



Britain's relationship with the European Union after Brexit

Case study: citizens' perception of it

SUMMARY

Over time it has been shown that the most effective way to resolve conflicts is communication. Regardless of the nature of conflicts, communication is the best solution, for this reason diplomacy is the key to all conflicts. It was expected that after the UK leaves the European Union, there will be disputes and conflicts on several areas between European leaders: in the economic, political, social, security, etc. fields. In terms of the economic field, The United Kingdom has given a special status to those coming from Northern Ireland, in order to transit goods to and from Britain with the European Union. Moreover, a protocol was signed stating that Northern Ireland would remain in British customs territory, as well as in the European single market, by applying European rules on customs union and goods.

It is known that the agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain triggered several conflicts throughout the entire period of the negotiations, but the purpose of the Agreement was to maintain peace on the European continent. Thus, the rounds of negotiations and communication between the two sides have diminished the conflicts. Even though tensions have been slightly heightened by customs misunderstandings, Northern Ireland is working to maintain and preserve the regulations imposed by the EU, but also to avoid some conflicts. Thus, over time, many more negotiations were held than those presented in the table, somewhere over 90 rounds of negotiations and meetings of both parties, in order to remedy the conflicts. In 2016 there were 10 rounds of negotiations and meetings, in 2017 there were 28, in 2018 there were 25, in the next year there were 22, and in 2020 there were 6, the pandemic being an external factor that limited these meetings.

If there has been talk so far of the processes of European integration and accession to the EU, I will bring up the processes of leaving the EU and the stages that the United Kingdom of Great Britain has taken, of the new phenomenon, that of disintegration and de-



Europeanisation. This phenomenon is a first that may or may not set a precedent, depending on the final result and the effects felt by the two parties following the separation.

Six years after the Brexit referendum, I can say that a lot of things have happened, there have been many challenges, obstacles, both for the European Union and for the United Kingdom of Great Britain, such as: the pandemic caused by the SARS-COV2 virus triggered in March 2020, the economic crisis felt by both sides in 2022, inflation, arising after the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, there have been economic, social, transport-related and tourism-related political changes, with European citizens being the most affected. My view is that it is imperative to find out why the British wanted to leave the European sky, especially since the majority of young people did not express their opinion to go to the polls, which is worrying (18-27 years did not turn out to vote). Thus, the present paper aims to present the evolution and conditions for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain from the European Union, the new perspectives and partnerships between the two, the future perspectives, including at the end of the work a case study on the perception of Romanian citizens on Brexit. Moreover, another objective of this theme was to follow the stages of negotiations taken, which were the agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom, possible new partnerships, which is to ensure the orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union and the Euro-atom.

An important point on this issue is that the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain are forced to remedy this problem together, even if the legal framework and new regulations are uncertain, they must be very well established, including administrative, economic, political, tourist, or transport issues. These issues are sometimes unknown to Europeans, but also to The British, and they are something new, never seen before, for an EU Member State to want to leave.

Moreover, I wanted to find out what are the weaknesses, the strengths of this process, what are the advantages and disadvantages of Brexit, but especially what consequences there were from an economic, political, social point of view, and, with emphasis on finding out what is the perception of Romanian citizens regarding this phenomenon. The main reason why I opted to choose this research topic is due to my increased interest in the field of study Brexit, but also to my curiosity to research the new topic that has emerged, which is the effect of Brexit, being a new phenomenon, because for the European Union it is a novelty. In 2019, when I started on this topic, some decisions were not yet established, everything being vague at European level, and the interest was large. Even though the EU has never faced such a situation before, I can say that it is a new phenomenon, that of disintegration. In other words, a state no

longer wants to be part of the European circle, choosing to become a third state. Interestingly, we will also find out what is the perception of Romanian citizens on this phenomenon – Brexit. I am thinking that it can also be a new theory of international relations, that of de-Europeanisation?

