

BREXIT IMPLOSION: WILL UK SURVIVE THE UNITY OF KINGDOM?

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Abstract

The UK decided to leave European Union. In fact, it had triggered the Article 50 in 2017, which acts as the exit button for any EU member if it wants to leave the Union. So far, it has been an unprecedented move by the UK as no country has ever left the EU. The study is focused on the phenomenon of Brexit and the aftershocks it is likely to cause in times to come. The purpose of this research is to analyse the future scenario that could take shape in the aftermath of the British referendum of 2016, both for the EU and the likely future of the UK itself. Brexit is an ongoing phenomenon. I shall use an empirical method while using the data collected from the various sources such as newspapers, the magazines, journals and the research articles. Besides, the online sources including the government sources will also be used. The method of this research is qualitative. Although I have written this research in the light of the reference used and the nature of this work is predictive. With the lens of realist perspective, this article concludes that the future of the EU is bleak if Brexit happens, even bleaker for the UK itself regarding the integration of the country.

Introduction

The UK was never a natural part of the original European integration plan. The British PM Churchill, while he was championing European integration cause, did not 'envision' his country being its part. And when European Economic Community (EEC), which is the precursor of what is now the European Union (EU) was forming, the United Kingdom (UK) declined to be part of it. Even when the UK, perceiving the changing economic and political environment, found it prudent to apply to EEC membership in 1960s, it was rejected twice.¹ The French President De Gaulle who vetoed

¹ Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger, "Introduction Brexit and Beyond," in the *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London: UCL Press, 2018), 1-21.

British membership twice had predicted that Britain was not sincerely committed to European integration and that its sole interest was economic. Britain had always been skeptical of deeper political integration.² However, Brexit is both interesting and exemplary phenomena in its own right. It would attract the attention of researchers and for those too, who idealise the Western politics as something beyond criticism; it is exemplary for the EU primarily, and for all such international organisations to observe Brexit with a purpose to analyse that what and where it went wrong.

It is ironic that apparently a simple miscalculation of British PM David Cameron, himself a Europhile, culminated in the most undesirable outcome for the person who was its prime mover and which cost him no less than his prime minister-ship the following day of Brexit.³

Background

Following the Second World War, six European countries formed an institution named European Coals and Steel Company, in order to rule out possibilities of future wars. Britain chose to stay out. During 1955-57, the same six countries formed a union, European Economic Community (EEC) that we can call a precursor to European Union.⁴

In the early 1960s, Britain, considering the economic progress of these countries, tried to join them. But the French leader Charles De Gaul, vetoed twice against its bid in 1961 and 1967.⁵ In 1973, however, Britain became the member of the European Economic Community (EEC). With the change of the leadership in UK, it held its first referendum on Brexit in 1975 in which 67% voted to remain. In 1983, the Labour party won the election on the promise of withdrawal from the Union. Thatcher also turned Eurosceptic following the passage of the Single European Act. For she was against deeper integration.

² Grainne de Burca, "How British was the Brexit Vote?" in the *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London: UCL Press, 2018), 46-53.

³ Andrew Glencross, "Cameron's European Legacy: How Brexit demonstrates the flawed politics of simple solutions," in the *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London: UCL Press, 2018), 22-27.

⁴ Armin Cuyvers, "The Road to European Integration," in the *East African Community Law*, ed. Emmanuel Ugirashebuja et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017) 22-42.

⁵ Martill and Staiger, "Introduction: Brexit and beyond," 04.

The Labour governments of Tony Blair and later that of Gordon Brown were, however, Euro-friendly and rather committed to the continued partnership between Britain and the EU. But then the Conservative party formed the government resulting in a hung parliament following British General Elections of 2010 that coincided with the economic crisis spread across the EU countries especially in Greece, Spain and Italy.

Why the Government held referendum in 2016?

The historical overview makes it clear now that the Britain was never a natural partner of the EU. There have been unending rifts in the past decades among the British Conservative Party's ranks over the issue of European integration. The question arises why Cameron-led Conservative government took this burden of history upon itself to hold this referendum in 2016. There are several answers: first and foremost is that it was the part of Cameron-led kitchen cabinet to appease the Eurosceptic wing of his party.⁶ There was ever more growing Euroscepticism among the conservative ranks. Secondly, the conservatives had to protect its electorates from the alluring of another emerging rival party UKIP with ultra-Euroscepticism under the leadership of Nigel Farage. Thirdly, the EU downfall since 2008, resulting in heavy bailouts to the failed economies like Greece, hastened the process of Brexit.⁷

Although Cameron, as a Remainer, (the Britishers who want to stay with the EU) canvassed hard to maintain a status-quo and convinced the voters to vote against the Brexit, the results of the referendum came against his wishes. The narrow victory of the Brexiters eventually coincided with his resignation.⁸

Theresa May succeeded Cameron as the Prime Minister following an in-house change in the Commons. Though, herself a Remainer too, she honoured the majority voters by saying that she would 'make a success of

⁶ Sara B. Hobolt, "The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent," *Journal of European Policy* 23, (2016): 1259-1277.

