

THE POLITICS OF EUROPEAN UNION AND NATIONAL INTEREST: A PERSPECTIVE FROM BREXIT*

Abstract

This work investigated politics of European Union and national interests: A Perspective from Brexit. The work is situated on intergovernmentalism as a theoretical framework. The method of this study is qualitative and data were sourced from secondary sources and analyzed done through content analysis. The study looked at the socio-political and economic drivers pushing for Brexit. It was discovered that issues of preserving the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, their national identity, jobs and using British money for Britons and lack of control of their borders which has heightened immigration into United Kingdom. This influenced the outcome of the referendum. The study also discovered among other things that the absence of UK in the EU will impact EU in negative terms as UK soft power and liberalization is an asset to the EU. For the UK, it will be hit hard due to the enormous trade benefits which it derives from EU membership coupled with the fact the EU provides cover for the UK to leverage in global economy. These have raised concerns about the possibility of EU integration in the absence of a strong balancer in the union. The study found that the national interests of UK are the propelling force for the Brexit.

Keywords: European Union, Politics, National Interest, Brexit

1. Introduction

Today, many experts and analysts of global affairs are concerned about the survival of the European Union given the number of jolts that it had actually witnessed following the UK exit from the EU. From the creation of EU and most especially in the 1980s, there were speculation that the EU is going to crash as a result of series of disputes and disagreement over certain issues¹. One of the leading exponents of neorealist school, had predicted the collapse of the EU after the end of the cold war. According to him, the institution was built to address the security challenges faced by the nation states (Cini, 2016:88)². It seems that with the referendum held on 24 June 2016 on the exit of Britain from the EU (Brexit), is in the pathway to successfully support and partly give reason to the speculation of many pundits on European Union politics. Due mainly to the rise of right-wing populist parties branding ultranationalist ideas in other European countries are really driving observers, experts and analysts to begin to reason whether the federal project is on the verge to collapse or to be disintegrated, thus casting a gloom over the future of European Union. The negotiations between EU and UK on the terms and conditions of exit has been characterized by uncertainty as there was a division between the UK Parliament and the Conservative Party led by then Prime Minister, Theresa May. This international division between British communities made it difficult for then Prime Minister to secure a deal with the EU and was replaced with Boris Johnson. Public opinions differ on the terms of the UK exit from EU. Due to this divergence of perspectives, have raised concerns what will be the fate of UK and EU after Brexit. UK left the EU on Friday, January 31, 2020 under a revised divorce agreement deal consisting of a Withdrawal Agreement accompanied by a Political Declaration on future ties with the bloc and its Member States. Both sides face huge challenges concerning the future relationships before the end of the transition period in December 2020. However, Moufida and Naim³ stated that given the challenges experienced by the United Kingdom in negotiation, it was clear that the UK:

Was torn between its desire for independence and sovereignty and the need to retain access to European markets. The negotiations' timeline is very challenging and if no deal could be reached that would be very costly in terms of economy due to major implications in areas such as agriculture, trade and employment. Any 'hard Brexit' options can be expected to cause a significant loss of growth by elevating UK's poverty rate to 4.9 % by 2029.

Will the EU disintegrate after the UK exit or will the federal project be sustained since UK interests to remain is no longer tenable. It is the objective of this work to unravel the social forces (national interests) that are pushed for Brexit and what will be the consequences on EU-UK relations. This paper is divided into four parts. Part one is the background to the study where it situates the theory that guides the work. The second part deals with the evolution of European Union and part three looks at the core drivers of Brexit and four the consequences for EU and UK and recommendations.

2. Theoretical Framework

Intergovernmentalism theory is one of the theories of regional convergence. This theory emerged as a critique to the neo-functionalism and federalist theories of regional integration. The theory was developed by scholars such as Frank Schimmelfenning, Thomas Riise, Antje Weiner, Tanja Borzel and Andrew Moravcsik have tremendously contributed in the evolution of this theory. Intergovernmentalism shares on the basic assumption with the rationalist institutionalist of international relations. To begin with, Schimmelfenning⁴ suggests that Intergovernmentalist assumes that states or

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¹Thies, J.W. (2001). Is the EU Collapsing, In: Diehl, P. F., & Frederking, B. (Eds.) (2001). *The politics of global governance: international organizations in an interdependent world*. London: Lynne Rienner.

² Cini, M. (2016). *European Union politics*. Oxford University Press.

