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# THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF BREXIT FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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## ABSTRACT

The date 23 June 2016 brought in front of the United Kingdom and the European Union a very serious challenge named Brexit. In the June 23, 2016 referendum, the British voted to leave one of the most unique international organizations in the world, thus putting the EU in front of the UK's request for the activation of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which the EU is facing for the first time. Brexit is opening new chapters in the history of the UK, while the EU is engaging with the procedures of the voluntary withdrawal of an important member state, which is known about its high political and military role in the world. Some experts of international relations and European studies say that Brexit will have much more consequences for the UK, some for the EU, but truth is that Brexit will be accompanied with many consequences for both of its protagonists. Its risks are very serious so they may result with the dissolution of the UK. Meanwhile, the increase of euroscepticism within the EU's member states, with particular emphasis the presence of Eurosceptic voices in its most important members is at a very worrying level. Based on these facts, the knowledge about the real meaning of Brexit is necessary. Therefore, the main focus of this research lies in the classification of the main political consequences of Brexit for the UK and the EU.

**Key words:** Brexit; United Kingdom; European Union; Article 50; Euroscepticism.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper treats a topic which is about Brexit, a current international relations event, the importance of which is extremely high because is being considered as the one of the most important events in this decade. One of the biggest and most important member states of the European Union is the United Kingdom, which is in the process of withdrawal from the EU, and the decisive Article 50 has never been activated before. The importance of Brexit relies

on the fact that its consequences will open new chapters in the histories of the UK and the EU. Thus, the main purposes of the paper are:

- *To explain the way how the British voted in the Brexit referendum;*
- *To describe the withdrawal procedure of a member state from the European Union;*
- *To emphasize the main political consequences of Brexit for the United Kingdom and the European Union.*

The research questions of the paper are:

1. *What characterizes the withdrawal procedure of a member state from the European Union?*
2. *Which are the main political consequences of Brexit for the United Kingdom and the European Union?*

The hypotheses of this paper are:

1. *Brexit is pointing out that the power of nationalism should not be underestimated and the power of international organizations should not be overstated;*
2. *The disappointments of Scotland and Northern Ireland with Brexit may result with the dissolution of the United Kingdom;*
3. *Brexit will have negative effects on the enlargement policies of the European Union;*
4. *With the withdrawal of the UK, the EU's ability to become a global actor is questioned.*

Therefore, to answer the research questions and to identify the hypotheses, the paper is divided into three sections. The first one is about the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, and is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter offers information about the Brexit referendum results, to continue with second subchapter where is explained the withdrawal procedure from the EU. The second and the third sections are the most important chapters of the paper because within them are the main information about the political consequences of Brexit for the UK and the EU. The second section is divided into two subchapters, emphasizing two major political consequences caused by Brexit for the UK, early parliamentary elections and the risk of its dissolution. The third section is also divided into two subchapters and emphasizes three major political consequences of Brexit for the EU which are the increase of euroscepticism among its member states and its negative impact in the enlarging policies of the EU and in its future role in the international arena after UK's leaving. This paper has an *explanatory*, *analytical* and *comparative* nature, and for its realization are used *qualitative methods*, relying on the *literature* that has material relevance for Brexit and the European Union policies, and also in *the credible internet sources* that mostly contains Brexit issues.

## **1. THE UNITED KINGDOM DECISION TO LEAVE THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **1.1 The Brexit referendum results**