⁷ Daniel Kenealy, "How did we get here? A Brief History of Britain membership of EU," University of Edinburgh, accessed May 24, 2016, <https://www.europeanfutures.ed.ac.uk/article-3278>.

⁸ "David Cameron: leaving EU would be act of self-harm," *the Guardian*, April 05, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/05/david-cameron-leaving-european-union-would-be-act-of-self-harm>.

Brexit'.⁹In a shocking move, however, she retracted from her earlier stance of not holding Elections before 2020, by calling snap polls to be held on June 8, 2017. Her hope of securing even a greater majority in the wake of Brexit was disillusioned when the election resulted in a hung parliament, with even slimmer Conservative majority.¹⁰

Aims/Objectives of the Study

This article is focused on examining the effects, the process of Brexit is likely to cast on the European Union in the shorter and longer terms. The aim also includes to analyze the factors behind this seemingly smooth functioning of this supra-national alliance of the elitist block of European countries whose ultimate aim has been to unite Europe into some sort of federalism. The study also touches the areas which could hamper the effectiveness of EU in the aftermath of this Brexit phenomenon. On one side, the study discusses the post-Brexit Britain and the future it might hold in the wake of contrasting results in other part of the United Kingdom such as Scotland, Northern Ireland and the territory of Gibraltar (already contested between UK and Spain); while on the other side, it will throw light on the likely future of EU in the days following Brexit.

The aftershocks that Brexit will bring about within the UK, for instance, are unavoidable, the history is witness that fact that the working relationship between Scotland and England has been far from ideal. After Brexit, the hard borders between Northern Ireland and the other EU countries and in particular the exchange of goods and people between Republic of Ireland are likely to cause further complications. Similarly, the Brexit scenario will cast its shadows on Gibraltar too.

The Brexit unfolding scenario in the House of Commons on the EU-27 could unleash a debate in the other EU countries regarding the separation with the European Union.

⁹ Anushka Asthana, Rowena Mason and Jessica Elgot, "Theresa May to become new PM after Tory rival Leadsom withdraws," the Guardian, July 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/11/cameron-announces-he-will-step-down-after-pmqs-on-wednesday>

¹⁰ Anushka Asthana and Peter Walker, "Theresa May calls for general elections to secure Brexit mandate," the Guardian, April 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/18/theresa-may-calls-for-general-election-in-bid-to-secure-brexit-mandate>.

The Brexit effects will cast its shadow over the future of the EU, but will the unity of the Kingdom itself survive in the aftermath of populist wave within UK?

Literature Review

Other researches on Brexit have also highlighted the identical issues. For instance, the research conducted by the Nat Cen Social Research has published a report identifying the areas which provoked the voters to pick the YES card on the fateful day of Referendum. The Remain campaigners were largely focusing on the possible economic fallouts in the case of British departure from the EU's single market. But the two issues simply carried the day and eventually dwarfed the economic concerns. The issues included migration and the independence from the European Union in the domestic affairs of the island nation.¹¹

Another research paper, produced by Ben Rosamond who is from the University of Copenhagen, also seeks to make a case in advancing the theory of disintegration of the EU following Brexit. It also argues that it is a reversal of globalization process. The paper even presents a bleaker picture than the research I have made in this regard.¹² The Economist (March 2019) too refers the Brexit as the reversal of globalization.¹³

Another report brings about somewhat identical scenarios in the aftermath of the Brexit. It highlights the diminishing cohesion among the EU countries in near future, while projecting a scenario that Brexit is only the starting point and it will be triggering a chain reaction leading to somewhat similar movements like Brexit, eventually culminating in the disintegration of the European Union. It also argues that many countries would be trying to elicit excessive concessions and favours from the weakening EU, and in either case of getting the concessions or not, it will be ultimately sabotaging the institutional structure of the EU. Moreover, the countries like Italy and Greece which have already started to replace EU with their national

¹¹ John Curtice, "Voters want UK to stay in the EU single market but be able to control immigration," Natcen Social Research (London, 2016), <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2016/november/voters-want-uk-to-stay-in-the-eu-single-market-but-be-able-to-control-immigration/>.

