Post-Brexit European External Relations

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Abstract:

Almost five years after the Brexit referendum, the European Union is still on its way to an integrated Common Foreign and Security Policy. The separation of one of the biggest economies in the Union has had economic downturns and has resulted in reduced intelligence and military capacity and experience inside the EU. On the other hand, losing Britain as a critical link and partner of the US in NATO has also affected European External Relations. The article aims to analyse some key aspects of the EU's internal "balance of power" transformations in the EU's institutions and their effects on the decision-making processes related to the European external relations since Brexit.

Keywords: Brexit; European Union; External Relations; European institutions;

1. Introduction

Shortly after the European Union managed to cope with the effects of the economic and banking crisis in 2008, the so-called trade war between the United States and China, the European Union's two largest trading partners, began to develop. Due to external factors, the elections in several countries in 2016 and 2017 were a severe test of internal stability, but this did not prevent the echo of the migrant crisis and populism from leading to the event that is still one of the most raised topics in the Union - "Brexit." In the global context of multipolarity and emerging new world order, the EU needs to be active on the international political stage to balance it with the interests of all players and the values that will build this future International order.

In the 21st century, the new world order will be determined by US-China relations. In this geopolitical shift and change in the global "balance of power," the European Union could have the ability to play a crucial role in building this new world in order for it to be balanced by both the interests of all players and the values that will shape this future international order.

The global context since Brexit is perhaps the most inappropriate time for the EU to break up with one of its leading and influential members after 45 years of membership. In the face of the UK, the EU loses an indispensable partner on topics such as intelligence and defence capabilities - elements without which it would be much more challenging to stand on the international scene with players like the US and China.

As well as the changes in the centre of power in the world, UK's departure is further disrupting the political balance inside the EU's institutions. In particular, the areas where the United Kingdom plays a significant role in opposing French influence.

2. European Balance of Power

Along with the shifting of the centre of the world's balance of power to the east - after leaving the UK - the political balance in the Union's institutions will also undergo drastic changes. This will make it difficult for small countries in the EU to make coalitions and to be able to express their positions without a partner like the UK. Particularly Central and Eastern Europe, and will also strengthen Germany and France's positions on issues such as the Common Agricultural Policy, where the United Kingdom played an essential role as a counterbalance to French influence.

Perhaps the most visible and expected change (from the general public) is the gap in the EU

budget (€ 10.575 billion) that will have to be filled, most likely by net donors like Germany and France. This situation implies two noticeable changes in the power configuration within the Union itself. On the one hand, this would further heighten concerns about Germany's dominant position in political processes. It is important to mention that the UK is one of the strongest supporters of The Single Market, and leaving it would affect discussions and votes on economic issues. Although the Franco-German coalition seems obvious, it may not influence Central and Eastern European countries, given the vast difference between their vision and that of Eastern Europe and even more so of the Visegrad Four. For example, Brexit has made European politicians think about the need for more comprehensive reforms. The difficulty of implementation is that the majority of the old EU Member States claim European problems can be solved by deepening European integration. British position in this area is closer to the countries of CEE. Brexit means that in a situation of disagreement between the countries of the European Union, the grouping in the EU of two or more speeds will be deepened. This possible scenario means that Eastern European countries could be marginalized in the European debates. Opponents of deeper European integration are the biggest beneficiaries of EU funding. In a situation of emerging "multiple-speed" Europe, these countries are likely to have less influence over the processes that countries take to work more closely together.

Some of the main topics on which the United Kingdom has been active include: liberalizing world trade through broad trade agreements, working for a common European market with equal access for all, police cooperation through Europol, and promoting a well-run EU with efficient budget management; effective legislation. With the UK supporting the single market as a defendant of the deepening liberalization, while not accepting some of EU's regulatory excesses, as stated by a report by the Global Counsel: "The paradox of British Euroscepticism is that after Brexit, the United Kingdom will lose influence over EU regulation without much freedom to regulate itself" (Irwin 2015: 14). Countries such as the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, and the Baltic States, of which the United Kingdom is a

significant ally on these issues, will need to find or form new coalitions to make a contribution. This is because the countries mentioned above, plus Germany, currently have a population that has exceeded the threshold of 35% of the total population of the EU, which, according to the Treaty of Lisbon, allows decisions to be blocked. Smaller EU countries, which could be disadvantaged, will also have to find new allies inside the EU to maximize their coalitions, and several new blocs will have to be formed to have their audibility on issues on which the United Kingdom supported.