A portmanteau of the words “*Britain*” and “*exit*” it is the nickname for a British exit of the European Union after the June 23 referendum asking voters: “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?” (“What is Brexit?”, 2016). On *June 23, 2016*, the conservative British government fulfilled its promise

about the referendum of United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, known as the Brexit referendum. The results were in favor of withdrawing the UK from the EU because 17,410,742 British or 51.9% voted to leave the EU, while 16,141,241 voters or 48.1% voted against to remain in the EU ("Report on the 23 June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union - Registration and turnout and the result of the referendum", 2016). However "leave option" was not voted by all the British countries. Brexit was voted most in England, where 15,188,406 English or 53.4% voted to leave the EU and 13,266,996 persons or 46.6% voted to remain ("EU referendum results - London", 2016). In the state of Wales 854,572 Welsh or 52.5% voted for the withdrawal of their country from the EU, whereas 772,347 voters or 47.5% voted against Brexit ("EU referendum results - Wales", 2016). In Northern Ireland 440,707 Northern Irish or 55.8% voted against withdrawal from the EU and 349,442 voters or 44.2% voted for Brexit ("EU referendum results - Northern Ireland", 2016). The biggest opponents of Brexit were in Scotland, in which 1,661,191 Scottish or 62% voted to remain in the EU, while 1,018,322 or 38% to leave the latter one ("EU referendum results - Scotland", 2016).

## 1.2 The withdrawal procedure from the EU

Withdrawal is an act by which a member state of an international organization terminates its membership. The right to leave international organizations is explicitly mentioned in the constitutions of most of them and the circumstances regarding to the right of withdrawal vary depending on the organization. (Amerasinghe, 2005, p.117). While it has always been generally assumed that the European Union could be dissolved and individual withdrawals permitted by an agreement of all the Member States, most analysts believed before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 that the European treaties in their Nice version did not permit unilateral withdrawals, in view of express provisions stating that these treaties were concluded for unlimited periods. (Dörr & Schmalenbach, 2018, p. 1057). The Lisbon Treaty for the first time defined (Article 50) the possibility of voluntary withdrawal of a member state from the European Union. (Reka & Sela, 2011, p. 186). According to the Article 50:

1. *Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements;*
2. *A Member State which decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention. In the light of the guidelines provided by the European Council, the Union shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that State, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union. That agreement shall be negotiated in accordance with Article 218(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It shall be concluded on behalf of the Union by the Council, acting by a qualified majority, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament;*
3. *The Treaties shall cease to apply to the State in question from the date of entry into force of the withdrawal agreement or, failing that, two years after the notification referred to in paragraph 2, unless the European Council, in agreement with the Member State concerned, unanimously decides to extend this period;*
4. *For the purposes of paragraphs 2 and 3, the member of the European Council or of the Council representing the withdrawing Member State shall not participate in the discussions of the European Council or Council or in decisions concerning it;*
5. *If a State which has withdrawn from the Union asks to rejoin, its request shall be subject to the procedure referred to in Article 49 ("The Lisbon Treaty - Article 50",*

n.d.).

On *March 29, 2017*, the British government confirmed to the EU its decision to activate Article 50 (“Brexit: The UK’s letter triggering Article 50”, 2017) and on *May 22, 2017*, the EC approved the authorization decision to open Brexit negotiations, the commission and negotiating directives (“General Affairs Council (Art. 50), 22/05/2017”, 2017). Officially, the first phase of Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU began on *June 19, 2017*. The issues that characterized the first phase were the rights of the UK and the EU citizens, financial issues and the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This phase had six rounds and ended on *November 10, 2017* (“Speech by Michel Barnier, the European Commission’s Chief Negotiator, following the first round of Article 50 negotiations with the UK”, 2017), although sufficient progress was not achieved. The second phase is very serious and is characterized by very difficult and complicated talks because at this phase will be decided on the “divorce bill” that the UK should pay to the EU, as well as on regulatory, budgetary, supervisory, judicial and structural issues and for the most important part of this phase, the future relations that the UK as a non-EU member state will have with the latter one after Brexit. Brexit should be finalized on *March 29, 2019*, but hammering out an agreement in just two years was never going to be easy given the complicated nature of the issues involved plus the fact that whatever terms were negotiated would have to be ratified by twenty-seven national parliaments, each of which would have a veto over the conditions (Buckledee, 2018, p. 181).

