process of disintegration of the EU, by which the Brexit has created a precedent attracting other votes in other Member States? Or are we witnessing a hollowing out of the EU independently of Brexit? Or instead can we hope that Brexit will act as wake up call for Europeans and democrats on the Continent? (SCHNAPPER P. 2017)

In order to try and answer these questions, the ideas mentioned above are the specifically domestic factors explaining Brexit in the UK. It cannot be completely separated from a wider legitimacy crisis affecting the EU as a whole, which is well documented in the academic literature. Or it cannot be understood if a number of domestic factors are not factored in which they are a reminder of British exceptionality in the Union.

The decisions to apply for membership were never taken as a result of a full acceptance of the political dimension of European Integration, but rather as a result of a utilitarian calculation that the UK would be better off economically as a Member of the Single Market and Customs Union than outside. The lack of commitment of the British elites, for whom membership in the EU was a stopgap solution at a time of relative economic decline, explains why Britain remained an “awkward partner” for decades. There was never an emotional attachment to the idea of Europe, as consistently shown by barometer opinion polls: the percentage of British respondents saying that they felt European and the percentage of respondents thinking that membership of the EU was a good thing was always lower than the EC/EU average.

Euro-scepticism, now embedded in the EU as a whole, started as a specifically British phenomenon in the early 1990s, after the signing of the Maastricht treaty founding the EU. It exposed strong divisions between and within mainstream political parties, which had already been in view in the 1960s and 1970s but became much more acute, and politically problematic, within the Conservative Party in the 1990s and 2000s. The UKIP was created in that period to campaign for withdrawal from the EU and, after a slow start, became increasingly an electoral threat for the Conservative Party, winning more and more votes in European and general elections.

When David Cameron became leader of the Conservative party in 2005, he pledged to “stop banging about Europe” at the following Party Conference and hoped to keep the issue out of the table. But he gave in to Eurosceptic pressure by pledging to take Conservative Members out of the European Parliament's European People's Party, deemed too federalist, and rejected the Lisbon treaty signed by Gordon Brown in 2007, promising “not to let matters rest” when it was ratified by the Labour majority in the British Parliament. Once he became Prime Minister in 2010 he introduced a EU bill in the Parliament which reasserted its sovereignty and made a referendum compulsory in case of any new transfer of sovereignty to the EU. At that point he refused to contemplate an referendum in the monarchy, which a sizeable minority of his own backbenchers supported. But by January 2013 he had changed his mind under pressure from hard Euro-sceptics in his party, the press and UKIP and had promised a referendum before the end of 2017 in his Bloomberg speech. By May 2015, when he won the general election, the referendum was inevitable.

The referendum therefore took place in a context of increasing discontent towards Europe in the UK, reinforced by the Eurozone crisis (which entrenched the idea that the whole Euro project was doomed) and the massive refugee crisis, even though it did not directly affect Britain, which is not part of the Schengen system. The referendum was also deeply affected, as the campaign showed, by the decision taken by the Blair government in 2004 to lift any restriction to the free circulation of citizens from the new Member States who

joined the EU. This led to the immigration of over one million Poles and other East Europeans in the UK (to a total of over 3.3 million EU citizens living in the UK in 2016), which became increasingly contentious in the British political debate from 2005 onwards. Immigration proved to be the most successful argument of the "Leave" campaign in the referendum, especially when N. Farage sponsored a poster showing a line of refugees in the Balkans with the slogan "Breaking Point – The EU has failed us". More generally, the Leave campaign focussed on the theme of "taking back control", which included reclaiming control of British borders and of the sovereignty of the UK's Parliament over British laws. It was able to tap into a widespread feeling that EU institutions were too powerful and imposed costs and regulation which the British public was opposed to and that it was not accountable in the way national politicians were to their own parliament. (SCHNAPPER P. 2017)

Other domestic issue which was significant for the referendum result, though not directly, had relation with the economic and social policies adopted since 2010 in the UK in response to the economic crisis. Spending cuts, especially affecting benefits, had a lasting impact on many working-class families who also faced wage stagnation and unaffordable housing in many parts of the country. This explains, at least partly, why the economic argument in favour of staying in the EU had little traction with sections of the public for that leaving could have a negative impact on the City or abstract figures like the GDP, but could not make things worse than they already were for them, or so they felt.

The domestic factors such as traditional misgivings about European Integration, a historical attachment to the idea of parliamentary sovereignty, however mythical in reality, immigration policy under the British Labour Party (1994 - 2010) and the spending cuts adopted by the Coalition Government between 2010 and 2015, explain to a large extent the result of the referendum. "Leave" voters were predominantly those affected by immigration and austerity: the less educated, less well-off older English population outside London were the section of the population most likely to vote for Brexit.

Although domestic factors explain to a large extent the result of the British referendum 2016, it cannot be separated from wider developments at play across the EU, to which the UK is not immune. Euro-scepticism, or the rejection of the European project, is now a widespread phenomenon in Europe, reflected in opinion polls and the success of anti-European populist parties in the 2019 elections to the European Parliament. The acquiescence of European citizens to the process of European Integration in the 1950s and 1960s has given way to a so called "constraining dissensus". (SCHNAPPER P. 2017) This has been happening as a result of the politicisation of European issues across the EU, which has led to a widespread contestation of, if not the project as a whole, at least many of the policies and perceived inadequacies of the EU institutions. In 2007, only 34% of respondents in the Eurobarometer poll thought that their voices counted in the EU, in the UK only 22%. (EUROBAROMETER 2007: 100) This may explain why turnout in European elections has been consistently going downwards since 1979, e. g. from an average of over 60% to just over 40% in 2014. The rise of populist anti-European parties throughout the continent has been the most obvious manifestation of voters' discontent.