According to Hix and Haggerman (2015),the UK was on the losing side of votes more than other European states.Between 2009 and 2015, from being "on the minority" side in 2,6% (2004-2009) to 12,3% in the next period. The other "big losers" Germany and Austria were in that position 5,4% in that same time period.Also, at an institutional level, the parting of the third biggest country by population in the EU would cause shifts in both the administration and the qualified majority in the EU Council, further weakening some smaller countries' positions. The institutional impact of Brexit on the European Commission is less obvious, with the number of Commissioners decreasing from 28 to 27. Also, the voting conditions in the Council will be significantly changed, as the United Kingdom is the third-largest Member State. The Double majority from Lisbon Treaty (Article 16 TEU/ Article 238 TFEU) is now changed and the adoption of acts by the Council now requires the approval of 55% of Member States (16) (72% if the act has not been proposed by the Commission), which must represent at least 65% of the EU's population (currently approximately 328.6 million of a total 505.5 million). The implications for smaller and medium-sized Member States such as Ireland are unclear (now, the most populous Member States would collect slightly less than needed for a qualified majority, while after Brexit, they will have a majority). Britain's departure could affect the balance in the Economic Policy Debates because of its leading role in support of liberalization. After Brexit, it would be harder for Germany to form a blocking minority or balance in the legislative, economic debates. The latter would be more

difficult to oppose illiberal measures without the UK's support in opposition to France's economic agendas. (Irwin 2015: 15).

At a lower level of governance, the research found that British administrative representatives were more underrepresented compared to, for example, their French counterparts as based on calculation from the House of Commons (2013: 3):

"The UK already has 4.6% of Commission staff, significantly less than 12.5% of the EU population; France accounts for 13.0% of the EU population and 9.7% of the Commission's staff. In the growing European Parliament, the share of British administrative staff has fallen from 6.2% to 5.8% since 2010 (while France has risen with 1%); and in the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the share of British administrative staff decreased from 4.8% to 4.3% over the same period (while France decreased from 7.7% to 6.9%)."

On this basis, the House of Commons (2013: 3) express their concern about the significant underrepresentation among the staff of the EU institutions and that "Given the high level of senior Government and the deep tradition of the UK administration, leaving even a small percentage of the total number of British administrators would be a significant loss for the administrative capacity of the European institutions."

In connection with the many significant changes and unforeseen circumstances since leaving the United Kingdom, it is essential to mention that it will affect all policy areas. Policy changes will affect the whole legislative process of the EU. As Brexit is an unprecedented event for European integration, it will change the configuration of actors and preferences around the negotiating table in Brussels. These changes will affect the coalition structures inside the EU and could result in enhancing a Franco-German coalition in the numerous EU legislative and policy areas and the possibility for more common initiatives.

3. External and Security Overview

Without Britain, when the Common Foreign Policy is moving faster, the EU is losing significant governing capacity, which could have been an excellent addition for European policies on the international stage in constructing the rules and conducting negotiations on world affairs in the 21st century.

A decade after the EU finally gave Dr. Henry Kissinger a number representing the European Union to the world (2009, the Treaty of Lisbon introduces the post of "High Representative"), the EU has lost one of its most substantial ties with Washington – Great Britain. The global context since Brexit is perhaps the most inopportune time for the Union to part with one of its leading and most influential members after 45 years of membership. In line with the shift of the centre of the world's balance of power to the east – after leaving Britain – the balance in the institutions of the Union will also undergo significant changes.