## **2. THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF BREXIT FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM**

### **2.1 The “early” parliamentary elections**

Following the publication of the results of the Brexit referendum, on June 24, 2016 Prime Minister David Cameron had decided to resign from his post. Respecting the will of the British people for their decision and thanking all those who supported him for eleven years as the head of the UK government, he said that after the decision of British people to take a different path, the country needed a new leadership (“Brexit: David Cameron’s resignation statement in full”, 2016). Conservative MP Theresa May, on July 13, 2016, was invited by her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, to form the government after Cameron’s resignation (“Queen Elizabeth II appoints Theresa May as her 13th Prime Minister”, 2016). Theresa May belonged to the group of conservative MPs who supported David Cameron and remaining in the EU, and also asserted that Brexit is a very serious and hard challenge for anyone who becomes the head of the conservative leadership if David Cameron would resign (“Theresa May wants you to stay in the EU. Has she blown her chances of ever being Tory leader?”, 2016). On April 18, 2017, she announced her plans about the organization of “early” parliamentary general elections, in which case she surprised the British people because in September 2016 she claimed that the upcoming parliamentary elections in Great Britain would be held in 2020. The reason of this decision by Prime Minister May was to strengthen her influence on the Brexit negotiations because with their beginning in June 2017, she asserted that Labour Party, Scottish National Party and Liberal Democrat Party would try to hinder and destabilize the process in Parliament. Taking a new five-year mandate, May saw it as a very favorable time because it would serve to negotiate free trade agreements that pose the toughest challenge for the future of Britain after Brexit (“General election 2017: Why did Theresa May call an election?”, 2017). Those elections were held on

*June 8, 2017.* The voting electorate included a total of 46,835,433 people, and the voting process was attended by 32,294,928 voters or 69% (“Report on the 8 June 2017 UK Parliamentary general election - Summary: administration of the June 2017 UK general election”, 2017). Based on the results of these elections, the presence of Brexit’s influence was undeniable. Unlike the last election in 2015, voters turnout was higher for 1,597,403 persons or 2.6%. Conservatives won again the elections and compared to the last elections had a raise of 2,335,657 votes or 5.5%, but in these elections a big success marked the Labour Party, which unlike the previous elections had 3,531,187 more votes and an increase of 9.5%. While the difference between Labours and Conservatives in 2015 had been 1,986,953 votes or 6.5%, in 2017 it was 791,423 votes or 2.4%. The United Kingdom Independence Party, which had extraordinary success in the 2015 elections, receiving 12.6% of the total votes, in this election it had a terrible failure with 3,387,031 less votes and a fall of 10.8 %. It is clear that people of the UK, especially the British who opposed Britain’s exit from the EU and those who had already understood the consequences of Brexit for their country, although late, appeared dissatisfaction and repentance through the vote, punishing the UKIP, but also the Conservatives, as Brexit’s causers. Prime Minister May thought that these elections would strengthen her government’s position by increasing the majority of MPs at the start of the Brexit negotiations, but the results were not as she had hoped. She did not reach the majority because she did not have 325 deputies, whereby such a result implied uncertainty over her strategy regarding these negotiations. Conservatives reached an agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party, which had received 10 seats in the British Parliament and so now together they had 328 MPs (“Theresa May and the DUP deal: What you need to know - So how come Theresa May is still prime minister?”, 2017). DUP deputies are supporters of Brexit. It should be noted that no coalition has been formed between Conservatives and DUP because a coalition normally means that different parties have agreed on a common program and ministers are from both parties. Conservatives will have the support of the MPs of this party only when they need votes in budgetary issues and in confidence motions (“Theresa May and the DUP deal: What you need to know - So are the Conservatives and the DUP in coalition?”, 2017).