³Moufida, B. and Naim, B. (2020) Post Brexit Era and its Implication on UK's Economy and Politics. *Journal of Political Science and Law*. Issue 24. Pp.1-45

⁴Schimmelfenning, F. (2018) Regional Integration Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. <http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.000>.

governments are the central actors in international politics, and they are rational actors. Second, international interdependence creates demand, and international institutions help to supply, international cooperation. The theory assumes that European convergence is spreading through the actions and interests of national states (Hix, 2003)⁵. The most influential exponent of this theory is Moravcsik⁶ in his book titled *'The Choice for Europe'*. Moravcsik (1998) contends that the EU is designed as an intergovernmental regime that governs the interdependence of the economy through the common political talks (Pollack, 2005)⁷. It believes that relinquishing the critical roles of the independent states on core national issues to other institutional structures are inherently impossible. Arguing along this line, Hoffman⁸ contends that, a rational defense of national interests and the preservation of the core of sovereignty, along with cooperation among governments, can be seen as a key to common issues among different countries. From here, one can see that the key assumption of the theory of intergovernmentalism is the preservation of 'national interests and state sovereignty'. The realist intergovernmentalist take these as sacrosanct in international relations.

The core assumption of the theory rests on the fact that states tend to believe that governments, not transnational entities, have full control over the convergence, and transnational institutions are created which national entities may benefit. The core issue is that the sovereignty of the nation-state should not be compromised to transnational institutions, though it may exist but not superior to the core interests of states. At the national level, there should be a coalition and support among the domestic groups for policy and increased power, and it must be entered internationally with other actors. International treaties are also the result of intergovernmental conferences in which representatives of national states negotiate in the legal frameworks that the EU institutions operate on the basis of their interests. From the realist intergovernmentalist assumes that states could cooperate on certain key areas as low politics while states could not cooperate on high politics which they term the core national interests. According to Hoffman cited in Schimmelfenning⁹ stated that:

'Low politics' and 'high politics' expect states to be willing to integrate in low-politics areas but to resist pooling and delegation in high-politics areas. Low-politics areas do not reduce the autonomy of the state in a major way, either because they do not affect core state powers or because states have limited autonomy to begin with (as in the case of liberal states in the market economy. By contrast, high politics encompasses the core powers of the state in the areas of internal and external security as well as monetary and fiscal policies. According to the traditional intergovernmentalist logic, then, small states have a higher demand for regional integration than large states, and all states are more willing to integrate low-politics issues.

From the above, the core areas such as surrendering state sovereignty to supranational authority to legislate on certain areas the state see as core aspect of national security is dismissed by the realist intergovernmentalists. It is pointed from the above that integration could be easily accepted by the powerful states in so far that it does not infringe on autonomy of the state power. The theory of intergovernmentalism has passed through three phases in its evolution. The first phase was after the 1960s when Europe's convergence was gaining ground. In this period, the object of analysis among scholars were to understand the force shaping the convergence and how to explain their outcomes. In the second phase, coincided in the 1980s. Then, analysts were seeking to study the rule of law in Europe, the political systems governing Europe and the political processes in institutional frameworks in Europe. In 1990s, the third phase seek to understand the building of European Union coinciding with the Treaty of Maastricht. The attention was to find out the linkage between convergence and other issues, such as the relationship between convergence with the state or the political and social consequences of convergence on cooperation between the two states. Given the relevance of international cooperation, it questions what is in international cooperation when a state has preference for an economic or geopolitical interest over other values. In what follows, Moravcsik¹⁰ argues one of the components is preferred to one another by the veto and disregard for the political elite of a state. Also Contrary to transnationalism, states tend to believe that governments, not transnational entities, have full control over the convergence. This theory has an affinity with classical international relations theory such as neorealism which believes the role of government in international exchanges. In anarchic state of the international system, there is tendency for international order and cooperation for the survival of the state, and EU has the potential to reduce the level of anarchy in international system. The core assumption of intergovernmentalism rests on the fact that states could enter into a union with their national interests, and these interests could be merged together and applied by the union which it has entered into. To be sure, governments negotiate first, on the creation or development of integration. Secondly, on key policy arrangements and, thirdly, on the institutional design of regional integration. These negotiations are only analytically distinct: they go on in parallel, are linked, and need to be concluded together successfully to produce integration.

