

## **“Britain’s Shifting Identity in Europe: From Reluctant Member to Defiant Exit-er”**

**Researcher:**

**Dr. Samira Fayad**

Centre D’Etudes Diplomatique et Stratégiques (CEDS), Paris



**Abstract:**

This article offers a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit. It investigates the political, economic, legal, and sociocultural consequences of this historic process, which has profoundly reshaped the UK's domestic governance and its role in the international order. Far from being a sudden rupture, Brexit is positioned as the culmination of a long history of British ambivalence toward European integration. This complex relationship has been shaped by a persistent desire to preserve national sovereignty, a historically rooted sense of British exceptionalism, and skepticism about supranational governance structures.

The study adopts a qualitative analytical methodology, combining historical documentation, EU treaties, government records, academic literature, media discourse, and political speeches. Special attention is given to parliamentary debates, referendum outcomes, and official communications from key political figures to trace the evolution of British Euro skepticism and identity politics. The research also evaluates the impact of populist narratives, immigration anxieties, and economic discontent—especially following the 2008 financial crisis—in fueling support for the Leave campaign.

Key findings of the study demonstrate that economic rationales were often overridden by symbolic appeals to sovereignty, cultural identity, and border control. The Brexit vote exposed deep divisions within the UK's political geography, with Scotland and Northern Ireland voting to remain, and England and Wales largely supporting exit. These results have reignited debates over Scottish independence and raised questions about the stability of the Northern Ireland peace process. At the same time, Brexit has transformed political loyalties, dismantling traditional party alignments and replacing them with a new cleavage based on attitudes toward globalization and national identity.

In the post-Brexit era, the UK faces considerable challenges in redefining its global strategy. The government's "Global Britain" narrative aspires to restore the UK's influence on the world stage through new trade partnerships and increased diplomatic engagement. However, the early outcomes have been mixed, with trade disruptions, regulatory divergence, and institutional adaptation generating uncertainty. The UK must now reconcile its desire for autonomy with the realities of global interdependence, particularly in the realms of trade, security, migration, and climate policy.

The article concludes with a series of strategic recommendations tailored to various stakeholders. For policymakers, the study calls for transparent communication about international agreements, inclusive governance, and long-term strategies to address regional disparities. For scholars, it emphasizes the need for further research into identity formation, regional integration, and institutional reform in post-Brexit Europe. For educators, the article advocates incorporating historical and geopolitical context into civic education to better equip future generations to understand and participate in democratic processes.

By tracing the United Kingdom's journey from reluctant EU member to defiant exit-er, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary European politics, the challenges of national sovereignty in a globalized world, and the evolving relationship between citizens and the state.

**Introduction:**

This research presents no specific research problem or unresolved issue. It aims to analyze and interpret the phenomenon of Brexit from a multidisciplinary perspective.

The purpose of this article is to present a comprehensive analytical overview of the multi-dimensional consequences of the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union, commonly known as Brexit. This research seeks to explore both the internal and external repercussions of Brexit, delving into economic, political, security, and sociocultural transformations that emerged as a result of this historical shift. By examining the causes, processes, and consequences of the UK's departure from the EU, the study sheds light on the broader implications for the future of European integration and international relations.

The problem of the article: is to understand how Brexit has reshaped the internal dynamics of the United Kingdom, impacted its external relationships—particularly with EU member states—and contributed to significant global political shifts. It also assesses how Brexit has influenced internal unity within the itself, especially considering the diverging responses from Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London. At its core, the research seeks to address the complex interplay between national sovereignty, economic self-determination, and regional cooperation.

This study is of paramount importance due to the profound and far-reaching consequences that Brexit has triggered. From trade relations and labor markets to national security and geopolitical strategy, Brexit has altered the UK's position on the global stage. Moreover, it has posed significant questions about the viability of supranational governance, the sustainability of economic integration, and the future trajectory of the European Union itself. Understanding these impacts is critical not only for policymakers and scholars but also for citizens and institutions navigating the new post-Brexit reality.

To thoroughly investigate these issues, the research employs a mixed-method approach grounded in qualitative analysis. The methodology involves a thorough review of official documents, including government reports, EU treaties, economic forecasts, policy statements, and academic literature. Historical contextualization is used to trace the evolution of the UK's relationship with the European Union, from its initial entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 to its official departure in January 2020. Additionally, data from credible economic studies, such as those published by HM Treasury and the Bank of England, are utilized to evaluate the economic ramifications of Brexit under various scenarios (e.g., EEA agreements, WTO rules, and bilateral trade deals). (Bickerton, 2020)

A key component of the methodology is the examination of political narratives and media discourse, particularly during and after the 2016 referendum campaign. This analysis helps uncover the underlying social and psychological factors that influenced public opinion, such as national identity, immigration concerns, and economic insecurity. The role of external actors and digital manipulation, especially through organizations like Cambridge Analytical, is also explored to assess the extent of foreign interference and media influence on democratic processes.