Table 2.1

*Results of the 2017 General Election in the United Kingdom*

PARTY	SEATS	+/-	VOTES	VOTE SHARE	+/- %
<i>Conservative</i>	318	-13	13,669,883	42,4	+5,5
<i>Labour</i>	262	+30	12,878,460	40,0	+9,5
<i>Scottish National Party</i>	35	-21	977,569	3,0	-1,7
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	12	+4	2,371,910	7,4	-0,5
<i>Democratic Unionist Party</i>	10	+2	292,316	0,9	+0,3
<i>Sinn Féin</i>	7	+3	238,915	0,7	+0,2
<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	4	+1	164,466	0,5	-0,1
<i>Green Party</i>	1	0	525,435	1,6	-2,1

<i>Social Democratic &amp; Labour Party</i>	0	-3	95,419	0,3	-0,0
<i>Ulster Unionist Party</i>	0	-2	83,280	0,3	-0,1
<i>UKIP</i>	0	-1	594,068	1,8	-10,8

*Note:* The data are adapted from “Results of the 2017 General Election”, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2017/results>.

## 2.2 The risk of dissolution

The risks of Brexit are very serious as they may result with the dissolution of the United Kingdom, a union that was created more than 300 years ago. Based on the results of the referendum, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted against leaving the EU, and the most dissatisfactions with Brexit were in Scotland. The results of the June 23 referendum highlighted a hypothesis that perhaps the UK might be dissolved in the future and that maybe in five years there will no longer be a United Kingdom. Scotland will be independent and part of EU. Less certain but quite possibly all or part of Northern Ireland will join Ireland. On September 18, 2014, Scotland had organized a referendum on its independence from the United Kingdom, but the results were 55.30% with 44.70% in favor of continuing to be part of the UK (“Scotland votes No”, 2014). The result was greatly influenced by the fact that an independent Scotland would most likely be treated as a new state, and therefore have to apply for membership on the EU. That process can take years and all EU members would have to approve the application and the risks of Brexit would be increased (“5 reasons to worry about Scottish vote - EU: In or out?”, 2014). Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Ferguson Sturgeon, claimed that the UK’s withdrawal from the EU could trigger a second referendum on Scotland independence because Brexit damages the future of the Scots, especially in the economic terms. The British government demands Scotland to be included in Brexit plans, but this demand contradicts the pro-European attitudes of the Scots, and the disadvantaged circumstances of Brexit will force them to reorganize this referendum (“Scottish government to publish plans for second independence referendum”, 2016). Minister Sturgeon has promised to reveal her plans for a second independence referendum in the “not too distant future”, after claiming there was currently too much “chaos” over Brexit (“Nicola Sturgeon: decision on a second Scottish independence referendum in the ‘not too distant future’”, 2018). Meanwhile, if Scotland organizes another independence referendum, the Scots anger caused by Brexit can be expressed through votes and detaching Scotland from the UK. The fear of the dissolution of UK is also increased by the EU’s promise to Northern Ireland after Brexit. According to international law, states can be created in an original way, and also can be created in derivative form by force (uprising) or peacefully (by agreement), always respecting the international legal order (Gruda, 2013, p. 72). If, after the UK leaves the EU and Northern Ireland decides to join the Republic of Ireland, it automatically becomes part of the EU, referring to the above mentioned point of the international law. DUP as a conservative government supporter requires a special Northern Ireland status in the UK/EU and if London does not agree its requirements, then its support for the conservative government may be jeopardized (“DUP leader threatens to withdraw support for Theresa May on Brexit customs plans”, 2018).