⁵Hix, S. (2003). *The End of Democracy in Europe?* How the European Union (As Currently Designed) Restricts Political Competition. London School of Economics and Political Science, (online). Available at: http://personal.lse.ac.uk/hix/working_papers/hixend_of_democracy_in_europe.pdf (Accessed 15 December. 2021)

⁶Moravcsik, A. (1998). *The Choice for Europe Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁷Pollack, M. (2005). Theorizing the European Union: International Organization, Domestic Polity, or Experiment in New Governance? *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* (online), no. 8, pp.357–398. Available at: https://www.library.illinois.edu/ias/wpcontent/uploads/sites/20/2016/12/ann_urev_Polisci.8.08_2103-1.pdf (Accessed 14 December. 2018).

⁸Hoffmann, S. (1998). Obsolete or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe. *Daedalus*, (online), Vol. 95, No. 3, pp.862-915. Available:https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027004?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Retrieved 12 December. 2021).

⁹Schimmelfenning, F. (2018). Regional Integration Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press.<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.000>

¹⁰Moravcsik, A. (1998). *The Choice for Europe Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

First, regional integration requires mutually beneficial arrangements for all participating states. For regional integration to produce mutual benefits, state policies need to be mutually interdependent and state preferences need to be congruent or compatible. Without mutual policy externalities, governments do not see value in regional integration; without compatible policy preferences such as in the area of environmental protection or health standards, governments are unable to agree on a common policy. The UK engagement with the EU rests on these core specifications and triggered its exit clause when there is incompatibility between its preferences and that of the EU.¹¹ Viewing from a liberal inter-governmental perspective, has two levels. One political priority is influenced by domestic environments and bargaining and negotiation between states operates in an international arena. Within domestic arena, there need to be a joint effort and support among the internal elements for policy and increased power, and this has to be entered internationally with other actors. As the theory shows, international treaties are an outcome of intergovernmental conferences in which states representatives negotiate on the legal frameworks international organizations will act on (Walton, 2013)¹².

Liberal intergovernmentalist toes the line of liberal theory of preference formation. According to Moravcsik, (1993p. 481)¹³ it argues that governmental preferences express the interests and power of societal groups which is mediated by domestic political institutions. Moravcsik¹⁴ posited, the demand for regional integration originates from the international policy externalities but the real and concrete integration preferences come primarily from 'the commercial interests of powerful economic producers' (Moravcsik, 1998: 3). Schimmelfenning¹⁵ now concluded that

Governments pursue integration as 'a means to secure commercial advantages for producer groups, subject to regulatory and budgetary constraints. Depending on how competitive these powerful producers are on the regional market, states demand either market liberalization or protectionist policies. Moreover, they seek agreement on regulatory policies that benefit the competitiveness of domestic producers.

It could well be argued that in the EU integration process, the interests of business class are very crucial. This has shaped the integration process of the European Union. This is informed by the forces of globalization which seen the growth of giant multinational corporations exercising tremendous power and influence in directing the flow of capital and production. The United Kingdom is reluctant to commit to the Europeanization or leaning towards the United States of Europe where state loses their sovereignty to supranational entity. From the perspective of United Kingdom, it sees the EU more as an intergovernmental organization than as a transnational entity. It is the tendency to protect its national interests- national security, identity, economy and reduce the inflow of migrants into the United Kingdom that drives the Brexit hence the renegotiation of the relationship between United Kingdom and European Union. It is the analytical strength of this theory to underscore the evolution of the European Union, its workings and the process of convergence one can situate its usefulness in this work as it depicts the fact that national interests are what drives United Kingdom to enter into negotiations for an exit from European Union. This where I situate the analytical usefulness of this theory to issue under investigation.

3. The European Union.

Politics is ubiquitous, a point Aristotle recognized many years ago. It finds manifestation wherever human beings and groups interact. It is fiercest in the international arena where states seek to advance their national interest. It was for this reason that Hans Morgenthau¹⁶ asserted that politics at the world stage is interest driven. Nations will always come to the international arena to fulfill their interests. No matter how friendly states are in their relations with other states, one thing is certain, their interest must be served. The issue of how states pursue their national interest in their relations with others is a phenomenon that will never cease to exist as long as nations are not isolated from others. Even when international relations of nations concern the well-being of members of an organization, nations will continue to pursue their selfish interest. The evolution of European Union could be traced to the attempt by French foreign minister Schuman who proposed the idea of developing the merging with Germany of the steel and coal industries into a single framework that could efficiently use coal and steel resources. This plan gave rise to the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. Italy joined later followed by Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg popularly called the Benelux Countries¹⁷. In 1957, the six states created the European Atomic Energy Community, 'Euratom' to pool research and scientific knowledge. This was carried out in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. This treaty was revised in 1985 and given way to Single European Act. This Act set deadline of 1992 for creating single market in Europe¹⁸. With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, in Dutch rename the Economic Community to European Union. The goal of this Treaty was to create monetary union, creation of European