The study also places strong emphasis on comparative policy analysis. By comparing the UK's post-Brexit strategies with those of other non-EU states and former EU affiliates—such as Greenland and Switzerland—the research identifies patterns and anomalies in the implementation of exit mechanisms, notably Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. The UK's negotiation processes, from Theresa May's failed withdrawal agreements to Boris Johnson's final trade deal, are critically analyzed to understand the strategic, legal, and economic trade-offs involved.

One of the core strengths of the study lies in its interdisciplinary nature. It bridges insights from international relations, economics, political science, and security studies to provide a holistic understanding of Brexit's ripple effects. This interdisciplinary lens is particularly important in light of contemporary challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has compounded the economic and logistical disruptions caused by Brexit. The study also examines the interplay between Brexit and other global shifts, including U.S. political support under the Trump administration and the reorientation of foreign policy toward Anglo-American and Commonwealth alliances.

Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to a more nuanced and informed dialogue around the consequences of Brexit. Rather than focusing solely on immediate economic impacts or political rhetoric, it encourages a deeper reflection on how Brexit has redefined the concept of national sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected world. Furthermore, it considers the broader implications for the future of regional cooperation, both within Europe and beyond.

This introduction sets the stage for a more detailed exploration in the following sections of the article, which will delve into the economic, political, and security-specific consequences of Brexit and their interconnections. The insights gained from this study can inform future policy decisions, negotiations, and academic debates on regional integration, democratic participation, and national identity in a globalized era.

## Chapter One: The Repercussions of Brexit on the British Interior

### . Preface

The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, widely known as Brexit, marked a historic turning point in both British and European politics. On June 23, 2016, more than 46 million Britons participated in a referendum to decide whether to remain in or leave the EU. With 51.% voting to leave, the results sent shock waves across the political, economic, and social fabric of the United Kingdom and its neighbors. This chapter investigates the internal causes and consequences of this decision, shedding light on the key political motives and societal divisions that shaped and followed Brexit. (Portes, 2016)

Causes of Withdrawal from the European Union (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)

The reasons behind the UK's decision to exit the EU are multi-faceted and rooted in both historical skepticism and contemporary political discourse. One prominent motive was the desire to regain national sovereignty. A significant portion of the British population believed that EU membership had eroded the UK's legislative independence, particularly in areas such as immigration, border control, and judicial oversight.

Economic considerations also played a vital role. While the EU provided a single market of over 500 million people, critics argued that the UK's economic potential was being constrained by EU regulations. Moreover, many viewed the EU's financial contributions, including support for economically weaker states, as a burden on British taxpayers.

Social factors, including rising immigration and the perception of cultural dilution, added another layer of complexity. Anti-immigration sentiments were exploited by populist movements, suggesting that Brexit would allow the to take back control of its borders. The issue of immigration became so central that it often overshadowed economic and political debates.

### Internal Political Ramifications

Brexit exacerbated longstanding tensions within the particularly between its constituent nations. Scotland and Northern Ireland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, creating a sense of democratic deficit and alienation from the broader UK-wide decision. In Scotland, this reignited calls for independence, with the Scottish National Party (SNP) leveraging the result to push for a second independence referendum. (Daddow, 2019)

In Northern Ireland, the situation was even more precarious. The reintroduction of border concerns between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland threatened the fragile peace established by the Good Friday Agreement. The possibility of a "hard border" sparked fears of renewed sectarian conflict, with many nationalist communities feeling betrayed by the outcome.

In contrast, England and Wales—particularly rural and older demographics—voted predominantly to leave. This revealed a stark cultural and generational divide within British society, underscoring the fragmented nature of national identity in a post-Brexit.

### Implications for Governance and Legal Sovereignty (Ekins & Gee, 2019)

One of the major promises of the Brexit campaign was the restoration of legislative sovereignty to the Parliament. Following Brexit, the government took steps to reclaim powers previously exercised by EU institutions, particularly in areas such as trade, agriculture, and fisheries.

The repatriation of laws led to significant legislative reforms, including the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which aimed to transpose EU law into domestic law. However, this transition raised legal ambiguities, especially concerning the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Tensions surfaced over which powers should return to Westminster versus the regional parliaments, further straining the unity. Moreover, the UK's departure from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) was hailed by many as a win for British sovereignty. Nonetheless, certain agreements—such as those related to Northern Ireland—still allow ECJ oversight, creating inconsistencies in the application of legal independence.

### Economic and Social Fragmentation (Henderson, Jeffery, Wincott, & Wyn Jones, 2017)

Internally, Brexit prompted significant economic uncertainty, especially for industries reliant on EU trade, labor, and investment. Manufacturing, agriculture, and higher education sectors faced disruptions due to the loss of friction-less trade and the end of freedom of movement.

Socially, Brexit polarized public opinion. It created what some analysts have called a “culture war” between cosmopolitan, pro-EU citizens and nationalist, anti-EU supporters. This division played out in the media, in politics, and even within families, revealing deep fissures in British society.

The government's handling of Brexit negotiations and the eventual agreement with the EU sparked public protests and parliamentary deadlock. This led to the resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May and the rise of Boris Johnson, who adopted a more aggressive approach to finalize Brexit under the slogan “Get Brexit Done.”