¹² Ben Rosamond, "Brexit and the problem of European Disintegration," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 12, (October 2016): 864-71.

¹³ The Economist, (March 23- April 1st): 53.

currencies show an improved economic performance of those dwindling economies.¹⁴

Not only that Brexit has the tendency to cause rupture in the remaining EU-27 in the foreseeable future, but also its negative energy could implode the UK herself. As the Scottish First Minister signaled that Brexit could mean the disintegration of United Kingdom.¹⁵

The literature has described in detail about the Brexit effects, but mainly in a scattered way. This research is focused at filling this gap in literature and bringing about a coherent work on the repercussions of UK's decision whose rippling effects could be more damaging for the UK itself, political rather than economic sense, than the EU at large.

Theoretical Framework

The European Union was formed on the basis of Liberal Institutionalism, which meant integration through regional organizations. That cooperation lasted for a few decades and its reversal has been triggered by the Britain in the form of Brexit.

Brexit phenomenon has clearly indicated the rise of populism. The state (Britain) is more concerned about its security and national interests in the face of rising trends of immigration and increased intrusion of the EU in the domestic affairs of the country. More precisely, if we analyse the entire situation while putting on the lenses of the theories of international relations, we have realize that neo-Realism of Kenneth Waltz is playing its part in the phenomenon of Brexit. So, I shall apply neo-Realist theory on this situation as it is preoccupied with the same concerns like security and the national interests.

On June 23, 2016, the people of the United Kingdom, in a historic referendum on the question of whether to remain or leave the European Union, decided to leave the 43 years of union. 'Yes' voters were principally motivated by the anti-establishment and anti-immigration sentiments, while the predominant concern for the 'No' voters was the economic

¹⁴ Wim Boonstra et al. "Four scenarios for Europe- scenario-3: European disintegration," Robobank, (Utrecht 2017), https://economics.rabobank.com/globalassets/documents/2017/februari/the_uncertain_future_of_european_integration-201702-totaal.pdf.

¹⁵ Hobolt, "The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent," 1259.

stability.¹⁶ The majority of 51.9 % decided in the favour of Brexit. The voter turn-out was 71.8%. England and Wales voted for Brexit by 53.4% and 52.5% respectively.

But Scotland and Northern Ireland reflected a different image by voting against Brexit by 62% and Northern Ireland with the majority of 55.8% decided in favour of Remain,¹⁷ while a 96% majority in Gibraltar disapproved of Brexit, a verdict that is in stark contrast with mainstream UK politics, reflecting dividing preferences within the Kingdom. The varying results across the UK has been a cause of concern for the future of the union itself ever since the Brexit results began to pour in.

Although British voters decided to leave the EU, it could materialize only if Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty is invoked by a member state. Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon provides with any member state to unilaterally leave the Union. Once it is erupted, there is no option. The British Prime Minister Theresa May had triggered the said article on March 29, 2017, which means Britain would leave the EU by April 2019.¹⁸

The formal withdrawal process starts with a notification from a member state expressing its desire to withdraw from the Union. The EU and the seceding state then have two years' deadline to agree upon the withdrawal agreement, unless agreed upon otherwise.¹⁹

The Economic Scenario

Ironically the future of both EU and the UK is uncertain in the face of Brexit. But it seems that the economy of Britain is going to suffer as a result of this phenomenon. As Britain will be out of the EU by 2019 yet banks must plan a few years ahead as it is the country's biggest single export. Financial services account for an annual trade surplus of \$67bn. As JP Morgan Chase,

¹⁶ Hobolt, "The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent," 1261-62.

¹⁷ Alex Hunt and Brian Wheeler, " Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU," BBC News, April 08, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>.

¹⁸ Michael Wilkinson and Robert Midgley, "What is Article 50?" March 31, 2017, Daily Telegraph.

¹⁹ Lehte Roots, "Impact of the Article 50 of the EU on migration of the EU workers in case of Brexit," in the Brexit: History, Reasoning and Perspectives, ed. David Ramiro Troitino, Tanil Karikmae and Archil Chochia (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 249-264, https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=wwhNDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

a multinational banking and financial services holding company warned that Brexit might result into 4000 job losses while a hard Brexit could be even more nightmarish as the city UK, the UK based financial services industry, holds that it could lead to 75000 job losses.²⁰

Despite the gloomiest of the predictions, however the British economy has managed to stay afloat since the last two years, with the foreign investment continuously pouring in, and with unemployment decreasing. Yet Brexit effect, in the coming days and perhaps years, will continue to jolt the economy. For instance, in Feb 2019, Honda shut its factory in Wiltshire; Nissan had announced shifting its manufacturing in Japan earlier that month. It simply means thousands of job cuts. Inward investment into UK car industry fell by half last year.²¹

Soft Brexit will allow EU and UK to trade freely and will protect the EU citizens' rights to remain in UK. It will allow the EU banking and financial sectors to work in UK and vice versa. But things are likely to turn dramatically if Britain follows a hard Brexit, which means the UK will treat EU citizen as foreign people. It will also mean that the EU members will no longer be able to work and move freely in Britain. Besides, there will be no free healthcare benefits for the EU members in Britain.²²

No Cherry-picking!