The methodology of this research is both a quantitative and a qualitative research, but also a descriptive research that constitutes a first stage of knowledge, in which I will use the description to present the terms, at a theoretical level, also the explanatory research, which is a complementary approach to the descriptive one with the help of which I will capitalize on the relationships between cause and effect. In the first part of the research we used the research method: scientific documentation, analysis of documents in the field of international relations, using specialized theories, articles, books, norms, laws and treaties, having as an instrument the analysis of the specialized literature in the field of international relations. The main instrument through which we have carried out this qualitative research are the analysis texts, documents, official sources, treaties, international agreements and decisions of the Council and the European Commission. Moreover, we have made a comparative analysis between what the European Union was like before Brexit and how it is now, after Brexit: *Before & After Brexit*, being an interpretative work. I also chose to do a case study, to apply a questionnaire among Romanian citizens, in order to find out what is their perception of Brexit, being a useful tool for measuring and interpreting data, within my PhD thesis. Moreover, I sought to find out the following things: what are the future relations and partnerships between the two and what negotiations have been started, how new international treaties and agreements have been modified or concluded, what are the new territorial, trade regulations, but especially what are the new European perspectives and directions.

In addition, we have done an analysis with the advantages and disadvantages of the Brexit phenomenon from both perspectives, the orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union. We have placed emphasis on the comparative analysis between diplomatic relations and the negotiations that have taken place between the two parties, what are the advantages and disadvantages from an economic, political, social point of view. I also wanted to hold a public debate, with the Brexit scenarios, and in which the short- and long-term future consequences of this phenomenon had to be debated, and there was also a panel entitled "*Before & After Brexit*", but the pandemic situation prevented me from doing these debates, so I carried them out online. So, during the academic conferences I took part in, I brought up this topic, being debated, and in addition, I discussed it during the seminary hours that I taught to the students from the Faculty of Political Sciences SNSPA – Bucharest. Also during the seminary



classes taught, we discussed and debated with the students the film *Brexit: The Uncivil War*, where the pros vs. cons of Brexit were made. Also, a novelty of the research is the case study that we conducted in the online environment among Romanian citizens, that of finding out their perception and opinion about Brexit. The survey was answered by 208 respondents.

The relevance of the theme for the field of political science is to follow, analyze the process of leaving the EU and the perception of Romanians on Brexit. The relevance of the study is to improve the field and help clarify and explain the new phenomenon: Brexit. The potential contributions to the development of this research are to follow and monitor the decisions of the European Commission and the European Council on the Brexit case, the consequences that followed, these being detailed, but especially the negotiations between the two parties and how the future of the EU was and is affected. In other words, I wanted to find out what is the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union after Brexit. In addition, comparing the period between now and before Brexit, we can see certain changes and effects at European level, both economically, politically, socially, but also in terms of trade and transport.

Thus, the present paper aims to present the evolution and conditions for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain from the European Union, the new perspectives and partnerships between the two spheres, the future perspectives and what is the perception of the Romanian citizens about this new phenomenon. Even after leaving the European circle, there will be partnerships, surely the future will be different, with consequences on both sides.

Over the years discussions have arisen about Poland's desire to EU birds, entitled *Polexit*, but nothing is yet certain. The fact is that the Brexit phenomenon has an impact on other European member states. Also, comparing the situation in the past (before Brexit - 2016) and that now (after Brexit - 2022), it was highlighted in the paper that there are changes in the economic, social, political field and it was said how these areas, or other existing relations between the two partners, have been affected.

In the first part of the thesis I approached the theoretical concepts in the field of international relations, and the part of the historical relationship between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the European Union. We also followed the stages of accession as an EU Member State, which was its historical route until the decision to leave the EU, focusing on its evolution, defining the context of Brexit, the values and principles of democracy, Europeanization, democracy, based on academic and theoretical writings, specific to the field of international relations. In the second phase of the research I focused on the new partnerships on diplomatic relations and negotiations that took place between the United Kingdom and the



EU, focusing on its external relations and some perspectives for the future, and in the last part of the thesis I made a comparative analysis, I highlighted what are the advantages and disadvantages from both perspectives "*before and after Brexit* " and we mentioned what are the short- and long-term consequences of this phenomenon, making a comparative analysis.