¹¹Schimmelfenning, F. (2018). Regional Integration Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press.<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.000>

¹²Watson, L. (2013). 'David Cameron Promises In/Out Referendum on EU.' *BBC News*, 23 January. As of 5 July 2017: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21148282>

¹³Moravcsik, A. (1993). Preferences and Power in the European Community. A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31, 473-524

¹⁴Moravcsik, A. (1998). *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press.

¹⁵Schimmelfenning, F. (2018). Regional Integration Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press.<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.000>

¹⁶Morgenthau, H.J. (1978) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York. Knopf

¹⁷Goldstein, J.S. & Pevehouse, C.J. (2013). *International Relations*. New York. Pearson. Tenth Edition.

¹⁸Moravcsik, A. (1993). Preferences and Power in the European Community. A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31, 473-524

policy Agency and political and military integration. Though this elicited resentments from nationals of many EU members but gradually were implemented. European Union is an economic union of European countries with a membership of twenty seven countries. Its Headquarter is located in Brussels, Belgium. It has a structure with European Council at the apex with 27 members and Council of the European foreign Ministers (27), Commission President. Besides this, there is European Commission with 27 persons and the Staff called 'Eurocrats'. These are bureaucrats who are specialists in different technical areas. At the end is European Parliament and European Court of Justice.

4. The Concept of National Interest

No concept in the study of international relations and foreign policy has generated controversy among scholars than the concept of national interest. This is due to the fact that scholars perceive it differently. Okon¹⁹ was of the view that scholars of different persuasion do see it as 'a goal, as a method of reaching a goal, as a means to an end, as a motivation for foreign policy formulations and execution, as a guide for policy makers, as an organizing concept for scholars and a criterion of judgment for the citizenry'. There is an underlying understanding among scholars that national interest is the focal point in the foreign policy, but there is a no general consensus as to the definitions, appropriate ingredients, measures should be adopted at any point in time to measure the extent to which policy makers or statesmen can use to attain this noble goal. In a broader setting, Okon²⁰ reasoned that when we talk of national interest, we invoke the basic motivations which undergird the diplomacy of respective nations in the international system. Accordingly, Rosenau²¹ suggests that national interest is 'the key to any explanation seeking behaviour that states pursue in their international relationships. As an analytical tool for guiding the actions of nation-states, Morgenthau suggests that the objective of foreign policy must be defined in terms of national interest arguing that 'interest is the perennial standard by which political actions must be judged'. In this sense, one can argue that it the reason, how and why nations do what they do when they engage in external relationship. For Hans J. Morgenthau, it is any foreign policy which operates under the standard of the national interest. National Interest also ascribes to a French expression *raison d'état* 'reason of state' which consists of a country's goals whether economic, military, or cultural. The concept is an important one in international relations as validated by the assumptions of the Realist school in which they opine that nations' actions, inactions, reactions and interactions in the international arena is done primarily to advance her national interests.

In early human history the national interest was usually viewed as secondary to that religion or morality. To engage in a war rulers needed to justify the action in these contexts. The first thinker to advocate for the primacy of the national interest is usually considered to be Niccolo Machiavelli. The practice is first seen as being employed by France under the direction of its Chief Minister Cardinal Richelieu in the Thirty Years' War when it intervened on the Protestant side, despite its own Catholicism, to block the increasing power of the Holy Roman Emperor. At Richelieu's prompting, Jean de Silhon defended the concept of reason of state as 'a mean between what conscience permits and affairs require'. The notion of the national interest soon came to dominate European politics that became fiercely competitive over the next centuries it is a form of reason 'born of the calculation and the ruse of men' and makes of the state 'a knowing machine, a work of reason'; the state ceases to be derived from the divine order and is henceforth subject to its own particular necessities²². Adeniran²³ described national interests in this manner:

When statesmen and bureaucrats are expected or are required to act in the national interest.... What it means is that they are being called upon to take action on issues that would improve the political situation, the economic and social well-being, the health and culture of the people as well as the political survival. They are being urged to take action that will improve a lot the people rather than pursue policies that will subject the people to domination by other countries.... policies which are likely to make them to stand among nations.