The historic decision, the British nation has taken and the path the British leaders have chosen is definitely a hard road ahead. By leaving the EU, the UK will shed the shackles of the Union while taking back control of immigration and will be under no obligation to pay into the EU budget and would also be free of the jurisdiction of the foreign courts.

But the hard Brexit will come with a price to pay, none other than by the Britons themselves. It will take Britain out of the single market, which means that there will be no more free trade between Britain and the EU. Theresa May has in fact been caught in a dilemma. On one side she has been desirous of leaving the single market while on the other pushing for the most favourable and freest possible trade deal with the EU. Britain has also decided to leave EU's custom union.

²⁰ "From Bing Bang to Brexit," the Economist, October 29, 2016, 52-53.

²¹ "Call my bluff," the Economist, February 23, 2019, 53.

²² "Fifty-fifty Nation," the Economist, November 19, 2016, 49.

But the EU leaders are in no mood to console Britain in any way that would serve the interests of the latter at the expense of the former. In a nutshell, the EU leadership does not seem to allow its British counterpart any cherry-picking.²³

Subsequently, as it seems, she has lost on both fronts: she has not been able to convince the EU leaders for a good enough Brexit Deal, nor has she gathered the support of the subsequent deal at home within the House she leads.

Resurgence of Nationalism

Although there was no direct question of immigration in referendum, there is a general perception that the majority of the people have voted for Brexit because of curbing the migration phenomenon. This can be corroborated by historical reference: for instance, in 1995, when net migration was still below 100000, two-thirds of the English people wanted it to cut. A hard Brexit would be resulting in tougher conditions for the Conservative government. Migration imbalance between Britain and the European Union will continue to pose challenges in times to come. Besides the restrictions of movement of the EU's unskilled workers to Britain, there will be the problems faced by the EU students coming to the universities in the UK. Obviously, it will also affect badly the business of the British universities.

Besides, those Britons who hope increased wages following the restriction on the EU citizen to come UK for livelihood, will be disillusioned. For this will come at the expense of an overall slow economy after Britain leaving the single market of the EU.

Furthermore, this slow migration will be causing a social dilemma and hitting public finances. For instance, the number of old age people in Britain is higher than any other EU country. While, the number of working age is decreasing. These phenomena are likely to lead the government to levy more taxes on the healthcare and pensions. With the closing of borders following Brexit, this migration imbalance is likely to snowball in future.²⁴

²³ "A Hard Road," the Economist, January 21, 2017, 08.

²⁴ "Keep Out," the Economist, February 25, 2017, 43,44.

If we see in retrospect in Nov 2018, PM May and the 27 EU leaders agreed on a 585-page withdrawal agreement which would form the basis of a binding treaty containing three major issues:

- (i) Citizens' rights;
- (ii) Divorce bill; and,
- (iii) Irish border.

The deal would stipulate the rights of some 3 million EU citizens in UK and over one million UK nationals in EU countries to stay and continue their activities, e.g. work and education etc. Secondly, the UK would have to pay 39 billion pounds as a divorce bill or its spending commitments with the EU.²⁵

Third and the most critical of the issues was the Irish border. The earlier EU position, which incurred May's indignance and subsequently led to EU's repositioning, was that the Northern Ireland should continue under single market and customs union. Eventually, a criterion was agreed upon, that is regarded as Irish Backstop. The Irish Backstop means that whole of the UK would remain in the EU customs union, while Northern Ireland would have to follow single market rules.²⁶

However, this hard-earned deal which took her to finalise two years subsequently caused her the most embarrassing moments in her life when she put it before her House for vote. The Brexit Deal suffered the heaviest parliamentary defeat by any prime minister of the democratic era. Even her MPs turned against her. The bill was voted down by 432 to 202, the margin of 230 votes.²⁷

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/25/may-brexite-deal-explained-eu-withdrawal-agreement-trade-backstop-citizens-rights>.

²⁶ Daniel Boffey and Jennifer Rankin, "Brexit Deal explained: backstops, trade and citizens' rights," the Guardian, November 25, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/25/may-brexite-deal-explained-eu-withdrawal-agreement-trade-backstop-citizens-rights>.