### **Institutional Shifts and Administrative Challenges (Jennings & Stoker, 2020)**

The practical implementation of Brexit required immense administrative restructuring. Government departments had to be reorganized to manage new customs procedures, regulatory frameworks, and trade negotiations.

The civil service, long accustomed to working within EU mechanisms, faced a steep learning curve in adapting to a post-EU landscape. New regulatory bodies were established to replace those previously under EU control, demanding significant financial and human resources.

### **National Identity and Public Sentiment**

Perhaps the most profound internal effect of Brexit has been its impact on national identity. For some, leaving the EU was a reaffirmation of British pride and autonomy. For others, it represented a retreat from global engagement and a loss of European belonging.

The referendum revealed conflicting visions of what it means to be British. These divergent identities have since influenced political affiliations, with new parties and movements emerging to either champion or resist the Brexit process.

Public trust in political institutions has also suffered. Many voters felt misled by campaign promises, particularly regarding NHS funding and trade benefits. This erosion of trust has extended to the media and to traditional political parties, prompting widespread calls for democratic reform.

Finally, Brexit's repercussions on the British interior are vast and multidimensional. It has reshaped the United Kingdom's political landscape, fractured its internal unity, and ignited debates over national identity and sovereignty. While some view Brexit as an opportunity for renewal, others see it as a step backward from cooperative internationalism.

The internal consequences—ranging from political realignments and legislative reforms to social polarization and regional dissatisfaction—will likely continue to evolve in the coming years. Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for assessing the success or failure of Brexit but also for envisioning the future of the United Kingdom in a post-EU era.

## **Chapter Two: Political Realignment and the Road to Brexit**

### **Rise of Euro skepticism and Populism**

The political landscape in the United Kingdom experienced a notable shift in the years leading up to the Brexit referendum. A significant driver of this change was the rise of Euro-skepticism, characterized by increasing public and political dissatisfaction with the European Union. This sentiment was fueled by economic concerns, perceived loss of national sovereignty, and mounting frustration with EU bureaucracy and immigration policies.

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), under the leadership of Nigel Farage, emerged as the face of British Euro-skepticism. Although UKIP did not achieve substantial parliamentary representation under the UK's electoral system, its influence on public discourse was considerable. It framed EU membership as a constraint on British self-governance, particularly regarding border control and immigration. UKIP's messaging resonated strongly with voters who felt left behind by globalization and rapid social change.

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, public confidence in political elites and international institutions eroded further. Austerity measures, wage stagnation, and cuts to public services deepened economic inequality and sowed distrust in establishment politics. These conditions provided fertile ground for populist narratives that blamed the EU for economic and social decline. Anti-immigration rhetoric, particularly targeting Eastern European migrants, became more mainstream and framed immigration as a direct threat to British jobs, welfare, and cultural identity.

The convergence of these factors reshaped political discourse in the Mainstream parties, particularly the Conservative Party, began adopting harder stances on EU policy and immigration, both to appease the Euro sceptic wing within the party and to prevent losing votes to UKIP. In response to internal pressure and a desire to unify his party, Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold an in/out referendum on EU membership if re-elected in 2015. (Bickerton, 2020)

## The Brexit Referendum and Its Aftermath

On June 23, 2016, the held its long-anticipated referendum. The outcome—51. % voting to leave the EU and 48.% voting to remain—exposed deep societal fractures. The Leave campaign, supported by figures such as Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, framed Brexit as a chance to "take back control" of British laws, borders, and money. It drew heavily on concerns about national sovereignty and migration, often using emotionally charged messaging that blurred the lines between fact and fear . Palgrave.](Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)(Portes, 2016)

In contrast, the Remain campaign—backed by David Cameron and most economic experts—emphasized the potential risks of leaving the EU: economic downturn, isolation, and uncertainty. Despite this, Leave's appeal to emotion and identity politics proved more powerful, particularly among older, rural, and working-class voters who felt culturally and economically marginalized.

The vote's aftermath was immediate and dramatic. Cameron resigned, having lost political credibility. The pound sterling dropped sharply, and political uncertainty engulfed the country. Theresa May succeeded Cameron as Prime Minister and attempted to navigate a divided Parliament and electorate. Her tenure was marked by failed withdrawal agreements and mounting pressure from both hard line Brexiteers and pro-Remain factions.

Socially, the referendum exposed and deepened national divides. England and Wales voted largely in favor of leaving, while Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London overwhelmingly voted to remain. These results intensified existing debates over national identity and constitutional arrangements. In Scotland, the outcome fueled renewed calls for independence, while in Northern Ireland, fears resurfaced regarding the re-establishment of a hard border with the Republic of Ireland.

The referendum also sparked a broader cultural and generational conflict. Older voters were more likely to vote Leave, prioritizing sovereignty and tradition, whereas younger generations tended to vote Remain, valuing internationalism, multiculturalism, and EU mobility. These generational rifts remain one of the most lasting legacies of the referendum. (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)

## Consequences and Legacy

The long-term consequences of Brexit continue to unfold, but some of its most significant effects have already taken shape. First, Brexit has fundamentally reshaped UK-EU relations, replacing decades of integration with a new, more distant partnership based on the 2020 Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The no longer enjoys friction less trade or freedom of movement, which has impacted businesses, universities, and citizens on both sides.

