

# A Comparative Analysis of the Diplomatic Strategies Employed in the Context of Brexit: The Causes, Implications, and Recommendations for the Future.

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Master of Business Administration (MBA) Thesis:

Submitted to Dimitris Christopoulos

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Vienna, 31.05.2023



## **AFFIDAVIT**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a comprehensive analysis of the diplomatic strategies employed by both the United Kingdom and the European Union during the Brexit process. The interplay between the strategies is examined, together with the motivations of key political actors, and the impact which Brexit has on various sectors and political parties. Through analysing the successes and challenges of the negotiations and how they influenced each other, this research contributes to the field of diplomatic studies and provides valuable lessons for employing diplomacy in future engagements. Furthermore, it sheds light on the grave implications for the UK, the EU, and the wider global political landscape. The findings highlight the consequences of Brexit beyond the referendum result and provides insights into the future understanding between the UK and the EU.

The Brexit process culminated in the United Kingdom's prolonged exit from the European Union. It was a historic milestone in the tumultuous relationship between the UK and the EU and will have long-lasting and ongoing effects. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the diplomatic strategies which were employed by both parties during the course of the Brexit process, especially focusing on the interplay between these two strategies and the factors which shaped their development. Additionally, this study will delve deeper into the motivations of the key political actors, the impact which Brexit can and will have various sectors, as well the role which political parties played in shaping this historic event.

Through analysing the successes and challenges which were achieved and overcome during the Brexit negotiations, the role of the Labour and Tory parties, as well as the implications for trade foreign investment, this thesis contributes to the field of diplomatic studies and will offer valuable lessons for any future diplomatic engagements between the now independent UK and the EU, as well as the broader global diplomatic field. Through analysing the factors behind the decision and which influenced the trends and phenomena, particularly the rise of nationalism and the controversy surrounding immigration, this study also provides new insights into the impact which the diplomatic strategies employed continue to have on the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

The conclusions reached in this research will serve as a prized resource for a new understanding of the true loss which Brexit has wrought, particularly in its eventful aftermath, further to merely in the referendum result in itself. It also provides a foundation on which to build the further study of the implications of Brexit on the UK, the EU, and the unprecedented global political landscape in which we find ourselves today.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Once considered highly unlikely to occur, Brexit has since become one of the most significant and revolutionary events in recent history, especially when viewed in the context of Western Europe. A general trend of ever closer cooperation and integration since the second world war was suddenly interrupted in its progression due to a confluence of political and social factors. This event has spurred extensive debate, analysis, and generated conflict in society and diplomacy, as well as exposed the deepened, and deepening divisions within society and politics. The road to independence culminated in the 2016 referendum, where 52% of the population voted in favour of leaving the Union (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). This vote was the result of decades of complex interplay of historical, economic, political, and social factors. These events will continue to influence and shape the diplomatic strategies of the UK and the EU in the years to come.

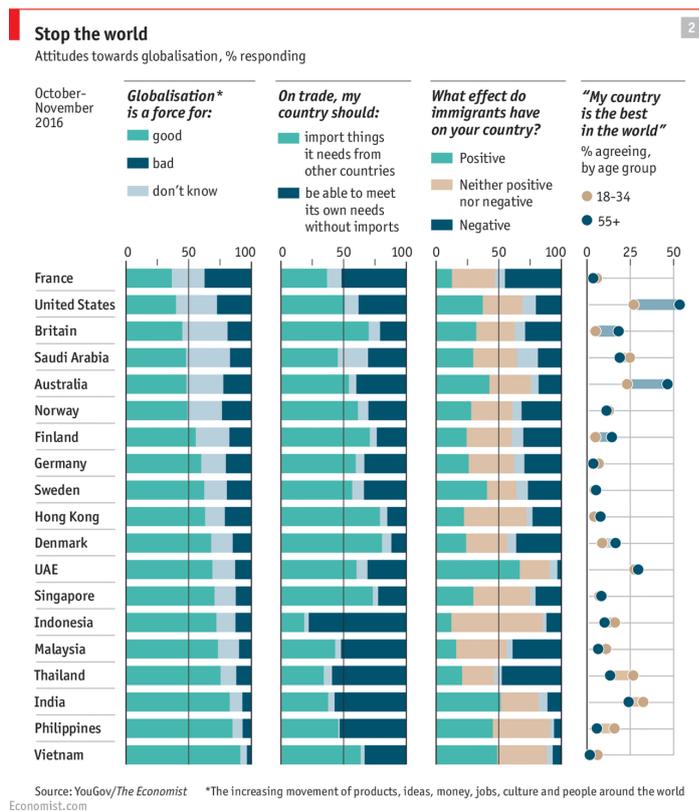
The 2008 financial crisis was one of the main culprits oft assigned much of the blame for Brexit. This event had a drastic impact on the UK economy and must bear some of the responsibility for an increased dissatisfaction with the EU's economic policies and the resulting austerity measures (Blyth, 2013). The financial crisis culminated in a prolonged period of economic stagnation which fuelled already increasing inequality in the UK, which in turn fostered the perception that the EU was not effectively addressing the economic challenges faced by its member states (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). The dissatisfaction was further exacerbated by the EU's unshakeable commitment to the free movement of people. Within the UK especially this led to an increase in immigration of those seeking economic opportunity as well as growing concern among some segments of the population about how this was impacting public services, housing, and employment opportunities for citizens of the UK (Hobolt, 2016).

