



Brexit: the Political Impact of a Possible Withdrawal of Great Britain's From the European Union

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Abstract: -

Great Britain's withdrawal from the European Union would not only change the internal political climate, but it could have important political repercussions within the EU and also on its relations with other European Community's countries. Also, it could stimulate the other EU Member States to re-evaluate the terms and conditions of their membership. The same applies if Great Britain fails to renegotiate these terms and conditions while keeping the status of EU member. A priority for the UK is to maintain close trade relations with the EU, even if politically it would opt for withdrawal. In the event of possible withdrawal from the EU, Great Britain could conclude an agreement with the EU following the example of a customs union (after Turkey's model). In this case, it would not be obliged to contribute to the EU budget or accept immigration from the EU member states. Last but not least, from a geopolitical point of view, Great Britain's exit from the EU could be seen externally as a sign of decline, EU losing its financial, economic, political and military powerhouse. From this point of view, the European Union itself have a significant political and economic interest to conclude a mutually beneficial agreement with Great Britain considering that it could terminate its EU membership.

Key-Words: BREXIT, Great Britain, Uk's withdrawal from the European Union, EU Membership

Introduction:

Brexit and the Problem of the Right of Voluntary Withdrawal under the EU Treaties

Until the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), voluntary withdrawal from the European Union was not explicitly stated neither in the constitutive treaties of the EU nor the accession treaties of the Member States. The lack of regulations on the right to withdraw from the Union, most likely, a deliberate omission to not weaken the Member States' commitment to the political project of EU. Before the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, given the absence of any express provision regarding the withdrawal from EU, there were two approaches to the problem (Miheş 2012):

According to the first approach, there was a unilateral right of withdrawal, even if there were no explicit stipulations in this respect –by the right of any sovereign state to withdraw from concluded international treaties. This approach was not universally accepted, particularly given that the European Court ruled for EU member states, that the

accession to the EC brings a permanent limitation to sovereign rights.

Therefore, before Lisbon Treaty, the main way of withdrawal from the EU was consensual withdrawal. In very restrictive conditions, it would have been possible also for member states to exit the union under the Vienna Convention (1969), mentioning as the main reason the fundamental change of

circumstances about the time of contract.

The Lisbon Treaty established the right of Member States to withdraw voluntarily and unilaterally. Currently, to terminate its membership of the EU, the UK could invoke, from a legal point of view, Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU). Thus, according to par. 1, art. 50 of the TEU "any Member State may, by its constitutional rules, to withdraw from the Union". Formally, a Member State who intends to withdraw from the EU must make known the withdrawal request to the European Council. Further, the European Union must negotiate and conclude a withdrawal agreement with the state that wants to give up the EU member status. The negotiation of the withdrawal agreement is under Article 218, par. 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The agreement is concluded on behalf of the EU by the Council of Ministers which approve the agreement by a qualified majority after it has been voted in the European Parliament.

Article 50 of the TEU stipulates that EU Treaties shall cease to apply to the Member State, which has withdrawn from the EU or, if negotiations failed and did not reach any agreement, two years after the EU Member State sent the notification. The constitutional rules in force in each Member State and have the freedom to determine the withdrawal procedure, must take the decision to withdraw from the EU.

EU Member States option to withdraw from the European Union draws the attention of European politicians and analysts for the first time several years ago, when Greece was unable to pay its foreign debt. From that moment, the legal provisions on the right to withdraw from the EU were analyzed and debated extensively. The second country questioning its EU membership is the UK.

In January 2013, David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, has asked for the renegotiation of terms and conditions for Britain's membership of the EU and a referendum is to be held by the end of 2017, given the fact that the Conservative Party won the general elections in May 2015. If British exit from EU will take place, a process of deliberation regarding the desirability of preserving certain laws and regulations imposed by EU will be held at the national level.