States could now openly embark on wars purely out of self-interest to secure these national interests, U.S has done this vigorously. Mercantilism can be seen as the economic justification of the aggressive pursuit of the national interest. Classically speaking, 'national interest' extrapolates from the Adam Smith's viewpoint that if the individual were left to pursue his own interests, in the long run- by the operation of the 'invisible hand'- he would thereby contribute to the welfare of the community as a whole.²⁴ The author went further to posit that the idea of national interest is closely related to the aggregation of disparate 'wills' into a general will as argued by Jean Jacques Rousseau or the collapsing of specific interests into 'a public philosophy' as suggested by Lippman²⁵. A foreign policy geared towards pursuing the national interest is the foundation of the realist school of international relations. The realist school reached its greatest heights at the Congress f

¹⁹Okon, E. (2013) National Interest. In Hassan, A.S and Aremu, F.A.ed. (2013). *Introduction to International Relations*. Ibadan, College Press & Publishers Ltd

²⁰Okon, E. (2013) National Interest. In Hassan, A.S and Aremu, F.A.ed. (2013). *Introduction to International Relations*. Ibadan, College Press & Publishers Ltd

²¹ Rosenau,J.(1969) '*National Interests*', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social sciences*. New York: Macmillan/Free Press.

²²Okon, E. (2013) National Interest. In Hassan, A.S and Aremu, F.A.ed. (2013). *Introduction to International Relations*. Ibadan, College Press & Publishers Ltd

²³Adeniran, T. (1983) *Introduction to International Relations*. Lagos: Macmillan

²⁴Okon, E. (2013) National Interest. In Hassan, A.S and Aremu, F.A.ed. (2013). *Introduction to International Relations*. Ibadan, College Press & Publishers Ltd

²⁵ Lippmann,W. (1963) *U.S Foreign Policy. Shield of the Republic*. Boston. New York.

Vienna with the practice of the balance of powers, which amounted to balancing the national interest of several great and lesser powers.

5. The Core Drivers of Brexit: A Theoretical Explanation

The fact that nation-states are driven by national interests in their conduct of external relations are not an issue of dispute. The core issue of dispute is inability of nation-states to meet these interests in the conduct of international politics. Not meeting this noble ideal- national interests may lead to self-help approach or may be sorted out by negotiation with other actors in the system. The core drivers of Brexit are rooted on the perceived threat to what the British people perceive as an erosion of their national interests. This section will analytically look at the issues to uncover the social forces that drive Brexit.

Defence of Sovereignty: The Core Driver.

Scholars and analysts that cut across diverse background tried to explain the driving force for United Kingdom to leave Europe a Union from the perspective of defending the sovereignty of Great Britain as one theoretical explanation of Brexit. However, a deeper examination of events, it trickles down to forces that may political, economic or cultural which revolved around the defence of national interest as stipulated by intergovernmentalism. Defense of sovereignty is probably the most common argument among intellectual-minded people on the British right, expressed by Conservative politicians such as former London Mayor, Boris Johnson and Michael Cove. Over the past few decades, a series of EU treaties have shifted a growing amount of power from individual member states to the central EU bureaucracy in Brussels. On subjects where the EU has been granted authority — like competition policy, agriculture, and copyright and patent law — EU rules override national laws. Euroskeptics emphasize that the EU's executive branch, called the European Commission, isn't directly accountable to voters in Britain or anyone else. British leaders have some influence on the selection of the European Commission's members every five years. But once the body has been chosen, none of its members are accountable to the British government or to Britons' elected representatives in the European Parliament. The global recession that began in 2008 was bad around the world, but it was much worse in countries that had adopted Europe's common currency, the euro. The unemployment rate shot up above 20 percent in countries like Greece and Spain, triggering a massive debt crisis. Seven years after the recession began, Spain and Greece are still suffering from unemployment rates above 20 percent, and many economists believe this problem is caused by euro. Luckily, the UK chose not to join the common currency, so there's little danger of the euro directly entering the British economy. But the euro's dismal performance still provides extra ammunition to Brexit supporters.