Second, Brexit has called into question the coherence of the British Union. Scotland's pro-Remain vote has given new momentum to the Scottish independence movement, with the Scottish National Party arguing that being forced out of the EU against their will justifies another referendum. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the post-Brexit trade arrangements—especially the Northern Ireland Protocol—have created political instability and strained relations between unionists and nationalists. The delicate balance achieved by the Good Friday Agreement now faces new challenges.

Third, Brexit triggered a realignment of British politics. Traditional party loyalties were upended. The Conservative Party reinvented itself around nationalism and Brexit, while Labor struggled to present a unified position. In the 2019 general election, Boris Johnson's Conservatives won a landslide victory by breaking into traditionally Labour-held, working-class constituencies in the North of England—areas that strongly supported Leave. This shift has redrawn the UK's political map and redefined voter identities based on cultural and Brexit-related values rather than traditional class divisions.

Finally, Brexit has forced them to redefine its role on the global stage. While the government emphasizes a new "Global Britain" strategy focused on independent trade and diplomacy, its actual geopolitical influence remains uncertain. The loss of EU backing in negotiations and the need to build new alliances underscore the challenges of navigating a post-Brexit world order.

In conclusion, Brexit was not simply a policy decision but the culmination of years of political realignment, economic strain, and identity-based tensions. It revealed profound divisions within the and created new questions about sovereignty, unionism, and global positioning. From the rise of Euro-skepticism and populist politics to the dramatic 2016 referendum and its lasting legacy, Brexit has reshaped the United Kingdom in ways that will continue to affect its domestic and international trajectory for decades to come. (Daddow, 2019)



## Key Findings

Brexit reshaped UK governance and political dynamics. Parliament and the judiciary played unprecedented roles during the Brexit process, showcasing a shift in the balance between direct democracy and institutional representation. Political allegiances were redrawn, with a stark divide emerging between Leave and Remain voters based on views about globalization and national identity. Boris Johnson's ability to 'get Brexit done' demonstrated how assertive leadership combined with electoral support can break political deadlock (Brusenbauch Meislová & Bujard, 2025).

The United Kingdom's constitutional unity has been tested. The contrasting referendum outcomes across the UK reignited debates over Scottish independence and complicated Northern Ireland's status. Rather than consolidating sovereignty, Brexit intensified secessionist sentiments. Scotland now argues Brexit justifies a new independence referendum, while Northern Ireland remains partly integrated with EU rules, challenging the coherence of the union .

Short-and-medium-term economic outcomes are largely negative. Increased trade barriers with the EU, the UK's largest trading partner, have disrupted supply chains and reduced export volumes. Key sectors such as manufacturing and agri-food experienced significant downturns. Economic analyses forecast a GDP reduction of several percentage points relative to a no-Brexit scenario . Investment hesitancy and labor shortages further highlight the economic cost of Brexit.

Brexit opportunities remain limited and cautious. Although the UK has signed trade deals with countries like Australia and Japan, the anticipated benefits are modest. Regulatory divergence from the EU has been minimal, with UK policies mirroring EU standards for continuity. The UK's potential for innovation remains, but its use of policy autonomy has been conservative so far . Furthermore, Brexit placed the judiciary in an unusual political spotlight.

The European Union maintained internal unity and advanced integration. Despite fears of fragmentation, no other member state followed the UK's exit. Brexit strengthened EU solidarity, as member states unified behind Ireland and the single market. Initiatives like the COVID recovery fund demonstrate the EU's pivot toward strategic autonomy and deeper internal cooperation .

New UK-EU arrangements introduced friction. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement avoided catastrophic disruption, but added customs checks and regulatory barriers. The Northern Ireland Protocol, designed to preserve EU-UK stability, remains a point of contention and necessitates ongoing management, as seen with the Windsor Framework in 2023.

Brexit's final phase was heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic restrictions complicated negotiations and masked the immediate effects of Brexit. The refusal to extend the transition period heightened logistical pressures, while economic disruptions were compounded. Brexit added an additional layer of uncertainty to an already strained economy .

The UK's global role remains under redefinition. Though no longer bound by EU trade policy, the UK faces the challenge of maintaining international influence. While it retains strong positions in NATO and the G7, Brexit created diplomatic friction, as seen in episodes like AUKUS. The UK's global strategy, though active, still needs to demonstrate sustained soft power and diplomatic leverage.