²⁷ Heather Stewart and Daniel Boffey, "Theresa May suffers historic defeat in vote as Tories turn against her," the Guardian, January 16, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jan/15/theresa-may-suffers-historic-defeat-as-tories-turn-against-her>.

Second time her deal was defeated again in March, with the margin of 149.²⁸ If that was not enough, May put her deal for the third time with the same effect: the Brexit deal was rejected for the third time, with the margin of 58 votes.²⁹

Euroscepticism in other EU countries

Brexit and many other crises, the EU has been facing today, renders its credibility into considerable question. Until 1990s there had been a kind of 'permissive consensus' among the people on European project. This came to change following the rise of anti-European parties in 1999 European Parliament elections. Still the relative calm persisted as long as the centre-left and centre-right parties were at the helm. Things, however, drastically changed in 2010s. The Eurozone crisis with inevitable increase in dominance and intrusion of the creditors' state began to reflect in public distrust. This issue, coupled with the immigration crisis proved formidable enough for resurgence of Euro-sceptic parties.³⁰

The contagion of Brexit seems to have spread across Europe where we find similar trends and divisions between those who champion the cause of globalization and the ones who, feeling left behind, want to take back control of border just like UK did in its 2016 Referendum.³¹ Many member countries, which have faced a sudden rise of far-right political leadership, view the increased EU role at the expense of national sovereignty with utmost concern. The Brexit has further stirred upheaval in other EU countries with nationalistic agendas with Euroscepticism taking the centre-stage. This trend, although not entirely new, has been in ascendance in response to EU's economic stagnation and ruthless austerity measures. In simple words, people belonging to these countries have been seething resentments that they have a little say in the affairs which affect them on

²⁸ "Brexit: MPs reject Theresa May's deal for a second time," BBC News, March 13, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-47547887>.

²⁹ Jeb Kirby, "British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit agreement fails for a third time," Vox, March 29, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/3/29/18285930/brexit-deal-defeated-parliament-theresa-may-third-time>.

³⁰ Neill Nugent, "Brexit: yet another crisis for the EU," in the *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London: UCL Press, 2018), 54-62.

³¹ Hobolt, "The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent," 1271-72.

day-to-day basis, and that they are being marginalized at the hands of few 'gentlemen' sitting in Brussels.³²

In the consequences of these crises, there has been a surge of Eurosceptic parties as 2015/16 polls suggested that such parties had popular support not only in UK, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria, Hungary and Greece³³ but also in Germany, Italy, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Spain. These are the major countries with successful populist leadership rise in recent years. Furthermore, report, entitled 'EU prospects threatened by risk of further referendums' found the possibilities of more referendums in the following countries like Germany, France, Netherlands, Sweden and Italy. The recent victory of the right-wing Alternative for Germany party in 2016 is an indicator of the changing trends in Germany. The French leader, Marine le Pen who obtained 33.9% vote in Presidential elections had also launched an election campaign based on Euroscepticism with the promise of holding referendum on the EU if her party formed the government.³⁴

Furthermore, the Capital Economics report has identified two major countries which could leave following Brexit. It said that the chain reaction has sparked a debate since Brexit in other countries in general and Netherlands and Italy in particular where referendums can be held any time sooner. Similarly, the growing Eurosceptic trend might enable the far-right Freedom Party which was likely to win, to pose a serious challenge against the interests of the EU.³⁵

Future of EU post Brexit

The future of the EU after Brexit is bleak if not entirely uncertain. The Brexit remains as one of many question-marks on the EU's

³² Kristin Archick, "The European Union: current challenges and future prospects," Congressional Research Service (September 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21372.pdf>.

³³ Nugent, "Brexit: yet another crisis for the EU," 58.

³⁴ Gregor Aisch et al. "How France Voted," New York Times, May 07, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/07/world/europe/france-election-results-maps.html>.

³⁵ Rebecca Flood, "Revealed: Which Countries could be next to leave EU?", the Express, October 02, 2016, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/716421/EU-referendum-Brexit-leave-vote-country-Merkel-superstate-Italy>.

governance³⁶ and that will definitely cast its shadows on the future of EU-27. Only, it is to be seen how far its implications will lead and affect the other states ambivalent towards the EU and its integrational bent. The Union has been criticized by the Eurosceptic leaders for having lack of democracy. From Brexit onwards, 'the narrative will be one of disintegration not integration'. For many other policymakers sitting in Rome, Paris and Warsaw, the Brexit factor has increased the fears of German hegemony over the EU.³⁷ Then, another criticism, even more formidable, arises that EU has reduced the scope of legislation of the national governments. Besides, the EU has been criticized for its remoteness regarding the basic problems of the people at large. For instance, the EU's fiscal rules have made life troublesome for the people. It has taken measures to reduce the social security measures in the name of structural reforms. It has added misery to people's life. These so-called structural reforms and the ensuing austerity measures are stifling people economically and making them to compare and contrast the EU with their national governments, concluding that their respective national governments are generally less remote in appreciating their indigenous concerns.³⁸