Many economists believe that deeper fiscal and political integration will be needed for the eurozone to work properly. Europe needs a common welfare and tax system so that countries facing particularly severe downturns — like Greece and Spain — can get extra help from the center. But that makes Britain's continued inclusion in the EU awkward. Britain is unlikely to go along with deeper fiscal integration, but it would also be unwieldy to create a set of new, parallel eurozone-specific institutions that excluded the UK. So, the argument goes, it might be better for everyone if the UK got out of the EU, clearing the path for the rest of the EU to evolve more quickly into a unified European state. This line of reasoning find resonance in the idea that UK's involvement in EU politics drains financial resources from UK and to the eurosceptics, this is exploitative relationships that has to be done away with or to the rise of populism (Inglehart and Norris²⁶ and Pelkman²⁷, Przybylski²⁸). From the inception of EU, from the time of coal and steel company, the UK had always been skeptical about joining EU. This was seen in its first referendum conducted after two years of association with EU in 1973. From this line of thinking, the drivers are narrowed down to issues that UK financial power are being exploited among EU and that the immigration and the mix-up with foreigners have dramatically affected the national identity of UK. It has been noted that issue of identity is a powerful force in understanding inter-group relations²⁹. The issue is that the influx of immigrants into the UK is a source of insecurity among British people. Grivin³⁰, Inglehart and Norris³¹, Arnorsson and Zoga³² pointed that people coming into the United Kingdom is not a problem but when unregulated immigration exceeds the minimum benchmark it now constitutes a problem. Put differently, through refugee and political asylum, many foreigners have entered UK and compete with their nationals on available jobs and basic amenities to the disadvantage of British people³³. According

²⁶Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash. *HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, (Online), pp. 1-53. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Amir/Downloads/RWP16-026_Norris.pdf (Accessed 11 December. 2021).

²⁷Pelkmans, J. (2017), *Economic Impact of Brexit on EU27: Part 2 – Sectoral Consequences*. Centre for European Policy Studies presentation at IMCO Workshop on Implications of Brexit, European Parliament

²⁸ Przybylski, W. (2019). 'The Real Tragedy of Central Europe.' *The Aspen Review* 04: 54–58.

²⁹ Amir, A. Ghislaine, A. and Abygel C. (2019). The Impact of Brexit on the Future of the European Union. Online article. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

³⁰ Grivin, B. (June 2018). Brexit and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe: why and how nationalism matters | H-Nationalism | H-Net. (2018). Retrieved from <https://networks.hnet.org/node/3911/discussions/1971598/brexit-and-rise-right-wing-populism-europe-why-and-how>.

³¹Inglehart, R. & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash. *HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, (Online), pp. 1-53. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Amir/Downloads/RWP16-026_Norris.pdf (Retrieved 1 December. 2024).

³² Arnorsson, A. & Zoega, G. (2018). On the causes of Brexit. *European Journal of Political Economy*, (online), Available at <file:///C:/Users/Amir/Downloads/SSRN-id2851396.pdf> (Retrieved January 5, 2022).

³³ Amir, A. Ghislaine, A. and Abygel C. (2019). The Impact of Brexit on the Future of the European Union. Online article. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

to Arnorsson and Zoga³⁴, he did show influx of people into UK especially in London, Northern England, Scotland and Ireland led to inequality and economic disparities existing in the British society. he contended the mass movement of people led to competition between migrants and native Britons over few available jobs. This leads to deprivation among the citizens within these areas influenced the referendum where most of votes from these regions supported Brexit. Arnorsson and Zoega³⁵ did show that between 2009 and 2014, two millions of UK-born individuals suffer from unemployment due to the fact that 5% of migrant against 7% UK citizens were at work. Erlange³⁶ relying on the report by the British Bureau of Statistics which documented that in 2015, about 942 000 immigrant workers in the UK come from the eastern European countries and principally Bulgaria and Romania while 791 000 originate from western European countries. From the same report, the net migration to Britain reached about 330 000 people in 2015, whereby more than a half is from the European Union. Britons now feel that immigrants are likely to drain more charge in their national economy in terms of economic costs and tax revenues, despite the fact some scholars and experts have recognized that immigrants are rather a considerable asset for the UK's economy.