According to Macdonald (2017) without Britain, the European Union would lose essential connections with the US and the rest of the British-Commonwealth countries, as well as its expertise and experience and, influence in countries like China and Russia, which are an essential part of the EU's foreign relations. Macdonald (2017) also states that Britain's part of the budget for aid in Africa plays an important role and its departure from the EU is of growing concern. In addition to that, without Britain, there is a possibility that France would try to push its interest regarding Western Africa, but at the same time, that would be a risky move because of the increasing Chinese interest in the region, which could result in the future relations between Germany and China. As Brown (2020: 29) argues, while Brexit does not fundamentally disrupt the EU–China relationship, it will lower the capacity of the EU to respond to China's rise and result in a forming new constellation of Member State preferences and lower resources.

Brexit would leave the EU with only one nuclear power – France, which would result in a change in the US approach to the EU in NATO and vice versa – to rethink the EU's participation in the Atlantic Alliance. France will also remain the only country in the European Union to be a member of the UN Security Council – something that will allow Paris to have a higher position and a stronger voice on security and defence issues of the Community. Another essential point of view,

as stated by Konstantopoulos and Nomikos (2017: 104), is that no EU country can compare its national intelligence capacity to that of Britain, even Germany, and France, especially when talking about global operations and reach- again, this would significantly delay the construction of such an integrated European system, but on the other hand, perhaps, it would encourage the Community to start debates on the subject more quickly and effectively if it realizes the growing need for its security system. Even though Olterman (2016: 2) sees opportunities for the EU, he also points the importance of the resources and effectiveness of Britain's intelligence apparatus.

Perhaps one of the most significant post-Brexit changes to EU governance in the field of defence and security is the launch by the EU of four key initiatives: just a year after the proposed made by France and Germany, the European Commission and Italy, as well as the Bratislava Summit in September 2016 and the 2016 European Council (AFCO committee, 2018). The EU's military governance (Military Planning and Conduct Capability) was set up in the summer of 2017, allowing groups of Member States to take European defence to the next level and propose more advanced projects shortly after Britain announced its departure from the EU. The European Defence Fund was launched by the European Commission (2017) to allocate funds (EUR 600 million per year until 2020 and EUR 1.5 billion after that) for technological innovation, research in the field of defence. Finally, a Coordinated Annual Defence Review (CARD) was launched to monitor national defence spending, identify opportunities for pooling resources, and provide joint capabilities. On the other hand, after Brexit, 80% of NATO defence spending will go to non-EU countries. (Allison 2018) Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) - "The Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty" (Spending for defence is 1.2% of EU GDP on average (at least 2% required for alliance members) Also, the United States fears that after leaving Britain, Germany would be more sympathetic to Russia as it will go after its own energy needs (Haynes 2018).

Some of the more apparent capabilities that the European Union loses after Brexit is significant armed forces and air forces along with transport and refuelling capability, which, as stated by Zyla(2019: 88), are much needed and in deficit in the Common Security and Defence Policy area of the EU. He also points out the human recourses in intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities at the same time when the UK has strengthened its cyber response capacity, which as Zyla (2019: 88) says: "have been further boosted by the close cooperation between the British GCHQ and its American counterpart, the NSA." This comes at a time when on the one hand, France remains the only country with similar intelligence capabilities but, more importantly, at a time when other countries are targeting the EU's cyberspace and media at a never seen before rate.

A House of Commons report in 2016 points that the UK's total share in EU military operations made up 14.82% of shared costs and 16% of the CFSP that funds civilian missions. This poses a significant disruption in the European external relations because, due to the withdrawal of the UK, the EU has lost about one-sixth of its combined GDP. This matters because the EU's internal market, rivalled only by the US and China pre-Brexit, operates as a great force of attraction to third countries. The 'carrot' through which the EU exercises its conditionality policies in accession, association, and trade agreements and its development and sanctions policy.