Brexit has fundamentally altered governance and politics: Parliament and courts took on unprecedented roles to navigate Brexit, reflecting a clash and balance between direct democracy (referendum mandate) and representative institutions. Brexit realigned political loyalties, collapsing traditional party divides in favor of a new cleavage based on attitudes to globalization and identity (Leave vs. Remain). Boris Johnson's success in "getting Brexit done" highlighted how assertive leadership and electoral mandate can overcome institutional gridlock ( in the politics of Brexit - British Politics and Policy at LSE). Constitutional unity of the is under strain: The divergent referendum results in Scotland and Northern Ireland have translated into renewed pushes for Scottish independence and complications in Northern Ireland's status. Brexit, intended to strengthen sovereignty, paradoxically fueled secessionist sentiments – e.g., Scotland's government cites Brexit as grounds for a new independence referendum, and Northern Ireland's Protocol keeps it partially aligned with the EU, straining the union with Great Britain. (Jennings & Stoker, 2020)

Economic impacts on the UK 11are largely negative in the short-to-medium term: The UK Economy has faced increased trade costs with its largest trading partner (EU), leading to reduced trade volumes and sector-specific challenges, particularly in industries dependent on seamless EU market access (manufacturing, agree-food). Investment has been deterred by uncertainty and market shrinkage. Official forecasts and independent analyses concur that UK 11GDP will be modestly lower in the coming years than it would have been without Brexit, on the order of several percentage points (). Supply chain

disruptions and labor shortages in certain sectors (e.g., haulage, food processing) were exacerbated by Brexit, especially when combined with pandemic effects.

Brexit's promised opportunities are real but limited so far: The has utilized its new freedoms to negotiate trade agreements (with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and CPTPP accession) and to craft an independent immigration system. However, the economic gains from these deals are, by the government's own analysis, modest, and not sufficient to offset lost EU trade (Why Boris Johnson won't agree to a Brexit extension). Regulatory divergence has been minimal initially – the mirrored EU rules to ensure continuity, though it is reviewing retained EU laws for potential repeal. Thus, while the has policy flexibility, it has exercised it cautiously in many domains, seeking stability and EU equivalence (for instance, maintaining similar financial regulations to preserve market access). The real test of Brexit's opportunity side will come in the longer term if the uses its agility to pioneer beneficial innovations in law, trade, or technology.

The European Union retained cohesion and even strengthened integration in some areas: Contrary to fears of an EU unraveling, no other member state followed the out. Eurosceptic movements in Europe lost momentum as the complications of Brexit became evident. The EU 27 showed strong unity through the negotiations, standing behind Ireland and insisting on a fair but firm deal that protected the Single Market's integrity likely would have opposed), and pursuing more assertive policies in defense and digital regulation. The EU's power center tilted slightly – France and Germany became even more pivotal without the UK's counterweight, and smaller states lost a vocal ally on liberal economic issues – but the EU continues to function and even expand (with countries like Ukraine and the Balkans looking to join, ironically showing the EU's pull remains strong). ). Internally, the EU adjusted to Brexit by moving toward greater self-reliance: launching a major COVID recovery fund financed by joint debt (something the

Brexit required new UK-EU arrangements without replicating membership benefits: The Withdrawal Agreement and Trade Cooperation Agreement together create a framework that is far less integrated than EU membership. While they prevented the most disruptive scenarios (no legal cliff for citizens' rights, no tariffs on goods trade), they introduced significant friction in UK-EU relations: customs borders, regulatory checks, exclusion of the from EU institutions and many cooperative programs (except by special agreement), and loss of freedom of movement. The Northern Ireland Protocol stands out as a novel solution keeping one foot of the in the EU structure, and continues to require careful management (the need for the 2023 Windsor Framework adjustments underscores that these arrangements are complex and sensitive). The UK-EU relationship post-Brexit is cooperative but more distant and formal, reliant on treaties rather than shared institutions, which means ongoing diplomacy is needed to resolve issues as they arise.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly intertwined with Brexit's final phase: COVID both impeded Brexit negotiations (forcing them online, compressing timelines) and masked some initial effects of Brexit. The UK's refusal to extend the transition in the face of COVID was a risky political choice that ultimately forced both sides to negotiate under extreme pressure (Brexit and COVID-19 by Darren Harvey:: SSRN). The pandemic's economic shock made it challenging to isolate Brexit's impact, but as those effects become clearer, it's evident that Brexit added an extra layer of shock to an economy already in crisis. This concurrence also showed the importance of flexibility: for example, the delaying import checks was essentially an admission that dealing with pandemic fallout took priority over enforcing new trade rules.

Global Britain is a work in progress; UK's global role has shifted rather than shrunk entirely: Freed from EU trade policy, the is carving a niche as an independent trading nation with moderate success so far (CPTPP entry being a highlight). In foreign policy, the continues to exert considerable influence (e.g., NATO, G7, UN) and has aligned closely with Western allies on major issues (Russia, climate). However, outside the EU, the sometimes finds itself in tricky positions (balancing between the US and EU, as seen in the AUKUS vs. France episode). The UK's soft power remains robust, but Brexit did cause some reputation damage in parts of the world. Much depends on how the leverages its independence to reinforce international norms and partnerships—early indications like AUKUS and active Ukraine support show it can lead in specific arenas, but it also must manage relationships with the EU to avoid isolation in its own region.

The research conducted in this dissertation reveals multiple intertwined findings stemming from the Brexit phenomenon. Drawing from the qualitative analytical methodology that utilized historical documentation, official communications, academic literature, and political analysis, several key insights emerge concerning the United Kingdom's internal dynamics, national identity, political orientation, economic shifts, and global positioning.