### 3. THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

#### 3.1 Increase of Euroscepticism among member states

The European Union is described as *sui generis*, or ‘unique’ in its own right because, unlike the United Nations and other international governmental organisations, it can actually be said to exercise a degree of sovereignty over its members via law-making powers in certain areas that its members agreed to relocate to the supranational level. In Europe there is a rising tide of discontent with the growing power of the EU and a desire in some political circles to weaken, or even dissolve, the organisation so that more of the power returns to the states. The Brexit debate raised many of these issues and is an interesting instance of the idea of supranationalism being challenged. (McGlinchey, 2017, p. 73-74). The European integration project is in poly-crisis mode: the financial crisis, the debt crisis, the economic crisis, the Greek crisis, the populism crisis, the productivity crisis, the terrorism crisis, the refugee crisis and the democratic deficit crisis. But Brexit is a different type of crisis. Brexit raises fundamental questions about the integration project. This was a one-way process towards a well-defined goal, but because of the ‘new settlement’, no more ever closer union (Campos & Coricelli, 2017, p. 48). Populist movements of the Right are developing across Europe, especially in the light of the refugee crisis that has been triggered by the wars in Syria in Afghanistan and in Iraq and by the consequences of global warming, which is pushing people to leave land that they can no longer farm and to seek a more prosperous life in Europe that they see portrayed daily on their television screens and on internet sites (Seidler, 2018, p. 378). According to a research realized by Pew Research Center in 2016, in ten European countries and the EU member states (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Hungary and Poland), the highest level of euroscepticism was in *Greece* (71%), *France* (61%), *Spain* (49%), *Great Britain* (48%) and *Germany* (48%). This research resulted that Euroscepticism was increasing throughout Europe and the percentage of Europhiles in these countries was 51% (“Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit - A double dip in EU favorability”, 2016). There are further indications that British Euroscepticism is at heart about rejecting UK membership (Harmsen & Spiering, 2004, p. 129). One of Brexit’s main risk for the EU is the encouragement of other states to leave it. The UK’s withdrawal from the EU is seen as a triumph of Euroscepticism against Europhilism. After the Brexit referendum, important elections were held in the main EU countries, in the Netherlands, France and Germany, characteristics of which were the Eurosceptic and anti-immigration views of some candidates who received extraordinary support from their citizens. On *March 15, 2017*, parliamentary elections took place in *the Netherlands*. Nationalist politician Geert Wilders has expressed his discriminatory views on Muslim immigrants, calling them dangerous to the Dutch, and his main promise was to end Muslim immigration to the Netherlands (“Geert Wilders, a Dutch Nationalist Politician, Calls Moroccan Immigrants ‘Scum’”, 2017). However, the elections were won by the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, led by *Mark Rutte* (21.3% of the votes), while Party from Freedom or Wilders’s party (13.1% of the vote) was ranked in the second place. The results of these elections were welcomed by the EU because they were seen as a quarter-final victory against the populism that had gripped Europe after the British referendum and US presidential elections (“Dutch election: European relief as mainstream triumphs”, 2017). On *April 23, 2017*, presidential elections were held in *France*. In the first round, the two candidates qualified for the French presidential elections were *Emmanuel Macron* of the *La République En Marche* (8,656,346 votes) and *Marine Le Pen* of the *Front National* (7,678,491 votes) (“Résultats définitifs du premier tour de l’élection présidentielle 2017

établis par le Conseil constitutionnel”, 2017). Le Pen caused tremendous vibrations on the European continent, based on the large number of supporters of her political platform, characterized by her promises regarding a particular brand of political isolation and economic nationalism, anti-immigration, the withdrawal of France from NATO, and Le Pen also had promised that if she would win these elections would follow the example of the UK in France, organizing a referendum to remain or to leave the EU. Thoughts about her victory had caused the fear that maybe the EU would face with “Frexit”, which will be fatal for it. Fortunately the elections were won by Europhile candidate Emmanuel Macron (20,257,167 votes) against Le Pen (10,584,646) (“Second tour de l’élection présidentielle 2017”, 2017). Federal elections in *Germany* were held on *September 24, 2017* and *Angela Merkel* triumphed (32.9% of the vote) for the fourth time but with a diminished authority. The Alternative for Germany, anti-immigrant Eurosceptics analogous to Britain’s UKIP, this time was the third biggest party, with strongest support in the east and south (“German elections 2017: full results”, 2017). Based on the results of these elections, the triumph of pro-EU leaders is seen as a success of Europhilism against Euroscepticism, however, it should not be denied that the Euroscepticism presence is at a very high level. Increase of Eurosceptic views is contributing to the frustrations of the EU member countries citizens towards its institutions regarding economic management and the immigration issues. The British Brexit vote is perceived as a vote against immigration (Taylor, 2016, p. 5).