The Cultural Explanation

One theoretical explanation offered for Brexit is what has described as 'Cultural Backlash'. This is a perception of group of persons who oppose multiculturalism, progressive, cosmopolitan behaviour towards strangers. Iakhnis et al³⁷ are of the view that most studies from scholars on European integration did show that most people perceive other culture as a threat to their identity. The populist ideology argues that immigrants into the UK not only threaten their national identity but also undermines and erodes democratic values and ethos that have endured over time in their process of evolution. To this effect, they portray some cultures as violent and harmful. To be sure, the populists see the Muslim people as violent and argues that their culture is anti-democratic. In this sense, those who voted for Brexit linked the Muslim people to terrorism and violence. This has pushed for the need for Brexit (Girvin, 2018)³⁸. To be sure, Amir, Ghislaine, and Abygel³⁹ had stated thus: '...populist has a grievance against the immigrant in the sense that they benefit from their social welfare, take their job, increasing insecurity, disintegrate their national identity. Indeed, they believe that traditional British values are marginalized by placing too much emphasis on the needs, religions and beliefs of foreign groups'

6. Consequences of Brexit in UK-EU Relations

There are wide concerns from analysts about the consequences of UK exit from EU. For example, Bailey et al⁴⁰ find that the 'imposition of a new non-tariff barriers through Brexit has proved particularly challenging to smaller firms in manufacturing supply chains'. While some pundits also said it will affect the UK trade relations tremendously. In brief, the followings have been identified as a major consequence for United Kingdom First, the UK alone will not be an attractive export platform for multinational companies because it does not bear significant potential tariff and non-tariff costs when exporting to the rest of the EU. The consequences of Brexit on United Kingdom from economic perspective is diverse owing to the many advantages the UK derive from being membership of the European Union. The UK trade statistics shows that it depends more on the EU than vice versa considering that 12.6% of UK GDP is deeply connected to trade exports linked to the European Union while just a paltry 3.1% of GDP of the remaining 27 countries are connected to exports to the UK. This implies therefore the UK's trade volume will shrink after Brexit due to a cut in trade deals between them. In what follows, another effect will be a downturn in UK economy due to size of EU market that receives 44% of UK exports and 60% of UK overall trade is covered by EU countries. Such economic clout UK has within EU will be jeopardized. Under the EU industrial policy, it has a unified policy that governs all EU member states. The UK benefits from this policy on industry more than any other country in the EU. Gregor⁴¹ stated that:

The UK receives more funding from the European Research Council than any other country and 50% more than Germany, allowing UK universities to fund more than 10% of project-based research from EU contributions. Ten of the top twenty universities in the FP7 programme are in the UK, including the top three. UK researchers benefit from the pan-European collaboration encouraged by programmes like Horizon 2020. 49% of CBI members say access to EU research funding helps their business. The automotive, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals sectors are among the beneficiaries.

³⁴ Arnorsson, A. & Zoega, G. (2018). On the causes of Brexit. European Journal of Political Economy, (online), Available at file:///C:/Users/Amir/Downloads/SSRN-id2851396.pdf (Retrieved January 5, 2022).

³⁵ Arnorsson, A. & Zoega, G. (2018). On the causes of Brexit. European Journal of Political Economy, (online), Available at file:///C:/Users/Amir/Downloads/SSRN-id2851396.pdf (Retrieved January 5, 2022).

³⁶ Erlange, S. (2016). Britain Votes to Leave E.U.; Cameron Plans to Step Down, The New York Time, (Online), ph. 8-17. Availableat:https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/25/world/europe/britaineuropeanunionreferendum.html?_r=0 (Accessed 2 December. 2018).

³⁷ Iakhnis, E., Rathbun, B., Reifler, J., & Scotto, T. J. (2018). Populist referendum: Was 'Brexit' an expression of nativist and anti-elitist sentiment?. Research & Politics, (online), Vol 5. No, 2, pp. 1-36. Available at: https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/897/docs/brexit.pdf (Accessed 3 May. 2019).

³⁸ Girvin, B. (June 2018). Brexit and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe: why and how nationalism matters | H-Nationalism | H-Net. (2018). Retrieved from https://networks.hnet.org/node/3911/discussions/1971598/brexit-and-rise-right-wing-populism-europe-whyand-how.

³⁹ Amir, A. Ghislaine, A. and Abygel C. (2019). The Impact of Brexit on the Future of the European Union. Online article. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

⁴⁰ Bradley, S. (2023). *Spain: A History in Art*. Irwing papers

⁴¹ Gregor, I. (2015) Brexit: The Impact on the UK and the EU. Global Counsel Publication. Retrieved on 20 June 2020.