Compounding these issues, and partially as a consequence of them, there occurred a sudden rise in nationalist and populist movements within the UK, mirroring their rise abroad, which contributed and fuelled an already growing anti-EU sentiment. The dissatisfaction and concern

with the EU policies was seized on by these movements as a cause celebre. They were able to capitalize on a growing dissatisfaction and misunderstanding of the EU and fuel the widespread perception of increasing encroachment on national sovereignty. Whilst they furthered and fostered a belief that the UK would be better off making its own decisions, independent of the European Union (Baker & Schnapper, 2015). This was compounded and adversely effected by the EU's ongoing expansionist ambitions, which continued to call for a deepening of integration and further enlarging the Union, and whose disregard of concern and public sentiment heightened these concerns in the UK to an ever-greater extent (Bickerton et al., 2015) Particularly the stance long-standing stance of the EU and of the UK government that Turkey would eventually accede to the union despite decades of delay and a current political impossibility was used to stoke fears of new waves of migrants from further afield entering the UK (Shipman, 2016).

Socially, and like many nations, the UK also experienced a growing divide between those segments of the population who felt the benefits of EU membership and those who felt left behind by the process of European integration (Hobolt, 2016), as well as globalisation in general, as is further illuminated in Figure 1. This divide became increasingly evident in the widely differing views on migration, the benefits of access to the Single Market, and the role of supranational institutions in governing national affairs. The Brexit vote revealed a deeply divided nation along geographic boundaries, with most of the population in England and Wales voting to leave, whilst the majority in Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). It was especially notable in that a large segment voted against their own economic interest.

FIGURE 1: STOP THE WORLD



(The Economist, 2016)

The Brexit vote not only signalled a desire for change within the governance of the UK but also exposed the broader challenges which the EU was to face, and which will continue to influence their future. These challenges included a rise in anti-establishment views, concerns about migration and the effects on society, as well as the need to address the economic and social issues which were faced by the individual EU member states (Evans & Menon, 2017). In responding to these challenges, the EU has sought to reform their institutions, whilst strengthening their commitment to the core principles of the Union, as well as enhancing its responsiveness to the needs of its citizens (Schmidt, 2015).

After the referendum occurred and in the midst of the Brexit negotiations, both the UK and the EU adopted diplomatic strategies which would naturally serve protect their own interests and secure the best possible outcome for their respective constituents, a classic example of the Power Politics framework as discussed in Chapter 1. However, these strategies were shaped by the underlying factors which led to the Brexit vote, as well as the rapidly changing political landscape in both the UK and the EU (Bickerton et al., 2015) during the negotiations. As the negotiations progressed, the interplay between these two diplomatic strategies evolved, and revealed the vast complexities of disentangling the UK from the EU after many

years of increasingly close collaboration and the challenges in forging a new relationship between these two entities (Springford & Tilford, 2014).

Ultimately, the Brexit process was marked by a complex and multifaceted interplay of factors, combining economic, political, and social. Combined these shaped the strategies and tactics of the diplomats involved and informed the dialogue on both sides of the divide. Understanding the background and context of Brexit is essential for a thorough analysis of the interplay between these strategies and for assessing their impact on the future relationship between the UK and the EU and how it might evolve. This expanded analysis aims to provide a more detailed examination of the diplomatic strategies employed on both sides of channel during the Brexit negotiations, as well as the factors which have influenced these them, and how they influenced each other.

## **1.2 Aim of the Study**

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This study aims to analyse the diplomatic strategies adopted by the UK and the EU during the Brexit process and negotiations, particularly focusing on how the interplay between these strategies unfolded and the disparate factors which influenced their development. This study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors which shaped the diplomatic strategies of the UK and the EU, the many ways in which these strategies influenced the negotiation process, how the strategies affected each other in turn, and the potential impact which these strategies will have on the future relationship between these two important entities.