In the UK, the EU-wide crisis was interpreted as evidence that the EU was not a successful economic bloc but a declining bureaucratic and inefficient system. The refugee crisis of 2015 added to these tensions, with a new, East-West dimension to it when Central and Eastern European states, especially V4 countries, refused to leave their borders open and to accept a quota of refugees, as the European Commission had suggested. It also raised the question of the effectiveness of the Schengen system, with many Member States re-introducing controls at their national borders.

Beyond these separate crises, commentators have pointed more generally to an identity crisis for the EU, where the whole process is no longer seen as legitimate because it is not seen as able to provide security and prosperity to its citizens, risks undermining national sovereignty and has not led to a shared polity with a common identity. Scholars have distinguished between an input (with citizen participation) and output legitimacy, whereby the EU's output legitimacy is no longer sufficient to satisfy voters. Summing up the conundrum in which the EU finds itself when it generates 'policy without politics' whereas the level where politics takes place is national but has largely been deprived of policy outputs – 'politics without policy'. (SCHMIDT V. A 2006)

One of the ways in which Member States attempted to reconnect voters with the European project was to resort more frequently to the use of referendums, as a way to reintroduce direct democracy in a process which seemed too aloof and technocratic. At first referendums were used as bargaining tools for national governments to gain concessions in their negotiations with the EU. Then they became means for gaining legitimacy, leverage and passing the political "buck" all at the same time.

The British referendum and consecutive Brexit therefore came at a time when the European project as a whole was threatened. It was an illustration of the extent of the crisis the EU was facing and had the potential to make it worse.

3 The Brexit politico-legislative process

The Brexit was a slow and complicated politico-legislative process. The issue of this legal process occurred both within the UK institutions and on the negotiations with the EU. Furthermore, it questioned not only the

withdrawal of the UK from the Union but also the future relationship between the country and the EU post-Brexit. To understand the Brexit politico-legislative process, it is necessary at first clarify some main issues and their aspects.

Mentioned above, the Brexit originated from David Cameron's 2013 Bloomberg speech where he promised a referendum on whether the UK should remain or leave the EU. The victory of the Brexiters on June 23, 2016 by 51.9% for a 72.2% turnout led to the Prime Minister's resignation and to the British Government led by Theresa May being under an obligation to apply the referendum result in the British society. However, the expression of the will of British people was not enough to initiate the exit process. Indeed, the withdrawal of any Member State from the EU is ruled by Article 50 TEU. This article was invoked for the first time within the EU history, and gives the possibility to any Member to quit the EU "*according to its own constitutional requirements*" (EUROPEAN UNION 2007). It states that a Member State shall notify the Union and start negotiations for the withdrawal and future relationship between the corresponding Member leaving and the Union. The two years transition period is allowed to find an agreement and the deal must be accepted by a qualified majority voting of the European Council (i.e. in the case of the UK: 16 Member States from the 27 ones with 65% of the Union's population) but can be vetoed by the European Parliament. Article 50 TEU is therefore the main and key legal basis for the Brexit. However, the bare activation of the article became a legal challenge within the UK.

In January 2017, the British Supreme Court ruled that "*the Government cannot activate the Article 50 TEU on its own accord, despite the referendum result, and needs to consult and obtain the agreement of the British Parliament*". (Note: R. Miller and another v. Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union [2017] UKSC. The Supreme Court gave its ruling on the Miller case on January 24th, 2017.) In accordance with this ruling, the corresponding bill of the UK's withdrawal was presented to the Parliament and the Members of Parliament (MPs) approved it in March 2017. The notification of withdrawal was then sent on 29 March 2017 by Theresa May's Government to the European Council's Head Donald Tusk and acted as the first official step of Brexit.

Also, the day after the notification was sent, the British Parliament introduced its EU (withdrawal) bill - also called *Great Repeal bill* – meant to revoke the 1972 European Communities act. This legal act has been considered as one of the most important and challenging steps carried out by British MPs.

Moreover, Brexit has opened a new kind of negotiations and unprecedented politico-legislative process within the EU. After receiving the British notification, the 27 remaining states reunited on 29 April 2017 to discuss Brexit for the first time and the currently on-going negotiations officially opened on June 19th. The talks were held for one week every month with the representatives of both sides – the EU and UK – with the deadline to find an agreement to 29 March 2019. If all agreement's issues were not agreed, there was a possibility to extend this negotiation period.