Political consequences

The possible withdrawal of Great Britain from the EU could have significant consequences regarding the integrity and political unity of the UK. In England, Euroscepticism is more pronounced than in Scotland. Great Britain's withdrawal from EU is not supported by the Scottish National Party (SNP). In the event of the UK exit from EU SNP could demand a second referendum regarding the independence, that would offer the Scots

the chance to decide whether to detach from the UK while maintaining relations with the EU. England's withdrawal from the EU would not only change the domestic political climate, but it would have significant political consequences both within the EU and on the future relations between EU member states and other non-EU countries. For example, UK's exit from the EU could encourage other member states to re-evaluate the terms and conditions of their membership. The same applies if Great Britain succeeds to renegotiate these terms and conditions while keeping the status of EU member. At the same time Also, if Great Britain manages to negotiate (after a possible exit) a preferential agreement with the EU, this could lead to the renegotiation of EU's relations with other European countries that are not part of the EU (Switzerland, Norway, and Turkey).

Last but not least, from a geopolitical point of view, Great Britain's exit from the EU could be seen externally as a sign of decline, EU would lose the financial, economic, political and military powerhouse. From this point of view, the European Union itself would have a major political and economic interest to conclude a mutually beneficial agreement with Great Britain considering that it would want to terminate its EU membership.

Current political domestic situation and the problem of UK's from the EU

The most relevant domestic political event in the UK are the parliamentary elections hold in May 2015. In this context, the divergences between the Conservative Party and the Labor Party on the Brexit have become campaign issues. Also, for the current prime minister of the cabinet of London, the Conservative David Cameron, there was a post-election stake: to maintain its position as party leader and head of government. To get the votes from a significant part of the population that does not agree with the current European policy, the prime minister pledged to renegotiate Great Britain's terms of accession to the European Union. In this respect, he promises to organize a referendum concerning the country's withdrawal from the EU by the end of 2017. .

According to a survey conducted by Ipsos Mori in October 2014, 56% of respondents were for Britain's remaining in the EU, while 36% opted for leaving the EU. According to experts, it is the first time since 1990, when the British Eurosceptics are a minority. In 2011, 49% of the population expressed its desire for Great Britain to leave EU and only 41% were in agreement to stay.

Historical elements United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union

1949 - Britain signs, together with 9 other Western European Country France, Benelux,

Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal), the United States and Canada the Washington Treaty which commits signatory countries take the responsibility to defend each other in case one of them is military attacked.

1960 - Along with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom signs the Stockholm Convention which establishes European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as an alternative to the

European Economic Community (EEC). EFTA aimed to remove customs duties on industrial products for trade between Member States. The difference between EEC and EFTA was that EFTA was not a customs union, each State could establish, in principle, certain customs duties and trade policies in its relations with non-member states.

1961 - The British government, led by the Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, decides to ask CEE accession to the European structure, however, French President Charles de Gaulle refuses to support Britain's request, considering the integration of the United Kingdom as a threat to the French goal to use EEC in order to amplify France's status in international relations. Also, EEC officials were concerned about the close ties between Great Britain and the United States, but also doubted the political will of the Kingdom to join the EEC.

1967 - United Kingdom once again calls joining the EEC.

1973 - United Kingdom joins the EEC, along with Denmark and Ireland.

1974 - Foreign Affairs Secretary James Callaghan states in front of the Council of Europe the policy changes related to working conditions in CEE, approves the proposal for European Parliament elections and asks the CEE for major changes within the EEC Common Agricultural Policy as well as viable solutions regarding the Economic and Monetary Union.

1975 - The British government holds a referendum in which 67.2% of the citizens agree to stay in the EEC.

1978 - The Council of Europe constitutes the European Monetary System (EMS) based on the European currency unit (ECU) and the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Except for Great Britain, all other Member States sign the agreement on EMS.

1984 - The British government led by Margaret Thatcher obtains the approval of the Council of Europe to reduce its contribution to the Community's budget.

1990 - United Kingdom enters the European Exchange Rate Mechanism

1992 - United Kingdom is forced to leave the ERM, due to the devaluation of its currency and a fragile internal economy.

1995 - United Kingdom and Ireland refuse to sign the Schengen Agreement, whereby the Member States eliminate internal border controls, because of fears of terrorism and illegal immigration.

2002 - 12 of the Member States adopt the Euro currency, except the UK, Sweden and Denmark.