The interesting part of the thesis is the case study, the questionnaire applied among Romanian citizens regarding Brexit, and I will end the thesis with some conclusions of this topic approached. In order to answer some of my questions and to be able to have some convictions regarding the Romanians' perception of Brexit and in order to achieve the objective (to carry out an investigation based on the questionnaire), I applied a questionnaire among Romanian citizens. He had structured, but also open questions, with variants of answer, in order to be able to measure the Romanians' perception regarding the exit of the United Kingdom of Great Britain from the European Union. The results were quantitative and the data processed were through the statistical method. The goal was to measure and obtain various information dedicated to the perception and influence of Romanians regarding this new phenomenon. The questionnaire was conducted in the online environment, and the 208 respondents were randomly chosen, from all age categories, different working fields, in order for the sample to be correctly validated. For this reason we wanted the subjects to be of different ages, to be from both categories of sex, but especially from different fields. The data were interpreted both statistically and psychologically, paying special attention to the data obtained and correctly interpreted.

Starting from the theories of Europeanization, I can say that a Brexit-type process can remove states from European values and principles, affecting the interaction with other state actors, risking to trigger a domino effect or that of the snowball, in which other states will want to leave the EU, especially since until now the EU has not faced such an event, being something new for everyone. In addition, there are links between the main theories of integration, applying them to the policy of withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, highlighting the role of politics in the new process, that of de-Europeanization. If there has been talk so far of the processes of European integration, I will bring up the processes of exiting the EU and the new phenomenon, that of de-Europeanisation.

Starting from an analysis of theoretical and academic works that highlight the notions about Europeanization, democratic principles, Brexit, but also the Treaties of the European Union, the present paper aims to analyze the specialized documents in the field of International Relations, of the decisions that have been taken on the phenomenon of Brexit, emphasizing the effects, consequences and the European future, bringing into discussion a possible new theory,



that of de-Europeanization, this being the uniqueness of the work. In view of the fact that the United Kingdom has decided to leave the European Union, the future of the European Union and the legal framework of the 27 Member States must be taken into account. Thus, the European Union needs a new Community treaty that will streamline the decision-making process and provide for sanctions for countries that violate the rules of the rule of international law and democratic principles.

The analysis of this research is to see what Europe was like before, and how it is now, without one of the great international players, but above all, what is the power of Europe after Brexit. Is Britain going to gain new powers internationally in the near future? Is the European Union going to be weaker economically, politically, socially, if it has lost one of the major players? At the moment, in 2022, the European Union is left with 27 Member States, then will its future be different, without the UK? Will there be other European member states that will express their desire to put the EU in place, with the example of Brexit as an example?

Since 1 January 2021, the UK has lost all its rights and obligations as an EU Member State: it will not benefit from the single market and customs union, nor from free trade with other states, there will be new barriers to goods and services, but also to trade. Even with this new agreement, businesses will face trade barriers, risking higher prices. In order to avoid such situations and as a result of an economic partnership, both sides decided to create an ambitious free trade area, without tariffs, for fair competition. Without this agreement, food products (beef, dairy, pork, cereals, sugar, poultry, lamb,) could have been subject to higher tariffs of over 50%; while fish products and cars would have had more than 25% higher tariffs, and textiles and shoes would be subject to tariffs of 12%. Had it not been for this agreement, there would have been much greater economic damage to agricultural producers on both sides.¹

Under the rules imposed by the World Trade Organisation, this agreement accepts the right of both powers (the EU and the UK) to apply trade defence instruments. Interestingly, both agreed on one idea: to recognise the "AEOEs" programmes, in order to allow the products to be marketed. Another discussion on the provisions of Article 50 is to impose valid air fares, visas and passports, according to the regulations imposed.

Certain sectors have been affected by the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, but an attempt has been made to reach a common understanding, but things are not so simple, as they are sensitive areas. The labour market and access to the financial market are of major importance for both parties. The negotiating strategy was unclear and

¹ European Commission, "*Q&A: EU-UK cooperation and trade agreement*", Brussels, 24.12.2020, p.2-3



difficult for the representatives to accept. Brexit reflects the remoteness of the integration process, posing a threat to the development of the EU. The consequences in the area of public administration, in the economic sectors, transport, businesses and citizens are inevitable, even with the existence of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement already in force.