More than six months after the start of the talks, the first stage of the negotiations – regarding the main separation issues – was officially settled just before the end of 2017. Indeed, for the EU, before any discussions could be made on the future agreement, the question of the exit and some specific points needed to be settled. It concerned especially the rights of the UK and EU citizens, the "divorce bill" and the UK obligations towards the EU as well as the Northern Ireland border. The question of the UK and EU citizens' rights has illustrated the legal challenges faced in those negotiations. Brexit posed a very concrete question for EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in other Member States of the Union. It has questioned freedom of movement first but also the rights associated to EU citizenship, competent jurisdictions in case of legal disputes and a role of the Court of Justice of the Union in the post-Brexit period. On the Northern-Ireland border issue, the question of "regulatory alignment" wanted by Ireland and the EU, as to preserve the peace and stability in the region, has been accepted and recognized by the British Government but has been challenged by the Democratic Unionist Party representatives and contested by the hard-Brexiters within the UK. It raised the possibility of Brexit bit by bit with exemptions for the different countries and territories within the UK. (BIRKINSHAW P. 2018) Although some sensitive aspects were not been entirely and clearly resolved, the EU considered on 8 September 2017 that sufficient progress had been made as to progress on the second stage of the negotiations and an accord was reached in principle, recognized by the European Parliament on 13 December 2017. Moreover, the British Government stated that this agreement is conditioned to the success of the future deal between the UK and EU and in a joint statement (from 8 December 2017) both sides agreed that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". This second phase of the talks was described as the most challenging and concerned especially the possibility of a possible two years transition period, the commercial relations and the cooperation on security issues. This phase should also determine the orientation to the British leaving towards actual soft or hard Brexit. The British Government line on the question has been evolving on the European and national stages. If the issue remains dependent on internal and political questions, the UK's Prime Minister T. May expressed on 22 September 2017 that the UK will do its best keeping the idea that no deal may be actually better than a bad deal. The idea was developed because the UK requires special relationship with the EU and therefore needs a unique and new kind of deal. However, it could appear as a treatment favour what the EU may not agree with. Moreover, to have access to the advantages to the EU, the UK would still need to contribute to the EU budget and obligation in parts. This asks how relevant Brexit would be in a configuration where the UK would be

engaged towards the EU but with no representation and voice within its institutions. And this is probably not real.

During the whole time, the Brexit process in the UK's Parliament was very strongly blocked mainly by the main opposition party – the Labour Party. Labours have behaved very strangely and always declared its support for Brexit, but only on the basis of an agreement signed between the UK and the EU (though such an agreement can be signed within the transition period after Brexit). The Labour Party refused all proposals of the agreement in the British Parliament and never submitted any own version of the agreement, nor its own conception of such the agreement.

The deadline for Brexit was prolonged to 31 October 2019. Hopeful progress in the Brexit process happened by a change of the Conservative Party Leader and Prime Minister on 23 July 2019. Teresa May resigned and was succeeded by Boris Johnson, a strong Brexiter. The conflicting state of relations between Conservatives and Labours in the Parliament was going on and the Brexit process was permanently blocked by Labours. The only solution to this problem was a new general Parliamentary election in the UK.

Prime Minister B. Johnson, trying to gain an overall majority in the Parliament to accomplish his main goal of taking the UK out of the EU by the end of January 2020, called for an early general election to take place in December which was eventually passed into law. At first, the new deadline for Brexit was established on the day of 31 January 2020 and consequently the British Parliament announced the general election on 12 December 2019. The election resulted in a Conservatives landslide victory, in their largest majority since 1987.

As we could observe Brexit was a massive, complicated, unprecedented, uncertain and slow politico-legislative process before the last general election. The result of the election revealed the Conservatives strengthening their position on Brexit, with B. Johnson's securing a mandate to ensure the UK's departure from the Union at the end of January 2020.

The legislation passed its final parliamentary stage on 22 January 2020, after more than three years of bitter wrangling over how, when and even if Brexit should take place. The next day on January 23 Queen Elizabeth gave the Brexit bill Royal Assent and so the bill became UK law. Prime Minister Boris Johnson formally signed the EU Withdrawal Agreement on Jan 24 and on the same day the leaders of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen) and European Council (Charles Michel) signed this Brexit Agreement in the EU's Europa building. A consent vote in the European Parliament took place on January 29 with a prospect openly expressed by some anti-Brexit MPs that once Britain will return to the Union. The UK was due to leave the EU bloc of states at 24:00 CET on 31 January 2020. Since the next day (1 February 2020), the 11 month transition period has been started within which new mutual relations between the UK and EU should be formed. (HRIVIK P. et al. 2020)

4 Appearance of democracy deficit within Brexit

The whole process of Brexit was accompanied by the phenomenon of democratic deficit. Not only was this process accompanied by a democratic deficit, it was also one of the reasons why Brexit actually happened. In this case, we can talk about the democratic deficit in the period before Brexit, respectively before referendum, during campaign and after referendum. The nature of the democratic deficit is determined on the timeline by the individual stages of the leaving process. While in the first stage of the process i.e. in the pre - referendum period, the democratic deficit was captured by the criticism of the British in relation towards the EU (reasons such as sovereignty, bureaucracy, over - regulation, immigrants ...) in the second stage of the process, the democratic deficit was present within the handling of the election campaign. From both sides of course. The last stage captures the reluctant acceptance of the referendum results, as well as attempts for holding a second referendum which undermining the institute of the referendum as a direct form of democracy. When David Cameron became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 2010, he probably had no idea that his country's membership in the European Union comes to its end. He also inherited Black Peter in the form of growing European scepticism inside the Conservative Party. The conservative European sceptics from times of Margaret Thatcher did not disappear. On the contrary, they have strengthened. To the measurement that their reservations against the European Union could no longer be ignored. Euro-scepticism grew because of the democratic deficit they felt in the form of: loss of sovereignty (manifested by the transfer of competences from the national parliament to the institutions of the European Union) increased regulation and bureaucracy and a quota system to redistribute immigrants from the 2015 immigration crisis, thereby losing control of who can enter the country - this would disrupt the established asylum process. From some point of view is leaving the European Union only one possibility how to escape European chains, and regain full control and sovereignty over state and UK territory (Palkovská, 2018).