On the one hand, despite the loss of "Hard Power," which is undoubtedly a crucial part of the European continent's security, the other significant loss for the EU is The UKs "Soft Power" capabilities. Although 17 of EU member states are in the top 30 Soft Power – Britain has ranked top two for five years and was at the top once. This means that the EU will lose a crucial part of its soft power capacity, which is significant in the 21 century.On the other hand, the UK has been unhappy to integrate further or even deploy its military or diplomacy capabilities in the EU's foreign missions, as it always felt that this could hurt their own sovereignty. However, after Brexit, the UK has not hesitated to express its willingness to contribute to the EU's CFSP, but the EU has yet to build up such possibility. At the same time, the dilemma "enlargement or deepening" will also suffer new dimensions, as with the displacement of the center of opinion and

forces in the European Union, the majority in the issues of the topic will change. On the one hand, leaving the United Kingdom will reduce the number of countries with centuries-old European historical, political, and social traditions. The impact would be significant if the six countries of the Western Balkans are also involved in the Community, which will significantly hamper the future deepening of European integration and will further increase the heterogeneity of opinions and views on the future development of the Union. This is also important because of the crucial part that the policies for enlargement of the EU take in the overall external relations.

As Rickets (2018: 5) explains, the British have made statements for EU-GB cooperation in the document "Consultation and Cooperation on External Security," which expresses the need for establishing a further partnership for achieving their global aims. Although the British proposals aim for more pragmatism over ideology, there is not much promise except for security projects like Galileo, the European contribution to the Global Navigation Satellite System, developed to reduce the European dependency on the US's GPS (Zyla 2020: 89). On the other hand, there are still debates on how the cooperation between UK and EU will form. However, participation in the European Defence Agency, European Intervention Initiative (E2I), and Europol would be must-to-have debates if both EU and UK want to maintain reasonable defence and intelligence capabilities.

Another key point, further expressed by Biscop (2016: 16), is that the UK's position of DSACEUR under the Berlin Plus Agreement and that "Some have suggested that an additional DSACEUR post be created for this eventuality or that the post now is rotated between France and Germany as members of EU and NATO." Although NATO remains the platform where the UK conducts its multilateral defence policy Laine and Nouwens (2017: viii) complement that "it is likely that the UK will try to become the leading European power within NATO." Whether France and Germany will let the UK acquire this role will remain to be seen. In short, the UK will likely enhance its participation in NATO to try to act as a leader

on international security and defence policy and treat its strong commitment to NATO as a critical source of international legitimacy and influence. In addition, Xavier (2018: 115) explains that Brexit could also result in a more favourable environment for further integrating the CSDP as the absence of a big country that is usually opposing further military architectures will make the other member-states take votes quickly.

In conclusion, the UK leaving has led to positive and negative trends in the future integration of the European Union. On the one hand, European leaders, finally, felt the increasing need for comprehensive reforms (10 years after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty), both for the functioning and the nature and future of the EU. On the other hand, just at a time when the World Balance of Powers undergoes significant changes, and the EU has the opportunity to participate in the process of building this new world order in which we will develop in the future, the Union makes a step back in its way to uniting the continent. At a time when, from Ukraine, through the Middle East to North and Central Africa, many fierce military conflicts and humanitarian crises, the European Union is losing an ally, which has considerable experience and history with these regions with exceptional diplomatic and intelligence capabilities. In decades, when the level of interconnection, unprecedented so far, requires tackling global problems such as global warming and economic stability, the EU loses as an ally the sixth-largest economy globally with links across the globe (The British Commonwealth). In the century, which will be outlined mostly from the relations between China-US and Russia, the EU could play a role in a balancer in these relations by fighting for democracy and equality. If it can consolidate its management to stand on the negotiating table together with the "great powers," the EU loses ally who has historically been, both in war and in alliance with these superpowers.

Even now, the Common Foreign Policy is to walk at a rapid pace without the UK; the EU is losing the significant managerial capacity that would be an excellent plus for European policy on the international scene in defining the rules and negotiations on the identification of world cases in the 21st century.The European Union and Britain will undoubtedly

keep their close relationship in the security area, but until they find a structural way for that, the EU will be in great need of new closer allies in its way of becoming a strategically autonomous global actor.

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