A first effect of Brexit is labour shortages: 40% of large British companies have been left without employees after Europeans left. The most affected sectors are transport, warehousing, Horeca, health, construction, utilities, with difficulties in recruiting staff as a result of Brexit. Taking into account that since 1 January 2021, new rules have been put in place regarding migration and difficult steps such as the right to reside, the number of Europeans employed in the UK has decreased by 8.7% compared to the period before the coronavirus pandemic. One downside is that many companies cannot operate without normal, which can lead to high economic growth.²

Another consequences that have arisen is that of fake news and the misleading of citizens regarding certain decisions, the installation of panic and revolt. Being a new phenomenon, the citizens did not know how to behave in certain decisions, they did not have anyone to consult with and they took for granted the information seen or heard from the social-media networks, which was not always in line with reality. Some information was written by anonymous people, fake accounts, but which created panic among British citizens, but also Europeans. A first useful rule for traders is that everyone must comply with the regulations and procedures destined for the EU and UK market: any product that leaves the EU and enters the UK must comply with the technical regulations and controls applied to customs and are subject to safety checks, but also vice versa, any product that leaves the UK and enters the EU must be checked and controlled.³ Britain recorded a drop in imports from the European Union in the first half of 2019, according to data published by the Office for National Statistics. Another important factor to note is the depreciation of the pound sterling, which will make exports more competitive, and imports will fall in value.⁴

According to the new regulations imposed by the United Kingdom, Romanian citizens can enter the UK for a visit / for tourism purposes without a visa. If they want to work or stay

² Effect Brexit. More than 40% of large British companies were left without employees, reports Digi 24, External news, article published on 16.09.2021, site accessed on 17.09.2021 <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/efectul-brexit-pestre-40-dintre-companiile-britanice-mari-au-ramas-fara-angajati-si-nu-reusesc-sa-angajeze-dupa-plecarea-europenilor-1670459>

³ European Commission, Q&A - EU-UK Cooperation and Trade Agreement, Brussels, December 24, 2020, pag. 4-7

⁴ Official website of the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, "*Brexit – the implications of the scenario no-deal*", <http://www.imm.gov.ro/ro/brexit-implicatiile-scenariului-no-deal/>, accessed on 18.05.2021



in the UK for more than six months, they are required to obtain an entry visa for them to be allowed into British territory. Moreover, citizens who want to work for less than 6 months, are forced to obtain an entry visa. An important aspect to keep in mind is that entry into British territory will be allowed on the basis of a passport or identity card, until September 30, 2021. Citizens who want to enter the *EU Settlement Scheme* will also have the right to travel to the UK with identity documents, provided that they are valid until 31 December 2025.

Another consequence is that since the beginning of 2020 the UK has put in place a fuel pricing system and will no longer take part in the trading of the EU's emission allowances. Another change is that the UNITED KINGDOM is no longer a member of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the most affected being the operators. Looking at the field of air, road, rail, maritime transport, continuous connectivity is desired. Interestingly, the field of foreign and defence policy is not discussed. However, a framework agreement for cooperation between the parties on nuclear safety for peaceful purposes, based on reciprocity, has been established. At the same time, an agreement in the field of security of information and classified material shall apply.⁵

Another branch affected by the effects of Brexit is the P.E.S.C (Common Foreign Security Policy), with The United Kingdom being an important military power at the European level. Thus, the field of security and defense was slightly affected after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the common space, having the concrete example: the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which directly affected the European Union as well. Certainly, the UK's exit from the EU was an important factor in the destabilization of European security, regarding the economic, political and inter-human instability installed at European level after Brexit, but especially after the pandemic crisis caused by the SARS-COV2 virus. Another factor that leads me to believe that this branch has been affected by Brexit is that of the outbreak of war, which has endangered the external security of the EU. However, I can say that the war was also an opportunity to bring the Member States closer together and unite, because they showed solidarity and supported Ukraine, with progress in the area of European integration and the possible accession of Ukraine to the EU.

Therefore, one can note the short-term consequences that have arisen after the completion of this process. Surely there will be other complications in the long run. I can say that up to now it has been possible to reach an agreement between the two powers, and so it can be noted that there are some outstanding issues left, which will be negotiated in the near future.