In this climate, David Cameron pledged to hold a United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, on condition that he would win parliamentary elections (2015). Cameron himself was for staying in the Union. Former President of the European Council Donald Tusk commented situation like that David Cameron never believed he would have to hold an EU referendum because he expected to fall short of an overall majority in the 2015 election. In this case, David Cameron bet on (un)certainty. He assumed that he would rule with the Liberal

Democrats after the elections and that Democrats will reject the referendum proposal. So, the blame for failing to meet his pre-election promise would fall on the coalition partner, and at the same time he could silence European sceptics among the Conservative Party by the fact that he was about to hold a referendum. However, the Conservative Party won the elections in 2015 and formed a government - without liberal democrats. Cameron had to keep his promise and hold a referendum. To this day many people consider the promise of a Brexit referendum after winning parliamentary elections for a gamble that was not worth it.

If the Brexit referendum were based solely on economic debate, most people would probably vote for staying. All key economic players, from Confederation of British Industry (CBI) to City, have called for Remain. This position undoubtedly supported the government's agenda, which highlighted the economic risks associated with leaving the Union. However, the nature of the debate has turned more on political than economic issues. In this case, the Remain campaign provided much weaker arguments and hardly even mentioned Brexit's risk and costs. In this context, the slogan "take back control" won. One of the reasons why the Eurosceptics won was the fact that executive and legislative power over a number of important economic and social policies, and last but not least, those related to immigration, passed to the EU institutions. These institutions have been largely uncontrolled or under-controlled by British citizens (or by any citizens from EU Member States). Leaving the EU would return these competences to democratically accountable politicians and administrators, thereby reinvigorating (or at least getting closer to) the British voters in this process. Of course, many Remainders have lent this argument credibility by criticizing the democratic deficit in the EU for 40 years. The criticism of democratic failures has been observed since 1979 (the first Euro elections). At these times, criticism of Europhiles at the address of EU was often tougher than critique of Eurosceptics. Quite a failure of the Remain campaign can also be found at a point where its members have not taken a positive political stance on European integration. This served to ensure that EU political integration serves to further legitimize the argument on the democratic deficit in the narrative of Vote Leave campaign.

Brexit was supposed to save money from paying to the EU budget. In addition, Brexiters assumed that the FTA would be negotiated quickly and on favorable terms for the City. However, not taking into account the financial consequences of the exit such as: inflation, pound drop, interest rate hikes, etc., the economic claims of Brexit proponents have been constantly disintegrating. Despite this, YouGov surveys have revealed that up to 60% of Brexit supporters consider these political gains profitable at the cost of economic losses (Bellami 2018). However, political costs can be even higher than economic. The fact that the British "take back control" may result in the British electorate losing control of the global and social processes that shape many government policies. The EU does not support such scrutiny by including national democracies within a transnational democratic system (as many Europhiles predict), what creating concerns about both domestic and European democratic deficits, but offering a framework within which national democracies can collectively regulate global processes relatively in a fair way. It also reveals that the states and their peoples have similar concerns and respect for the same things. Outside these agreements, states will face the dominance of other states, as well as foreign agents, multinational corporations, financial institutions and terrorist groups (Pettit 2010). No state today is able to face these influences on its own. Even the US, with its military hegemony, the great strength of the domestic market, and its considerable natural resources, is not able to do so. It is certainly beyond the capacity of a medium-sized economic and military force, such as the United Kingdom, which is heavily dependent on international trade.

The fundamental problem can be formulated in terms of what Dani Rodrik called "the fundamental political trilemma of the world economy" (Rodrik 2011). Specifically, democracy, national self-determination and economic globalization cannot be achieved at the same time. One of them must be "sacrificed". As an example: If we want to maintain a deep democracy, we have to choose between a nation-state and international economic integration. If we want to preserve the nation state and self-determination, we must choose between deepening democracy or deepening globalization.

To make matters worse, the phenomenon of political correctness has entered the Brexit process. The result of political correctness in this case is the idea that every opponent of admission of immigrants and a redistribution quota policy is a conservative bigot xenophobe. It was even more confusing for British workers when former Labor President Tony Blair stood up against Brexit. However, many workers saw the immigration influx as threatening for their work. At that time, Blair coined the thesis: "Free debate is a part of democracy and people are" free to listen". However, many of Brexit supporters were excluded from the public debate. This kind of political correctness was present throughout whole Brexit campaign.

In addition to political correctness, the campaign was also marked by considerable manipulation from both sides. Brexiters were manipulating the referendum mainly in connection with targeted advertising with the help of the British company Cambridge Analytica, which no longer exists. Despite this, Cambridge Analytica has never received any payment for this action from Leave.EU. On the other hand, in addition to the official Vote Remain campaign, globalists and supporters of a united Europe such as George Soros also fought to remain in the Union. He proudly reported that he had spent £ 400,000 on an anti-Brexit campaign (Elgot, 2018). With this sum, he supported the Best for Britain project, which "educates people to make the right choices". The campaign

culminated in a day of referendum on June 23, 2016. It was big blow for European Union. Because it was for first time after deepening integration when member state decides to leave "European house" (Somai, 2018, p. 1308).

Some people began to demand a second referendum after a rigged referendum, so the Supreme Court Judgment in December 2016 stated the following: *"The referendum was not legally binding, merely" advisory, "so it can't be ordered to be re-run by a court - any decision to have a fresh referendum would be made by the government and Parliament would have pass and referendum act."* (BBC editorial, 2018).

However, the second referendum eventually took place "de facto". This happened during the early elections in 2019. Where more support for Boris Johnson meant a more authentic approach to Brexit. It was a kind of "confirming" election to the Brexit referendum. At their end stood the strongest conservative party since Margaret Thatcher's victory in 1987. Despite the fact that George Soros had invested £ 2.7 million in the campaign against Boris Johnson through the Best for Britain project (Hale, 2019).