Future of Britain post Brexit

Brexit will definitely affect the UK in one way or the other. For, there has emerged a clear-cut clash of priorities between Britain and its political units, i.e. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar. One certain fallout from Brexit is that it has renewed the debate of Scottish independence from the UK. It is not long ago since Scotland had had such referendum on September 18, 2014, in which a slim majority of NO voters enabled the UK to escape the possibility of the breakup of 304 years-long marriage between Scotland and England that made the latter the 'Great Britain' since 1707.³⁹

³⁶ Simon Bulmer and Lucia Quaglia, "The Politics and Economics of Brexit," *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (May 2018): 1096.

³⁷ Charles Grant, "The Impact of Brexit on the EU," Centre for European Reform, last modified June 24, 2016, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/impact-brexit-eu>.

³⁸ Paul De Grauwe, "What Future for the EU after Brexit?" CEPS, last modified October 06, 2016, <https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/IEForum520161.pdf>

³⁹ "Articles of Union," <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/heritage/articlesofunion.pdf>.

If British majority vote takes these three units away from the EU, despite the fact that all three voted in favour of the EU, it would further create a sense of alienation between UK government and its autonomous parts. In fact, it is worth-noting that Scotland is more eager to stay with the EU than with the UK, according to the results of two referenda of 2014 on Scottish Independence and then in 2016 on the Brexit issue.⁴⁰

Scotland and Brexit

Scotland has already expressed its resentment, with Nicola Sturgeon demanding another referendum to decide the fate of her country without the tutelage of the so-called 'United' Kingdom. Amidst the Brexit debate, in March 2017, the Scottish government asked its parliament for the authorization of another referendum from the UK government. Although, the request was deferred for the time being, it reflects the future political course of Scotland visa-vis UK.⁴¹

The 1707 Treaty of Union dissolved the Scottish Parliament and subsequently melted it into a centralized parliament (in London). Throughout 20th century, there had been clamours for greater autonomy and it was only in 1998 that Scottish Parliament was restored. Since then pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) has been the dominant party. It became the largest party by 2007 and led a majority government in 2011. In 2014, a referendum on Scottish independence took place in which 44.7 per cent Scots had favoured independence from the Union.⁴²

The recent referendum of Scotland must be afresh in Scottish memories. Though it resulted in a slight majority of those who wanted to remain with the UK, there was a considerable percentage of people who had expressed for independence. But the unpopular decision of Brexit might turn out to be the game changer in the recent history of the Great Britain. For, if another referendum takes place in Scotland, it is generally believed that Scottish people will be preferring the EU to the United Kingdom. The case

⁴⁰ Michael KEATING, "The Impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union on Scotland, Wales and Gibraltar," Directorate General for Internal Policies, last modified September 2017, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/583118/IPOL_IDA%282017%29583118_EN.pdf.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Amanda Sloat, "Divided Kingdom: How Brexit is remaking the UK's constitutional order," the Brookings Institution (October 2018), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FP_20181005_divided_kingdom.pdf.

of Brexit too represents a dividing trend between Brits and Scots. A clear majority in Scotland voted against Brexit. In Scottish Parliament too, the clear majority seemed to favour the Remain as 57 of 59 MPs were opposed to Brexit. The ground reality regarding Scottish view with respect to the question of whether sticking with the EU seems clearly in contrast with the Brexit results predominantly determined by the people of England. These conflicting priorities naturally pave the way for another Scottish referendum any time soon.⁴³

Northern Ireland and Gibraltar in the Brexit Scenario

Ireland was divided in 1921 between the Republic of Ireland and 6 counties which formed the part of the Union. The region had had a troubled history. The April 1998 Good Friday Agreement however restored peace, settling the Northern Ireland issue between British and Irish governments that it would remain part of the Union unless there is the consent of a majority of the people in the Northern Ireland for otherwise. The Brexit has largely destabilised that political balance, or understanding between the two governments, bringing back to life the problems that existed in the pre-Good Friday Agreement era. With Sin Fein beginning to canvass for a 'border poll' to determine whether there is prospect of joining with the Republic of Ireland'.⁴⁴