⁵ Direction for the European Union, "*EU policies guidelines*" – Synthesis of European activities, no.1/2021, coordinator Dr. Cristina Stroescu, p.24



British citizens will realise that the economy is going to suffer, with an economic crisis in 2021 at the end of 2021. During the four years of long negotiations, the European Union has shown solidarity, integrity, responsibility, but above all peace, while also confronting the conflict situation between Russia and Ukraine. The EU hopes that the other 27 Member States will remain united, devoid of the idea of separation from the common European objective, remaining under the same European umbrella. I can say that following the new conflict situations between Russia and Ukraine, the EU supports Ukraine and the procedures for accession to the EU have been accelerated, which is another complex subject. I should point out that a basic feature of the EU is that of internal European integrity, with common and solid principles with the other European Member States.

I am therefore of the opinion that for a long time to come this new Brexit phenomenon will leave fingerprints and consequences for both parties. Certainly, in the near future, the EU and the UK will manage to have effective collaboration and cooperation, will manage to overcome the obstacles that will follow, focusing on the security of citizens and the environment, in order to maintain peace on the European continent. For this reason, I support the fact that the future of the European Union is difficult to predict, as there are many obstacles encountered: from the Brexit phenomenon to the Covid-19 pandemic, then the Ukraine-Russia war. Did the phenomenon of globalization contribute to all these phenomena? As we well know, the project of globalization continues to improve the living and living conditions of the population, through the constant development of international trade, digitalization, the reduction of conflicts, the encouragement of cultural diversity, etc. The European Central Bank defines globalisation as a phenomenon that has transformed the economy: we can order online, we can deliver products around the world, and competition between countries has increased.⁶

Taking into account the fact that there was no international context for a Member State of the European Union to leave the European sphere, the future of the European states will be affected, and the development of the process of withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain will bring consequences. I believe that the EU is moving towards federalism, accelerating integration and becoming a United States of Europe, where the European institutions take the most important decisions at central level. It is imperative to follow the example of the US, when it has transformed from confederation to federation, because a confederation cannot function in the long term, due to the large differences of interests and the large number of states, which face obstacles. However, the difference is that the 27 Member

⁶ The European Central Bank, "*Globalisation and strategy evaluation*", website accessed on 25.06.2022
<https://www.ecb.europa.eu/home/search/review/html/globalisation.ro.html>



States have different cultures and languages, different histories, which can complicate the process of achieving a Federal European Union. Thus, in a federation, the external relations of member states will become problematic under international law, just as has been noted with the Brexit situation. Instead, it lacks a common fiscal union, that is to say, its own system of taxes, duties, revenues and expenses. Another interesting thing is that citizens can go to the European court against nation states. Until now, the EU has been based on the principles of state sovereignty and the self-determination of peoples (peoples are different from language, culture, history), but with the help of diversity and heterogeneity, the transition to a European federalism can be made, because peoples from different cultures can live together under the same economy.

Even though Britain left the EU, I believed that the European space would remain the largest and most stable market globally, but after the outbreak of the war between Ukraine and Russia, my perception changes, with a possible economic crisis setting in place among the citizens. The potential threat lies right next to us, Romania, where the conflict is only a few kilometers away from us. At the moment, however, no one knows how to specify what the fate of millions of European citizens will be, and there are clearly some economic, security dangers.

Following the analysis carried out, we have noticed that Romanian citizens are of the opinion that there will certainly be states that will want to join the EU, but also other states that will withdraw from the EU in the near future and will want to conclude the European partnership. If other countries withdraw, it is certain that Europe will no longer be a global economic and political decision-maker, and federalism is gradually beginning to set in. However, I believe that solidarity and cohesion at EU level will increase, and the EU will develop more and more supranational institutions so as to deepen the integration of Member States. I am of the opinion that the EU will also develop a joint defence initiative, with NATO as a model, especially in the current and conflicting context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Surely there will still be states willing to join the European project, so the EU will expand more and more towards the eastern part of Europe.