Democratic deficit in this process was ultimately only the tip of the glacier, the majority of which was submerged under the surface which was formed by the historically rooted British European skepticism against the idea of a common united Europe since the post-war Europe.

5 British Euro-scepticism as a reason for Brexit

Traditional British European scepticism played an important role in the UK's leaving from the EU. According to Greek political scientist Georgios Nastos, the core of this European scepticism is national sovereignty and identity manifested in political rhetoric, the media and public opinion. British European sceptics, especially among the conservative elites, perceive the United Kingdom as a global rather than a European player. In this regard, they consider the current EU, including the vast Brussels bureaucracy, as a major obstacle to the economic and trade sovereignty of the UK. (Nastos, 2016)

Natural British European scepticism from the beginning refused to participate in the United Kingdom in the European Communities (EC), and later in the EU. Another form, so-called. she criticized soft European scepticism and distanced itself significantly from the advancing processes of European integration. The British representatives of soft European scepticism criticized in particular the gradual supranationalization of decision-making processes within the EC / EU and promoted the intergovernmental principle of decision-making. The revision of the EC / EU founding treaties, the growing in the competences of the EU institutions and the disproportionate strengthening of the political and human rights dimension together with political correctness at the expense of common economic and trade policies brought disintegration tendencies culminating of the referendum about its membership. In 23 June 2016, the vast majority of British voters decided to leave the Union. The current US President Donald Trump's policy has publicly supported Britain's efforts to exit the common European market. (Hrivik, 2016)

British trade and the country's economic and economic relations were oriented towards the Commonwealth countries in the 1940s, to which more than 50% of British exports went, while to Western Europe only 20%. The United Kingdom, unlike France, was an advanced industrial production-oriented state, but only a small proportion of the population was employed in the agricultural industry, while a fifth of the population was employed in French agriculture. In May 1950, a key turning point in the development of European integration came. Robert Schuman presented the concept of the European Coal and Steel Community. The British were not informed in advance. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established by the Treaty of Paris signed on 18 April 1951 by France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The treaty was concluded for 50 years and entered into force after ratification on 25 July 1952. The aim was for the common market in steel, coal, coke, iron ore and scrap and economic cooperation to prevent further war. Ernest Bevin was disturbed by the federalist tone of the whole community, and he considered it a marketing move stemming from the weakness of France, which, he said, was losing influence over the German industry. In addition, economic commitments to Western Europe would mean a loss of position in the Commonwealth countries. As a result of the British decision, the project was dominated by France. United Kingdom Secretary of State Anthony Eden refused any involvement of Britain in European structures. Anthony Eden was looking for a way to influence integration on the continent. In 1952, Eden came up with the idea of linking the Council of Europe and the ECSC, where the members of the Council of Europe would participate in the ECSC's 'six' discussions, so that a joint Council of Europe and 'six' body would always prevail over multinational institutions. The Monnet's Office immediately alerted the governments of the Member States that the adoption of the British proposal would jeopardize the independence of the Community and, moreover, there were no organic links between the supranational authority and the Council of Europe. Eden's idea of linking the Council of Europe and the ECSC did not pass. The British considered every aspect of integration and their advantages and disadvantages. Despite its ownership structure, British industry was much better than continental. The British had outlets in the Commonwealth countries and trade was principally based on exports of engineering and other industrial products and imports of agricultural products to Britain. Unlike the French in agriculture, the British had only 4% of the population, while the French had 23%. And this is another key point in the dispute. The French considered the

greatest benefit of integration as having gained a market for agricultural products and at the same time protected for their uncompetitive industry. The British needed the exact opposite, a free market for the agricultural products they imported from New Zealand, Australia and other countries of the Community, and expand outlets for their relatively advanced industry. (Loužek, 2010)

The UK's diverging attitude towards post-war European integration was first publicly presented by a speech by former British Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Opposition Winston Churchill on September 19, 1946 at the University of Zurich. In his speech he suggested building a kind of post-war United States of Europe based on an alliance of sovereign states. He was being inclined to create a common European grouping of states, but he did not count on British participation in a united Europe. Conservative Party policy favoured deepening deeper bilateral relations with the USA. (Hrivik, 2016) The Labour Party was taken similar attitude too. It refused to integrate Great Britain into transnational European structures. The gradual weakening of the British colonial empire forced Great Britain to establish greater cooperation with the EC in the 1950s. Unsuccessful negotiations about the Association Agreement was resulted to establishment of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 4 January 1960 by signing the so-called European Free Trade Association calling Stockholm Convention (UK, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Switzerland with Liechtenstein and Portugal). Compared to the Treaties of Rome, it was less comprehensive and mainly less ambitious. Its aim was the gradual convergence of tariffs on most industrial production and sometimes their gradual abolition. EFTA did not emphasize the gradual unification of national economies and had no other open or hidden objectives. Within the Joint Council of Ministers all decisions were taken unanimously. Nevertheless, the UK dominated politically and economically in this economic grouping. The USA perceived competition between the EC and EFTA as a threat to the division of Western Europe. Therefore, the then of the USA top political leaders appealed to the mutual cooperation of both organizations, favouring the European Economic Community. Because that the UK's competitive alternative European integration project EFTA failed, in the 1960s, the United Kingdom began applying for EC accession. (Kovar and Horcicka, 2005a)