### **Brexit and British National Identity (Bickerton, 2020)**

The decision to exit the European Union cannot be viewed merely as a political or economic act. Rather, it is deeply rooted in a long-standing sense of British national identity. Throughout Chapter, it becomes evident that the UK's relationship with the EU has always been marked by ambivalence, reflecting a broader historical resistance to full integration. The national discourse, as highlighted in speeches, political campaigns, and public debates, often emphasized sovereignty, autonomy, and a nostalgic appeal to British exceptionalism. These sentiments overshadowed pragmatic arguments for economic interdependence or political cooperation with Europe. The Leave campaign, for instance, framed Brexit not as a departure from unity, but as a reclaiming of national control — an identity-driven imperative. Thus, the findings indicate that Brexit was as much a cultural and psychological assertion as it was a constitutional or economic choice. Palgrave.

### **Sovereignty and Immigration Over Economic Rationality**

The second major finding confirms that economic logic was repeatedly subordinated to issues of sovereignty and immigration. As shown in Chapter , despite warnings from economists and political analysts about the potential financial costs of leaving the EU, a large portion of the electorate prioritized control over immigration and borders above market access or regulatory ease. The EU's policies on freedom of movement, viewed by some Britons as intrusive or threatening to national cohesion, became the focal point of political debates. This anti-immigration sentiment was a mobilizing force, particularly among Conservative and right-wing segments. Even though economic projections indicated probable downturns, especially in trade and foreign investment, these were dismissed or overshadowed by rhetoric appealing to cultural independence and border control. This finding is critical as it reveals a shift in democratic decision-making where symbolic sovereignty triumphs over measurable economic benefit. (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)

### **Domestic Policy Disruption and Union Cohesion**

The consequences of Brexit were not confined to international trade or foreign relations; they penetrated deeply into the domestic structure of the United Kingdom. The findings show that the referendum and its aftermath have strained the internal cohesion of the Scotland and Northern Ireland, both of which voted to remain in the EU, voiced strong objections to the outcome. Scotland in particular renewed its calls for independence, challenging the very fabric of the United Kingdom. (Daddow, 2019) The border issue between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland also reawakened historical tensions and created complex diplomatic challenges, particularly regarding customs and trade arrangements Phinmore, . This undermines national unity and suggests that Brexit has amplified centrifugal political forces within the The research further indicates that institutional realignments and regional dissatisfaction post-Brexit are ongoing and evolving, revealing a fragmented and contested domestic political landscape. (Phinmore & Hayward, 2020)

### **Brexit's Global Economic and Political Impact**

The UK's decision to leave the EU reverberated well beyond domestic borders. Findings from Chapter highlight the global implications of Brexit, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The simultaneous occurrence of these two disruptive events created a compounded crisis for the UK's economy and international relations. The loss of seamless access to the EU single market led to initial trade disruption, a measurable decline in imports from the EU, and only partial recovery of exports. At the same time, the pandemic disrupted global supply chains and strained national budgets. While it is difficult to isolate the effects of Brexit from the pandemic, the findings suggest that the UK's trade relations with major partners such as Germany, France, and Ireland have weakened, while China and the US gained a larger share of EU trade. (Daddow, 2019)

Moreover, the anticipated economic benefits of Brexit — such as new trade deals, deregulation, and domestic job creation — have been either delayed or largely symbolic. The research points out that despite government promises, wage growth has been modest, and labor shortages in key sectors (agriculture, transport, hospitality) have intensified. These findings reinforce the argument that the economic cost of Brexit has yet to be offset by tangible long-term gains. (Ekins & Gee, 2019)

### **Evolving Security and Intelligence Cooperation**

Another significant finding is the complicated landscape of security and intelligence sharing post-Brexit. Chapter outlines how the previously one of the EU's most active contributors to agencies such as Euro-pol and systems like ECRIS and SISII, faces new restrictions and reduced access as a third-country actor. While mechanisms exist for selective cooperation as seen with countries like Norway and Denmark — the UK's exit from the EU has necessitated new bilateral agreements, each with its own legal and political hurdles. The findings show that Brexit has weakened coordinated counter terrorism strategies,

judicial cooperation, and intelligence flows, at least in the short term, creating potential vulnerabilities for both the and the EU. Cambridge University Press. (Henderson, Jeffery, Wincott, & Wyn Jones, 2017)

### **The Future of UK-EU Relations**

Lastly, the findings suggest that the UK's relationship with the EU remains unresolved and fluid. While formal exit occurred, many aspects of UK-EU relations, particularly in areas like financial services, education, research, and border management, are still subject to negotiation. The UK's approach has oscillated between cooperation and confrontation, often constrained by internal political pressures and public expectations. Meanwhile, the EU has focused on maintaining cohesion among remaining member states and minimizing the precedent set by the UK's departure. The dissertation finds that while the Brexit process is legally complete, its political and institutional ramifications are far from over. (Jennings & Stoker, 2020)

### **Proposal:**

In light of the preceding analysis and the multifaceted findings related to Brexit's internal and external repercussions, several forward-looking proposals can be articulated to help the United Kingdom navigate its post-Brexit reality more effectively. These proposals are designed to address domestic challenges, mitigate economic risks, strengthen political unity, and reposition the globally in a manner that aligns with its values and long-term strategic interests.