### **3.2 The enlarging policies and the role of the EU in the international arena after Brexit**

European integration is becoming more and more a process influencing not only politics and economics, but also the European citizenry (Börner & Eigmüller, 2015, p. 3). The ‘Europe as power’ programme is similar to early international federalism in that both view the ‘outside world’ as dangerous - an assumption, which constitutes an important reason for European integration (Zwolski, 2018, p. 203). Thus, Europeanization is defined as the process of discourse diffusion by which Europeanity deepens and widens (Coman, Kostera & Tomini, 2014, p. 30). The EU has been going always through the enlargement process and for the first time with the Brexit it will face with decreasing number of the member states (It is doubtful that the EU27 is capable of, or even willing to, engage in further enlargement in the medium term). That leads to problems of its own in the Balkans, where the lack of perspectives of accession in the near future could lead to the emergence of new political conflicts (Cabral, Gonçalves & Rodrigues, 2017, p. 70). The EU27 will need to develop a sensible Balkans policy if it does not want to experience massive instability on its southern borders (Welfens, 2017). Most simply, the process of integration is the combination of parts into a whole, with the whole resulting from that combination being an integrated body. In the different definitions a common thread is the formation of political habits and institutions to foster cooperation and to lead to the end of hostilities and war, although many definitions go further (Salmon, 2000, p. 243). The Balkan countries (Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) are characterized by conflict history (common communist past and wars), multi-ethnic composition and problems with national minorities, poor governance, the underdeveloped economy and the Euro-Atlantic integration goals (Reka, 2010, p. 311-314). The Balkans is an enclave within the EU’s borders, which neither foreign nor internal ministries can neglect this fact for a long time, giving its potential both for helping and for hindrance of the EU’s security. Seen on regional and wider prospect, the EU integration is the only option (Hoti & Kosir, 2015, p. 254). In the Western Balkans, the Franco-German formula for establishing interethnic relations is the only option that will contribute to a new era, the era of building neighborly relations between countries and people



of the region (Rexhepi, 2011, p. 250). The EU will have to develop a reasonable Balkan policy if it does not want to experience massive volatility at its southern borders. Many important strategies as far as fulfilling the goals of prosperity and peace in the Western Balkans are facilitated through European integration (Sela, 2015, p. 40). At the Western Balkans Summit in Paris on July 4, 2016, Germany and France, as the most powerful voices of the EU, emphasized that Brexit will not affect the integration process of Balkan states on the EU (“Balkans - Sommet ‘Paris Balkans 2016’”, 2016). But the EU will be preoccupied with Brexit because it has never faced such a situation, so the integration of the Western Balkans will not be realized without finalizing Brexit, which means that the latter one will affect in the integration processes of these countries. Then, the UK is known as the most supportive member country of the EU enlargement policies and it has been a valued partner of the Western Balkan states that has continuously supported their integration process. In the Western Balkans Summit organized in London on July 10, 2018, with leaders of Western Balkan countries and European partners, the United Kingdom emphasized her support for the European integration of this region even after Brexit, but this support outside the EU does not have the same results compared to that inside the EU (“About the Western Balkans Summit”, 2018). The diminished weight of Europe in a world of well over nine billion people is clear enough, but less so is the degree to which its importance will have dwindled. Bewailing Europe’s shrinkage to less than five percent of the global population is fruitless, what’s needed is to look at the trends and the most likely developments to see how the European nations can retain a central role in this globalized world (Merritt, 2016, p. 29). The longer-term effects of Brexit would also be serious. The EU would lose much prestige from the exit of one of its biggest members. Britain is one of the few EU countries with real diplomatic and military clout, a state which is a permanent member of the Security Council in the United Nations that is the most powerful global governmental international organization. Brexit will be detrimental to the EU’s transatlantic relations, in which the UK has a very important mediating role. This implies that the withdrawal of the UK from the EU will damage EU’s ability to become a global actor with big importance in the international relations.