The independence of most Commonwealth states and the consequent decline in foreign trade with the former British colonies resulted in a reassessment of the UK's foreign policy towards the EC. The UK's intention to integrate into the common European market was particularly welcomed by the USA. After the resignation of French President Charles de Gaulle, the United Kingdom, together with Denmark and Ireland, joined the EC in January 1973. Britain's accession delayed for some time the integration of the political framework into European integration. Its position prevented the Dutch intention of establishing European political cooperation into the EC system. Great Britain guarded the independence of its own international policy. The victory of opposition laborers in February 1974 put de facto into questioning Britain's EC membership. No Entry on Tory Terms and Keep Britain Out become the main motto of Labour Anti-European propaganda. Together with the poor economic situation and the traditional resistance of part of the British population to engage politically on the European continent, the future of UK's EC membership was uncertain. Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, together with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, James Callaghan, has approved the so-called. correction mechanism. Its aim was to reduce British contributions to the EC Common Budget. In the referendum on Britain's remain in the EC on 5 June 1975, the majority of British voters accepted new conditions, with up to 67.2% of eligible voters voting. The result of the popular vote was the victory of Prime Minister Wilson and the British Euro-optimists. The 1979 elections were won by the Conservatives. The new government of Margaret Thatcher, criticized the then increase in payments to the common budget of the European Communities and called for a review of this situation. With the slogan 'I want my money back', it has pushed through a substantial reduction in the UK's contribution to the common budget and the return of part of the funds invested into the Communities by the so-called. compensation. (Kovar and Horcicka, 2005b)

In a further integration period, the United Kingdom supported only the limited economic dimension of the single market. But the United Kingdom did not agree to sign the so-called. Social Charter or the concept of Economic and Monetary Union. Among the main opponents of Economic and Monetary Union was the UK, which, in response to the announcement of the first stage of EMU, specified its conditions of participation: falling inflation, the gradual completion of the single market and the removal of remaining restrictions on the free movement of capital. In response to the Delors's report, the UK introduced its own variant of monetary integration. In 1989, it repeatedly proposed the introduction of the so-called. hard ECU, which would primarily serve as a reserve currency and a currency to conduct payment operations. According to the UK, the replacement of national currencies with the common European currency should have been made only on the basis of direct stimuli from financial and foreign exchange markets. The President of France, Mitterrand, suggested that the UK's exception, which from the outset declared its unwillingness to participate in the creation of a common currency, should be limited. However, the limitation of the British opt-out in the EMU case, which would ultimately not be accepted by the UK, was not subsequently implemented. On the contrary, VB confirmed its opt-out for the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union project. The inconsistency between the integration intentions of Commission President Delors and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who supported the limited intergovernmental dimension of cooperation, was also linked to the Commission's efforts

to enforce the harmonization of value added tax (VAT) in Member States of EC. Countries with low VAT levels, including the UK, resisted the attempt to harmonize taxes because they feared a rise in consumer prices. The concerns of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher about further integration activities, whether social, monetary or tax harmonization issues, were based on the current belief that the level of integration that has emerged is temporary and that the shift of unification to other areas is undermining the sovereignty of Member States. UK's attitude towards integration efforts going beyond the founding treaties is expressed, for example, by: M. Thatcher's speech at a ceremony in Bruges in September 1988, where she said: "... my first principle is this: the best way to build a successful European Community is voluntary and active cooperation between sovereign, independent countries. Efforts to suppress national fixtures and to concentrate power at the heart of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardize the goals we seek to achieve ... Europe will be stronger just because France is France, Spain is Spain and Britain is Britain, and each of these countries have their own custom, traditions and identity. It would be crazy to try to entice her into a kind of unified European identity..." (Fiala, Pitrová, 2009)

The EU Treaty elaborated on the individual problems and caught the exceptions for individual member countries. It was emphasized that the exceptions are taken by the Union as a temporary matter and not as a standard method of resolution. Exceptions The opt-outs, also committed by the EU Treaty, also concerned the UK, which expressed its disagreement with the new integration activities; Permanent exceptions to the Treaty in the UK case covered the single currency agenda. It was also a failure in the so-called. the Social Protocol, which therefore continued only as intergovernmental activity by the Member States and the Schengen Protocol, which remained intergovernmental. The EU Treaty also proposed a concrete path towards a single currency Preparations for the Common Monetary Policy have begun long ago. However, the British pound did not take part in these preparations, in which the UK government did not want to be strongly linked to other European currencies in order to maintain as much autonomy in monetary policy as possible Furthermore, the Treaty introduced institutionalized cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, confirming the exemption from participation for the UK and Ireland, which were not the only ones to sign the Schengen Agreement. The specific form of intergovernmental cooperation in the case of the Schengen agreements was lost by the signature of the Amsterdam Treaty, which covered the Schengen system within the EU contractual framework. Building the Schengen area has thus become part of the EU's agenda. (Fojtková, Vahalík, 2017)

In forming the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in 2003, the UK opposed the creation of a superstate and refused, for example. the creation of a European Foreign Minister, but since this treaty was previously rejected by citizens in other EU countries (the Netherlands and France), a UK referendum has never been held. The Treaty of Lisbon was adopted in place of the Constitutional Treaty in 2009, which does not contain any reference to constitutional symbols (such as flag, anthem) and some terms such as EU law, EU constitution have been removed, so the Treaty of Lisbon has become an acceptable form of treaty to reform the functioning of the EU and its institutions. The UK agreed to create a new EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Other compromises adopted at the request of the UK when signing the Lisbon Treaty include a provision in the area of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which allows some members to continue to work on a particular act while allowing others not to participate. (Fojtková, Vahalík, 2017)

By ratifying the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 by the British parliament, a group of pro-European and European sceptic politicians was formed within the Conservative Party. European sceptics criticized the growing in transnational elements and refused to create a common currency and a common foreign and security policy. Growing the transnational principle of European integration at that time also led to the constitution of new European sceptic parties in the United Kingdom - UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) and BNP (British National Party). Some conservatives also suggested leaving the country from the EU. Together to the hard-European scepticism, a new generation of politicians was discovered. They were called soft European sceptics and supported of the UK's membership in EU, but they did not support the adoption of a common European currency.