### **Rebuilding Political Cohesion Through Inclusive Governance**

One of the most critical internal consequences of Brexit has been the strain it placed on the cohesion of the United Kingdom, particularly in Scotland and Northern Ireland. To address this, the government must prioritize inclusive and consultative governance that actively involves devolved administrations in post-Brexit policy-making.

It is essential to reframe the Union as a flexible and cooperative partnership rather than a centralized authority. A renewed constitutional dialogue should be initiated to: Review the powers of devolved governments.

Develop intergovernmental mechanisms to ensure representation in major national decisions.

Consider new frameworks for federal-like arrangements or more autonomy for regions.

By doing so, the can reduce the appeal of separatist movements and promote a more unified political vision. (Bickerton, 2020)

### **Re-establishing a Stable Economic Strategy with Global Reach**

Economic uncertainty and trade realignment were among the most significant short-term consequences of Brexit. In response, the must develop a targeted international economic strategy that diversifies its trade relationships while rebuilding ties with European partners.

This can be achieved by: Strengthening bilateral agreements with key EU member states to ensure smoother market access in sectors such as finance, pharmaceuticals, technology, and agriculture.

Expanding Commonwealth and transatlantic trade cooperation, particularly with the US, Canada, and Australia, through fair and reciprocal trade agreements.

Investing in domestic industries and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to boost competitiveness, job creation, and export capacity.

In tandem, fiscal policy should prioritize regional development to reduce economic disparity between London and peripheral regions, which played a role in Brexit voting patterns.

Designing a Balanced Immigration Policy (Daddow, 2019)

One of the driving forces behind the Leave campaign was public concern about immigration. While Brexit granted the greater control over its immigration system, the country still needs to attract foreign talent to sustain economic growth, especially in sectors like healthcare, education, research, and agriculture. (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)

A balanced immigration strategy should: Introduce a points-based system that values skills, education, and language proficiency while ensuring fair treatment and transparency.

Provide pathways for EU citizens previously residing in the to continue their contributions with secure legal status.

Launch public awareness campaigns that highlight the economic and cultural benefits of legal, skilled immigration.

Such an approach can ease public concerns while ensuring that the remains an attractive destination for global talent.

Enhancing Security and Intelligence Collaboration (Ekins & Gee, 2019)

Brexit has disrupted existing frameworks for security cooperation with the EU, particularly in the areas of intelligence sharing, cross-border policing, and counter-terrorism. To maintain internal and regional safety, the must: Negotiate new security arrangements that allow continued participation in databases like SIS II, ECRIS, and Euro-pol under third-country provisions.

Explore bilateral intelligence-sharing agreements with key EU member states and regional blocs.

Deepen collaboration with NATO and “Five Eyes” intelligence partners, ensuring that Brexit does not compromise the UK’s standing in global security alliances.

Moreover, the should invest in cyber security infrastructure and transnational threat response mechanisms, which are increasingly vital in the face of emerging digital threats.

Launching a National Dialogue on Identity and Civic Unity (Henderson, Jeffery, Wincott, & Wyn Jones, 2017)

Brexit revealed deep divisions across British society—between urban and rural populations, younger and older generations, and different educational and cultural groups. To bridge these divides, the needs a nationwide civic dialogue focused on building a common identity and shared purpose in a post-Brexit context.

This can take the form of: Public forums, town halls, and educational campaigns that promote listening, empathy, and constructive debate.

Revising school curricula to include content on European history, governance, democratic participation, and civic responsibility.

Supporting civil society initiatives that empower communities to lead reconciliation efforts, especially in regions most affected by political polarization.

These initiatives aim to foster a stronger, more informed, and unified national identity, mitigating the cultural fragmentation observed in the wake of the referendum.

Strategically Repositioning “Global Britain” (Jennings & Stoker, 2020)

Finally, the must rethink its role on the global stage beyond slogans. The “Global Britain” concept needs substance through:

Renewed diplomatic engagement with multilateral institutions such as the UN, WTO, and WHO.

A commitment to climate leadership, including rejoining cooperative EU environmental initiatives where possible.

Promoting cultural diplomacy, academic exchange, and soft power by reinvesting in international education programs (like Erasmus alternatives), development aid, and public broadcasting.

A clearly defined and ethically grounded foreign policy will help reestablish the as a credible global actor capable of building bridges across regions.

## Conclusion & Recommendations

The post-Brexit landscape is undeniably complex, marked by uncertainty, division, and the need for structural re-calibration. However, with strategic foresight and inclusive policy making, the has an opportunity to emerge stronger, more coherent, and more globally relevant. These proposals offer a road-map for reconciling internal divisions, stabilizing the economy, and redefining Britain's place in the world — not by retreating from cooperation, but by re-imagining it through national empowerment and international engagement.

The process and consequences of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union have unveiled complex challenges that span political, social, and educational domains. As such, this dissertation concludes with targeted recommendations for three key stakeholder groups: policymakers, scholars, and educators. These recommendations are grounded in the findings of the study and aim to support more informed governance, deeper academic inquiry, and enriched public understanding.