In an ever-changing world with many unforeseen situations, where the global order is dominated by the paradigm of competition and the influence of the Great Powers, the EU-27 has to overcome many challenges and obstacles internationally. It is necessary for the EU to impose its will and become a global power, even without Britain. It is necessary for the EU to impose its will and become a global power, even without Britain, and I believe that the EU is moving towards federalism, which gives the EU greater capacity to face the challenges encountered, but also the diversity of culture and opinions. The multi-speed Europe no longer works after Brexit is over. As a solution would be the fair distribution of the powers and powers



of the European institutions. Thus, states function as a functional entity that has the capacity to act as a global political actor in its own right on the large international and global stage. I therefore believe that only a Federal Republic of Europe/United States of Europe can give peace to the world.

I conclude by saying that this process - Brexit has been and is difficult to accept for both British and European citizens, because over time numerous political, economic, fake news, commentary and analysis have emerged on this subject. Even though not much time has passed since the UK left the EU, one can already notice the negative effects from this phenomenon, in areas such as the economy, tourism, the labour market, international relations, security and others. It turns out it was just a populist political maneuver to decentralize the sphere of power. Also, as was seen in the analysis, but also in the movie *Brexit: The Uncivil War*, it was voted in large part by uninformed people, without knowing the consequences of the vote. Yes, surely the EU can be an important player globally and without Britain, but it has lost a strong economy, but also a pragmatic partner that has contributed immensely to the development of the EU. Thus, the EU must be more united, less bureaucratic, and more decisive with regard to the rogue states (especially Hungary and Poland that expressed their desire to leave the EU during the years 2020-2022). Also, the Franco-German partnership must remain as strong as it has been until now, and it is possible to discuss a European Union with a strong partnership with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. I also believe that there will always be a stable relationship between the union and Britain, and this relationship will be based on each other, support, and help, when appropriate.

Yes, I believe that even without Britain, the EU will remain a global power, because it has a wide range of resources, and each country helps and contributes to its proper functioning. In this way, the EU may remain an important global player (especially from a geopolitical perspective), but it will lose the economic and military power it would have had if Britain remained a member. Even if the UK has a significant economic and social contribution, the EU can still be solid, because it has highly developed countries. As we have seen, even after leaving the European circle, there have been partnerships and the future between the two parties will be different. If so far there has been talk of the processes of European integration, I have brought up the processes of leaving the EU and the stages that the United Kingdom of Great Britain has taken, the new phenomenon, that of disintegration and de-Europeanization, according to the results of the research started in the online environment. It is noted that the relationship between the EU and Britain will no longer be so close politically and socially. But there will still be a very close economic collaboration



So, the fact is that there are many stages and issues left to clarify, Brexit being just a challenge that the EU has gone through, being a deeper and more complicated issue. I believe that in an international union as broad as the EU, there will always be intercultural differences, in the social, budgetary fields, in the way feasibility studies are designed, in the design of implementation systems, and in the way in which the distribution of important social elements is made. All these aspects arise because of cultural differences. I believe that this type of unions and formations should be set up at a smaller level, the first and most important aspect being the cultural one, Brexit being the concrete example. Thus, I can say that now, Britain is a free country, which can make its own decisions in its favour, but which is forced to bear its consequences for a long time. So, between the UK and the European states there is an interdependence (social, economic, political), and Brexit will have a considerable long-term impact in all these areas of activity for Europe: economic, political, social. Certainly, the EU and the UK will still need mutual help in various circumstances.

The analysis indicates that relations between the UK and the EU will stabilise and do their best, both sides to be well, in order to continue cooperation and collaboration. In the future, I think they will cooperate quite a lot, which justifies the fact that the relations will develop in a positive sense and the problems will be remedied. They will institutionalise themselves in a format that allows for mutually beneficial cooperation between both parties. I believe that relations between the EU and Britain will develop positively, once all negotiations on economic and social issues have been concluded. The EU and the UK may be strong partners in the future, given Russia's aggressive actions, but also China's emergence as a great power.

Therefore, it is noted that this Phenomenon of Brexit is an important lesson for several EU Member States, even those that are non-EU members, and regarding the economic future of the United Kingdom, I am of the opinion that it could join the European Economic Area, being a possible solution, following the example of Norway and Switzerland. But we will see in the future what challenges the European Union will face.