The United Kingdom Independence Party was founded by Alan Skeda in 1993 on the occasion of a campaign against the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. It asked for the immediate and complete leaving of the UK from the EU. It criticized the loss of British national sovereignty over the EU institutions or the lack of democracy in the EU because of the non-voting nature of the European Commission or the inability of the European Parliament to represent the interests of citizens of the Member States of the Union. UKIP also strongly opposed the over-regulation of the single European market and the UK's inability to reach independent international trade agreements and migration issues arising from EU membership. The party convinced British society that its suffering could only be greatly alleviated if the country was ruled solely by the British Parliament without outside interference from Brussels. According to G. Nastos, the main factors the decision of most British voters to leave the EU were, above all, the question of the sovereignty and identity of the monarchy. (Nastos, 2018)

6 On some potential Brexit's consequences

To analyse political, economic, social and diplomatic consequences of Brexit, as well as key features and issues of the post-Brexit period within the eleven-month transition period (by 31 December 2020) is difficult because the negotiations on future relations between the UK and EU have not too gone forward, they are still in process.

In general, Brexit is expected to gradual disrupt internal equilibrium of the Union and to decrease its influence and credibility in near future. The EU is losing the world's fifth largest economy, a nuclear power and a member of the UN Security Council. This underlines certain risks for the EU's external relations, due also to weakening its inner cohesion. On the international scene, the EU will lose its position and significance which can mean some certain economic and political risks. Germany and France together achieve a much stronger position and influence within the Union after the UK's departure and this can lead to greater internal instability. (HRIVIK P. et al. 2020)

Another key issue of the Brexit concern refers to relations between Northern Ireland (being outside the EU) and the Republic of Ireland as the EU's Member State. The economies of Northern Ireland and Ireland are completely interconnected, considerable amounts of goods and services are crossing the border every day without any checks. Both sides are determined that the Common Travel Area will remain in place, but that in itself does not resolve the challenge of a hard border re-emerging. Because the UK has announced its leaving the EU's Single Market and Customs Union that immediately turns the internal border on the Irish Isle into an external border for the both mentioned unions with all the potential checks that implies. This is a reason why the Irish Government wants a written guarantee from the UK that Northern Ireland will continue to follow EU rules – so goods can continue to move freely across the border.

The UK henceforth remains economically dependent on the Union, in particular regarding its internal market. In fact, 40% of UK's investments in the world refer to the EU and 50% of the capital inputs on the British region come from the Union, so that represent a certain risk for the UK's economy. Moreover, some industries largely stand on the EU's support, like agriculture. Even if it represents less than 1% of the Britain's economy, 55% of its industry depends on the EU's financial contributions and 72% of the export is destined for the EU.

It seems important to mention also possible depreciation of the British pound, which could affect the UK's economy. According to some European leaders, the UK is depriving itself of the numerous advantages resulting from the European Common Market and can suffer from the reduction of trust of international investors. On the other hand, there are some issues about the potential financial instabilities in the Eurozone and its competitiveness.

A study of the European Parliament "*An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Brexit on the EU27*" shows that the EU is likely to face a hole of 9 billion Euros in its annual budget, being the estimated amount of the UK's net contributions. They also show that the volume of trade in goods and services is quite substantial between the UK and the EU27, with 94 billion Euros of exports from the EU27 to the UK, and 122 billion Euros in the EU27's imports. However, according to the Parliamentary study, it seems that the UK is more dependent on the EU, and even if they agree that Brexit will inflict losses on both sides appearing to be more serious for the UK than for the EU. (BARLES B. et al. 2018)

Within the Brexit process, there occurred some preoccupations referring to European citizens living in the UK (around 3, 4 million) and to British citizens (nearly 1 million) living in the EU. For those who are residents in the UK for at least five years, they apparently will be able to apply for "settled status". Nevertheless, if the UK and EU cannot find a deal within the transition period by the end of 2020, there is an issue that British citizens living in the EU could lose their residency rights and access to full-valued health care. However, British expatriates in the Union's Member States are able, to thanks to the European Economic Area (EEA), to employ right of free movement which means in general that EU Members cannot bar or expel citizens of EEA states. (Note: The citizens of the member states of the European Economic Area (EEA), including the EU and EFTA states, have the same right of freedom of movement in the EEA as EU citizens do within the Union.) There have also been fears that some EU Member States, angered by Brexit, could try to apply pressure on British expatriates as a demonstration of reprisal. Nevertheless, when Brexit had been initiated, EU nationals living in Britain expressed their will of having rather individual "acquired rights" under the 1969 Vienna Convention, which means they can stay. The same appeal will be probably applied by UK citizens living in the Union. Finally, EU nationals arriving in the UK after a "cut-off date" of 31 January 2020 will probably no longer have the right to permanent residence in the monarchy.

Moreover, the Brexit event will have other cardinal effects at different levels. It will undoubtedly have an impact on the EU, with some Member States probably tempted to follow Britain. The consequences will be also acute on the UK itself, as well as on Scotland and Northern Ireland themselves which did not sufficiently support voting for Brexit in the last general election performed in December 2019. However, the overall result was in favour of the Brexiters, mainly in England.