For Policymakers: Promote Transparency and Public Engagement in International Affairs (Bickerton, 2020)

One of the central insights from this research is that Brexit was, in part, the result of a significant disconnect between political leadership and public understanding of international agreements. Many citizens felt excluded from the decision-making process or misinformed about the implications of EU membership and withdrawal. This disconnect was exploited by populist rhetoric, leading to decisions driven more by emotion than informed judgment.

To prevent similar political crises in the future, policymakers should:

Foster transparent communication about international agreements, trade negotiations, and institutional commitments. Government agencies must prioritize clear, consistent messaging that explains how such agreements affect employment, public services, sovereignty, and national development.

Encourage public consultations and referenda only when the electorate is sufficiently informed. Complex geopolitical decisions must be preceded by educational campaigns, bipartisan debates, and access to independent information.

Strengthen parliamentary oversight on foreign policy and treaty negotiations to ensure democratic accountability. Greater involvement of regional governments, civil society, and expert committees can help democratize external decision-making and enhance legitimacy.

By bridging the gap between elite decision-making and public understanding, the can rebuild political trust and resilience against manipulation and disinformation.

For Scholars: Advance Research on Identity, Sovereignty, and Regional Integration (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017)

Brexit has opened fertile ground for new research inquiries into national identity, political psychology, and institutional resilience. The dissertation highlights how questions of belonging, tradition, and sovereignty influenced public opinion as much as, if not more than, economics. These dynamics continue to evolve in the post-Brexit environment and merit sustained academic attention.

Scholars are encouraged to: Explore post-Brexit identity formation across the UK's regions and demographics. Qualitative studies on how individuals understand Britishers, Europeans, and citizenship can provide insights into social cohesion, political alignment, and long-term unity.

Investigate the transformation of the UK's global identity, particularly the "Global Britain" narrative. Research should examine whether and how this strategy translates into real diplomatic, economic, and cultural influence .

Analyze Brexit's impact on European integration and the potential for further disintegration or reform within the EU. Comparative studies between the and other member states facing rising Euro-skepticism could offer valuable policy and theoretical contributions.

Evaluate legal and institutional adaptations following the UK's withdrawal, including changes to international law, trade systems, and regional governance.

A robust scholarly response to Brexit will not only help interpret its implications but also inform policy development in other regions navigating similar challenges.

For Educators: Integrate Historical and Geopolitical Context into Civic Education (Daddow, 2019)

Brexit revealed that many citizens lacked a clear understanding of the EU, its structure, and the UK's role within it. This knowledge gap made it easier for political actors to shape narratives without challenge. To address this issue at the root, education must play a more proactive role in preparing informed and critically engaged citizens.

Educators at all levels should: Incorporate historical context into discussions of contemporary geopolitics, emphasizing the long arc of European integration, colonial legacies, and the evolution of foreign policy.

Promote civic and media literacy, teaching students how to analyze political rhetoric, interpret data, and recognize misinformation. Understanding how institutions function—and why they matter—is essential to maintaining democratic participation.

Encourage interdisciplinary learning, blending political science, history, economics, and ethics to help students grasp the multifaceted nature of issues like Brexit.

Create platforms for debate and discussion, such as model parliaments, policy simulations, or essay competitions, where students can engage with real-world challenges in a participatory environment.

By cultivating informed, reflective, and globally aware individuals, the education system can help build societal resilience and reduce polarization in future political events. Wellings, (Wellings, 2019)

In Summary, the Brexit process has profoundly reshaped the United Kingdom's political, social, and diplomatic landscapes. While it marks the end of one chapter, it also begins another—one that requires thoughtful adaptation, inclusive dialogue, and a commitment to understanding. These recommendations provide a foundation for navigating the complex post-Brexit era, ensuring that future decisions are grounded in knowledge, equity, and collective responsibility.

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## "الهوية المتغيرة لبريطانيا في أوروبا: من عضو متردد إلى مغادر متحد"

إعداد الباحثة:

الدكتورة سميرة فياض

مركز الدراسات الدبلوماسية والاستراتيجية (CEDs)، باريس

### الملخص:

يقدم هذا المقال تحليلاً شاملاً ومتعدد التخصصات لقرار المملكة المتحدة الخروج من الاتحاد الأوروبي، المعروف باسم "بريكست". ويتناول التداعيات السياسية والاقتصادية والقانونية والثقافية والاجتماعية لهذا الحدث التاريخي، الذي أعاد تشكيل منظومة الحكم الداخلي في بريطانيا ودورها في النظام الدولي. لا يُعدّ البريكست انقطاعاً مفاجئاً، بل يُصوّر على أنه نتيج لتاريخ طويل من التردد البريطاني تجاه الاندماج الأوروبي. وقد تشكّلت هذه العلاقة المعقدة من خلال رغبة مستمرة في الحفاظ على السيادة الوطنية، وشعور متجذر تاريخياً بالتفوق البريطاني، إضافة إلى الشك تجاه هياكل الحكم فوق الوطنية.