## CONCLUSION

The referendum of United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union was one of the major promises of the Conservative Party in the UK’s general parliamentary elections in 2015, in which they won. On June 23, 2016, the British people voted in favor of Brexit with a narrow result of 51.9% to 48.1%. England had the highest percentage of Brexit voters, also the Wales with 52.5%, while Scotland was the country with the highest percentage of anti-Brexit voters, and than the Northern Ireland with 55.8%. Withdrawal means an act by which a member state of an international organization terminates its membership, as well as the right and circumstances regarding to the right of withdrawal vary depending on the organization. The Lisbon Treaty for the first time defined the possibility of voluntary withdrawal of a member state from the EU through Article 50. Under this article, if a member state decides to leave the EU, initially notifies the European Council for its intention, then the EU negotiates and reaches an agreement with that state, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the EU. This agreement shall be concluded on behalf of the EU by the EC, acting by a qualified majority, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament. If no agreement is reached two years after the withdrawal notice, the EC in agreement with the member state unanimously decide to extend this period. The first phase of Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU began on June 19, 2017, which had six rounds and was finished on November 10, 2017, although sufficient progress was not achieved. The second phase is characterized by very

difficult and complicated talks because at this phase will be decided on the “divorce bill” that the UK should pay to the EU, on regulatory, budgetary, supervisory, judicial and structural issues and for the future relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union after Brexit. Based on these facts, the finalization of Brexit on March 29, 2019 seems quite difficult. The UK, also the EU, will not be spared from the political consequences of Brexit. When David Cameron resigned from the Prime Minister’s post, his seat was taken over by Theresa May. Brexit was causing disagreements among British politicians and to strengthen its influence on the Brexit negotiations, Prime Minister May made a decision to organize early parliamentary elections in 2017. However, although conservatives won these elections, they did not reach the majority and were forced to establish an agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party, but not a coalition. In these elections, the Labour Party had a growth of 9.5%, while the UKIP had a terrible failure, a decrease of 10.8%. The British who opposed Britain’s withdrawal from the EU and those who had already understood the consequences of Brexit for their country, appeared their dissatisfaction and repentance through the vote. Brexit’s major threat to the United Kingdom is the risk of its dissolution. Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Ferguson Sturgeon, alleged that Brexit could trigger a second referendum on Scotland independence because the withdrawal from the EU damages many Scots, especially in the economic terms. If this referendum will be organized, Scottish anger from Brexit can be expressed through votes and detach Scotland from the UK. On the other hand, one of Brexit’s main risks to the EU is encouraging of its member states to leave it, because of the frustration of the EU citizens towards their institutions related to economic management and handling immigration, is resulting with the increase of Euroscepticism. Although the triumph of pro-EU leaders in these countries is seen as the triumph of Europhilism toward Euroscepticism, it is not denied the fact that the latter’s presence is very high and creates spaces for concern. Also, Brexit has raised doubts about the EU’s ability and readiness to engage in further enlargement. The EU will be very concerned with Brexit because it has never before faced such a situation and this implies postponing the enlargement processes of the countries that aspire to join the EU, particularly the Western Balkans. If there is a lack of integration perspectives in the region in the near future, this can lead to the emergence of new political conflicts between Balkan countries and to cause even more problems to the EU. Then, the insecurity of the Western Balkans integration is enhanced by the fact that the UK has been one of the main EU enlargement promoters and the states of this region are losing one of the main supporters in this aspect. The United Kingdom is one of the few EU countries with real diplomatic and military power, and Brexit will be detrimental to the EU’s transatlantic relations and also for its ability to become a global player with important role in international relations. Based on the extremely complicated nature of Brexit negotiations, in which the spaces for complications and disagreements between the UK and the EU are not closed, there may will be other political consequences for both of Brexit protagonists.

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