All these consequences and other issues, arising from this singular situation, explain why the Brexit problem is so unusual and interesting for investigation. Fuzziness and uncertainty of the transition period are actual attributes of the post-Brexit process, specifying its content, consequences and continuation in future. This can be

observed from politico-legislative, judicial, economic and human-right points of view, in the UK with the issue of the manner in which this leaving the EU should be officially recorded. Some issues refer to the future relationship between the UK and EU. This is not negligible especially from an economic point of view. The outcomes of the referendum 2016 and the last general election 2019 are compelling the UK's Government and the EU's institutions to redefine the economic partnership between the both entities. This new partnership seems difficult to be designed and set up.

Within the context of the Brexit process the governing Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland announced ambitions to organize a second referendum on Scotland's independence, because it refused to support the UK's withdrawal from the EU declaring an interest of Scotland to become a member of the Union in near future. Why is this referendum on Scotland's independence unlikely? To be held, and to have a legal value, this referendum would have to be authorised by some key UK authorities, mainly by the British Parliament. To some extent, this is the same problem as the case of Catalonia in Spain. Aware of this fact, it will be difficult, probably impossible, for Scotland to carry out another referendum on its independence in the following years. But the SNP would appreciate that Scotland, and therefore the UK, can remain a part of the European Single Market. However, this is not guaranteed at all, and there will not be any real answer before the end of the post-Brexit transition period.

To conclude, it appears today that the issue of Scotland's future will be henceforth a part of the UK's destiny. Scotland will remain a firm part of the UK in the next post-Brexit years. This issue is very sensitive. The UK's Government will now really refuse to deal with the second referendum on Scottish sovereignty as well as with the issue of Northern Ireland (being as complicated as the one of Scotland) because its withdrawal priorities have become key in negotiations with the EU's institutions on some post-Brexit relations, cooperation and many other problems.

Another issue referring to Scotland and Northern Ireland seems also very important as these UK countries voted in the last general parliamentary election by their majority to remain in the EU. But it is curious in a case of Scotland where people voted in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence to remain in the UK. Therefore, it is impossible to set these results aside. That is the reason why the issue of the future of Scotland has been a persistent question since 23 June 2016. Nevertheless, it is a case which could be solved within future economic relationship between the UK and EU.

Brexit's consequences and prospects are now extremely actual which need special exploration for specifying all possible effects and impacts on the European and British levels, as well as on a national level of other Member States. This can enlighten internal dissensions and various questions referring to the future of the EU and UK, and predestination of very European Integration.

Some other possible Brexit consequences in the Union can be, for example, determined by the following ideas:

- the uncontrolled growing of deficit of democracy in the Union caused mainly by European elites and some interests and egoism of the most influential Member States, mainly France and Germany which have been totally controlling European Integration evolution;
- the persisting of the French form of government in the Union which supports centralized governing of the Union and large-scale EU bureaucracy;
- the strengthening of a supranational character of the EU and a position of Brussels' bureaucracy respected first of all by Germany and France;
- the possible loss of a dominant position of the English – the most communication language in the world – among working languages in the EU (this issue is now submitted by some French politicians);
- and next.

To remove these and other risks and doubts on next EU development, to stop disintegration trends, to reduce Euro-scepticism and to strengthen inner stability and unity, the EU inevitably needs acute, reasonable reforms in the post-Brexit period. (HRIVIK P. et al. 2020)

7 Conclusions

None of the Member States' governments, nor interestingly their publics, wished for a Brexit. A poll published in spring 2016 showed that 75% of the German, Dutch or Spanish respondents thought it would be a bad idea for the EU. Even in France, traditionally seen as more hostile to the UK, a majority of 62% of voters thought it was not a good idea for the UK to withdraw from the EU. All EU heads of states and government supported keeping the UK in the EU. (SCHNAPPER P. 2017)

The vote on Brexit was the result of a mixture of domestic, European and international factors. One of its main consequences has been to add a further level of uncertainty and disruption to an already embattled the EU. While opinion polls in the rest of the Member States show that the vote has not, in the short term, led to an increase in anti-EU feeling and the fear of immediate contagion to other countries seems to have been overblown, Brexit remains a huge challenge for the EU as it questions the *raison d'être* of the European project. It is too early to say if the British referendum and Brexit alone will represent a further step towards disintegration

or whether, on the contrary, they will serve as a wake-up call for citizens and leaders who have taken the peace and stability afforded by the EU for decades for granted. The risk is that governments will continue to muddle through in the EU, unwilling to contemplate major reforms for fear of fuelling more discontent or exposing the divisions between Member States.

Once the referendum and Brexit had taken place, the concern of European leaders became to limit the damage to the rest of the Union and contain a possible contagion effect to other Member States where Euroscepticism had been on the rise. Their fear was that, emboldened by Brexit, other anti-European political forces across the continent would put pressure on their governments to organise similar ballots in their countries. The British referendum proved to be a successful precedent; Brexit could be the start of a dangerous process of unravelling for the rest of the EU. This explains why French, German, Italian and other European leaders have been calling for the unity, solidarity and cohesion within the EU-27. But, a new serious challenge for the present EU is mortal pandemics of coronavirus COVID-19 which has totally destroyed the Schengen system and put the leading European institutions, mainly the European Commission and European Council, into the position of inert, inefficient, ineffective and helpless bodies in a deep shock and depression. This can become a next reason for the gradual weakening of European Integration and the Union. The EU so needs inevitably and immediately sound reforms for its salvation.

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