The jolting effects of Brexit were equally felt in Northern Ireland where a clear majority had voted for the status-quo with regard to UK's ties with the EU. But to the dismay of those who favoured to stick to the EU, it turned out that their vote had no 'say' in the context of British nationalism. Even the UK Supreme Court stated categorically that the consent of the Assembly of the Northern Ireland would not be required for the UK government's decision to withdraw from the EU.⁴⁵ An eminent researcher presents a bleakest scenario in the following words: 'Anything that disrupts

⁴³ Sean Swan, "Scottish Nationalism, Brexit and the Case for indyref2," accessed December 2017, <https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2017/Scottish%20Nationalism%2C%20Brexit%20and%20the%20Case%20for%20Indyref2.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Sloat, "Divided Kingdom: How Brexit is remaking the UK's constitutional order."

⁴⁵ Jonathan Tonge, "Impact and Consequences of Brexit for Northern Ireland," European Parliament Briefing, accessed in December 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/583116/IPOL_BRI\(2017\)583116_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/583116/IPOL_BRI(2017)583116_EN.pdf).

Northern Ireland's delicate political status quo, meanwhile, could yet prove the cue for a resurgence of dissident paramilitary activity'.⁴⁶

Similarly, British overriding majority to leave the EU could off the people of the Northern Ireland who clearly expressed their desire to continue the partnership with the EU.

Gibraltar is another case that indicates a more complicated picture of Brexit, suggesting that things are beginning to go out of control and that liberal institutionalism is gradually falling apart. On the Brexit vote, Gibraltar, too, favoured for Remain with the majority of 96% votes, more than any other part of the UK and considering its geographical position, the decision was anything but logical. The dominating concern that led Gibraltar to vote for Remain was the border issue. The cross-border movement of workers would be not as smooth once Brexit materialised. For, after Brexit, it will have to erect border with Spain. This could have economic implications and could cause security concerns for Gibraltar. Furthermore, free movement of labour is the most urgent concern in Gibraltar, which depends a daily influx of workers across border with Spain. In the wake of Brexit, it seems likely that Spanish claims over Gibraltar would be renewed.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The EU has been facing many challenges since the debacle of Lehman Brothers in 2008; indeed, Euroscepticism is one of those, which has further complicated the European project. EU migration policy since 2015, in the wake of increased migration phenomenon from Syria and other war-torn countries seeking asylum into EU countries, has coincided with the resurgence of Eurosceptic parties. If Brexit remains a smooth process, it will serve as a model for other states whose Eurosceptic parties will tend to push harder in their stances.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ David Blagden, "Britain and the world after Brexit," *International Politics* 54 (Febrary 2017) 1-25.

⁴⁷ Jackie Kemp, "Three Reasons why Brexit means the break up of the UK," the Huffington Post, April 12, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jackie-kemp/brexit-scottish-referendum_b_15963016.html.

⁴⁸ Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "Putting Brexit into Perspective: the effect of the Eurozone and migration crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European states," *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (May 2018): 1206-12.

Brexit will cast its long shadows on the future of UK too. Probably, more on its politics than its economy. Although experts had predicted economic chaos would result following Brexit, the economy has performed well if we observe the official records of the last three months of 2016. GDP, which grew 0.7% from 0.6%, is a clear indication that British economy has withstood the test of its decision to leave EU. The depreciation of the pound has actually helped the exporters. Furthermore, the prediction of the experts of a gloomy scenario following Brexit was falsified by the Bank of England which decreased the interest rates from 0.5% to 0.25% immediately after the referendum.⁴⁹

However, if there is one lesson to be learnt from Brexit is that economic sustainability does not necessarily and effectively translate into political stability. A peaceful revolution has been knocking at the doors of the British Parliament since long. It is all but clear as a daylight that Scottish demand for freedom from the British Union would become more pressing in the face of Brexit. According to Nicola Sturgeon, it was 'democratically unacceptable' for Scotland to be forced into leaving the EU as 62 per cent of those in Scotland had voted to remain.⁵⁰

Moreover, the present resentment for the future uncertainty in Northern Ireland too is no less than that exists Scotland. For instance, in May 2018 in Northern Ireland, a survey on Brexit resulted in 69% support for Remain, which is 13% increase in the original Brexit referendum. Besides, Brexit has also increased Catholic support for Irish unification.⁵¹ In addition, Brexit will pose challenge to the future of Gibraltar as an economic centre.⁵² The trace of history, entail that Scottish have always been a distinct people and never took pride being identified with the Britons. For Scots, William Wallace is a hero who fought for their independence in the 13th century. Since that time, and more particularly since 1707, their self-identity has been lost into 'Great Britain'.⁵³ They have never forgotten their Scottish hero who fought valiantly against the British forces and eventually died fighting. Scots are

⁴⁹ Tim Bowler, "How has the economy fared since the Brexit vote?" BBC News, March 28, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-36956418>.