The employment strength of the automotive sector is on average of 0.42% of labour force from the United Kingdom which represents a total of 4.9% of the overall exports of the United Kingdom to the EU market averaging 35% by value. The economic implication is that if the EU-UK are unable to negotiate a deal as it is presently that deadlines on negotiation have not been met tariffs on cars is likely to rise to 10%. The chemical and pharmaceuticals employ 0.52% of UK labour force, totaling 9.9% share of all UK exports of which 57% goes into the EU. If negotiation breakdown, then tariffs skyrocket to 4.6%.⁴² The aerospace sector houses employment ratio at 0.34% of labour force in United Kingdom. This represents 2.3% share of total UK exports comprising 45% heading to the EU. If the EU-UK negotiation deal could not go through, the risk of market disruption is pegged at 7.7% tariffs. The increase in tariffs will be severe in food, beverage and tobacco which will increase by 15%. Secondly, multinationals have complex procurement procedures and many coordination costs between headquarters and local branches. This would be more difficult if, for example, the United Kingdom left the European Union, the transfer of staff between firms would be more difficult, with stricter immigration controls. Thirdly, uncertainty about the shape of future trade arrangements between the United Kingdom and the EU will tend to reduce inflow of foreign direct investment. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe saw the UK as less attractive to Japanese investors in the future. All this could lead the British economy to stagnate for a year. On the other hand, an EU without UK is a problem. In the political economy of European Union, UK has enormous impact in trade and other services. For example, The UK accounts for about 12.5% of the EU population, 14.8 % of its economy and 19.4 % of its exports, except for intra-EU trade. In addition, Britain runs a trade deficit of £28 billion, home to about 2.5 million EU citizens, and one of the largest contributors to the EU budget (about 12 % of the budget). There are also fears that the departure of the British would lead Germany to carry more financial burden (Ham, 2016 cited Amir, Ghislaine, and Abygel, 2019)⁴³. EU's exit will alter the political landscape of European Union. The EU will no longer be a force in shaping global international relations and it may likely look up to United State of America for more assistance in all matters. Again, its influence in the United Nations will likely diminish in both political and economic dimensions since the UK provides enormous soft power assets to the European Union⁴⁴.

The impact of Brexit on liberalization and regulation is projected to be hard-felt in EU politics since UK is the most liberalized country which often counterbalance illiberal countries in the EU that are inclined to protectionism. Under the EU voting rules created in 2014, it requires 35% minority votes to veto a policy in the European Council. With exit of UK, this will make the balance of power in the Council shifting away from the liberalizers (Ireland, Nordics and Netherland etc) making it difficult for them to assemble a blocking minority even with the support of Germany to kill-off a policy during debate in the European Union Council. As it is now, with Brexit, Germany would have been better-off in the Council with United Kingdom on its side in regulatory debates as this gives Germany more leverage in guiding and moderating the process as to have a collaborative outcome. Now, it leaves Germany vulnerable which may incline her to take assertive and adversarial position in the absence of a strong bulwark, the United Kingdom⁴⁵. For example, the presence of the United Kingdom in the European Council has been important in key areas as the UK had shaped key policy debates in liberalizing terms such as the REACH for chemicals Sector and service directives.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has investigated the politics of European Union from the perspective of national interests of United Kingdom. It argues that the core drivers of Brexit are reinforced by the need to defend national sovereignty, political, economic and cultural interests of United Kingdom. The populist based on their argument for Brexit on immigration which has polluted their national culture, causing inequality and economic deprivation among others. We argue that these issues raised above constitute the core of national interests of United Kingdom. The study recommends as follows: The UK should endeavour to put a structure that would draw as much as possible a deal that will empower the United Kingdom to remain very competitive in global politics and trade taking cognizance of the great influence of China and India in competing for African economic space. The EU should look inward to deepen integration among its members. This requires sacrifices and commitment from all members to keep the EU as a going concern in international system of states.

⁴² Duff, A. (2017). 'Brexit: Avoiding the Vortex.' Policy Network, 15 May

⁴³ Amir, A. Ghislaine, A. and Abygel C. (2019). The Impact of Brexit on the Future of the European Union. Online article. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

⁴⁴ Amir, A. Ghislaine, A. and Abygel C. (2019). The Impact of Brexit on the Future of the European Union. Online article. Accessed on 8 May 2019.

⁴⁵ Gregor, I. (2015) BrexiT: The Impact on the UK and the EU. Global Counsel Publication. Retrieved on 20 June 2020.