⁵⁰ Sloat, "Divided Kingdom: How Brexit is remaking the UK's constitutional order."

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² George Macquisten, "The shape of Gibraltar in the aftermath of Brexit," (London: the Bruges Group, 2017,) https://www.brugesgroup.com/images/papers/shapeofgibraltar_brexit.pdf.

⁵³ "Articles of Union," <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/heritage/articlesofunion.pdf>.

still fighting, though now in the form of civilized battles like referendum in order to express their disapproval of the British authority.

In 1707, through the Act of Union, Scotland became the part of the Great Britain. But that was time of absolute monarchies. Now, the world is different with nation-state system reinforcing itself with democracy as a principle of institutional arrangement in operation. Was it not for the same reason that UK decided to leave the EU in order to assert its nationalism and to 'take back control'?

The Scottish referendum of 2014 in which 45% Scots voted for independence. It means that Britain narrowly avoided the disintegration of 307 years of Union. It is but obvious that in democracy the simple majority is respected and has precedence over the minority. But another fact which is no less important is that in a true democracy the minority is also not neglected. The assessment of the Scottish referendum as a point of argument then its minority can become a majority any time in the foreseeable future. What could be amore ideal time than Brexit for the Scottish leadership to mobilize its voters to effect a YES vote in the favour of independence?

Similarly, the future of Northern Ireland with regard to UK is also bleak. It voted for the Remain and not the Brexit. But neither Scotland nor Northern Ireland is going to give a tougher challenge to London than it could face in Gibraltar post Brexit. Gibraltar was ceded to Britain by Spain under the terms of Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. There have been several wars between Britain and Spain over the claims of Gibraltar. Since the establishment of the EU, things were swept under the carpet. But the Brexit seems to be causing to renew this old tension.

Recently, the Spanish foreign minister said that British alarm over Gibraltar expressed that "someone in the UK is losing their cool",⁵⁴ which reflects that the old smoothness of relationship in the pre-Brexit period is fading away. On one side, Gibraltar's economy could dwindle in the face of leaving the EU market since it is being mentioned by the various inside sources that the business going to Gibraltar until now would be parceled between

⁵⁴ Jessica Elgot and Anushka Asthana, "UK seeks to cool tensions with EU over Gibraltar," the Guardian, April 03, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/03/may-says-jaw-jaw-will-be-uk-policy-towards-gibraltar>.

Andalusia and Malta.⁵⁵ On the second, the tension over Gibraltar could culminate in a future war between the Britain and Spain. But this is the worst-case scenario if and only sanity does not prevail.⁵⁶

Historically and by nature, British people are conservative. They take pride in their institutions including monarchy. They also boast of being called as the mother of democracy. The recent white paper issued by the government is an expression that there was a sense of marginalization among the British people due to the growing dominance of the EU and its interference in the domestic affairs of the country. The resentment of the government casts its shadow in the following expert's statement that "the government intends to take control of our own laws which will mean our own laws, which will mean bringing to an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK".⁵⁷

Euroscepticism may be criticized but one of its claims seems reasonably justified. It argues that the EU countries are bailing out the bankrupt governments like Greece, rather those countries should first safeguard the interests of their own national citizens on priority basis.

With the Brexit being realized in 2019, the dream of united Europe, seen by the founding fathers of the EU (Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy, West Germany and Luxemburg) seems more blurred and more difficult to justify. With the rise of the populist governments in countries like France and the Netherlands, who were predicted to form governments, but could not, the future of the EU seems bleaker than ever before. The diversity of religion and the economic disparity have also played their parts in the resurgence of nationalism and the populist leaders' call to 'go back to the roots'.

The entire situation can be summarized into a statement of the populist and anti-Islamist leader of the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, in order to

⁵⁵ "Leave one union, lose another," *The Economist*, March 16, 2017, 11-12.

⁵⁶ Nicola McEwen, "Disunited Kingdom: Will Brexit spark the disintegration of the UK," *Sage Journal* 07 (September 2016): 22-23.

⁵⁷ David Davis, "Brexit White Paper: key points explained," (London, 2017 Report), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/exiting-the-european-union-ministerial-statement-2-february-2017>.

describe that how the leaders in general have begun to see the European Union with reference to their own countries. The statement follows:

“The EU took away our identity and our national sovereignty. The end is near. Like Roman Empire, its gone”.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, “Ever More Divided Union,” the Time, March 20,2017. 21-23.