## **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into fourteen chapters, with each chapter focusing on a different aspect of the Brexit process, it's background, history and interplay of the diplomatic strategies employed by the UK and the EU. The chapters are organized as follows:

- Chapter 2: Underlying Causes of Brexit and its Impact on UK and EU Diplomatic Strategies

- Chapter 3: Diplomatic Strategies Prior to Brexit
- Chapter 4: Cause and Effect
- Chapter 5: Comparison of Responses
- Chapter 6: Negotiation Interplay
- Chapter 7: Final Results
- Chapter 8: Implications and Recommendations for Future Diplomatic Strategies
- Chapter 9: The Impact of Brexit
- Chapter 10: The Role of Media and Public Opinion in the Brexit Process
- Chapter 11: The Future of the European Union after Brexit
- Chapter 12: Diplomatic Backchannels in the Brexit Negotiations
- Chapter 13: External Actors and their Influence on the Diplomatic Process of Brexit
- Chapter 14: Conclusion

## **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Examining the process, referendum and negotiation of Brexit offers us a unique opportunity where one can explore and analyse what role the various theoretical frameworks which are applicable can have in bringing us a greater understanding of the complex dynamics which were at play during the UK's exit from the European Union. In this section, we will attempt to delve deeper into which theoretical insights can be gleaned from examining Brexit through the lens of power politics as well as the European integration theories, and what challenges and limits these theories face when their framework is applied to such an unprecedented event of modern history.

### **1.4.1 Power Politics and Brexit**

Power politics, as a theory is rooted in the realist perspective, it emphasizes the role which power and national interests have in shaping the course of international relations. The realist approach posits that nations act primarily in order to pursue and protect their own interests,

often through means of competition and conflict with other states (Waltz, 1979). The Brexit negotiations can be examined through the prism of power politics, as the UK and the EU did each seek to inherently advance their own interests over the course of the process and to secure favourable terms which best suited their citizens, their economies, and their political realities. The UK's desire for national sovereignty, controlled immigration, and advantageous trade deals (Menon & Salter, 2016; Oliver, 2016b) exemplifies this realist notion of states prioritizing their self-interest over those of their counterparts.

Additionally, the realist perspective can provide insight when examining the murky depths of motivations and actions which the key political actors contributed to the Brexit process, such as Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage, and Jacob Rees-Mogg, whose stances and priorities were driven by a mix of personal ambition, opportunism, as well as a true belief in the benefits of a more independent UK. Understanding the role which power politics has in shaping the actions of these players is critical to grasp the broader dynamics at play in the Brexit negotiations.

#### **1.4.2 European Integration Theories and Brexit**

European integration theories, notably neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, were originally developed to explain the process of European countries coming together and uniting to form a more integrated and cohesive political and economic unit (Moravcsik, 1998). However, Brexit posed a unique challenge to these theories, as it represented an existential threat to the European project rather than an adaptive one.

Neofunctionalism posits that the process of European integration is essentially driven by a process of "spillover," where the integration of one policy area leads to the integration of other, related areas (Rosamond, 2005). However, in the case of Brexit, the traditional neofunctionalist perspective struggles to explain the UK's decision to disintegrate from the EU, as it goes against the previously predicted and accepted trajectory of an ever-closer integration of the union.

Intergovernmentalism, on the other hand, emphasizes the role which national governments play in driving European integration and contends that integration occurs when it aligns with the own interests of the member states (Moravcsik, 1998). This theory offers a more nuanced understanding of Brexit, as it acknowledges that member states might prioritize their own interests over the process of European integration. However, intergovernmentalism does also fall short in offering a comprehensive explanation of all the conflicting complexities of Brexit,

seeing as it does not account for the potential negative consequences which disintegration has on both the UK and the EU.

### **1.4.3 Challenges and Adaptations of Theoretical Frameworks**

Given the unprecedented nature of Brexit and the challenges it poses to existing theories of European integration, scholars and policymakers must adapt and expand these theoretical frameworks to better understand the complexities of this event. This may involve incorporating elements of power politics and realist perspectives, as well as exploring new theoretical approaches that can account for the unique dynamics at play during the Brexit process.

In conclusion, the theoretical insights gained from examining Brexit through the lens of power politics and European integration theories highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the motivations and actions of key actors, as well as the broader implications of Brexit for the future of the European project. By adapting and expanding these theoretical frameworks, scholars and policymakers can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of Brexit and its potential impacts on the UK, the EU, and the broader international community.

### **1.4.4 Future Directions for Theoretical Frameworks**

As the Brexit process unfolds and its long-term consequences become more apparent, it is essential for scholars to continue refining and expanding the theoretical frameworks used to analyse this event. This may involve exploring the role of domestic politics, public opinion, and the influence of populist movements in driving the UK's decision to leave the EU. Furthermore, the interplay between regional and global dynamics and how they impact the Brexit process and its aftermath should also be considered.

Another direction for future research could be the examination of the impact of Brexit on other European countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe, where the rise of nationalist and populist movements has been observed. Investigating the potential "contagion effect" of Brexit on other EU member states and their attitudes towards European integration could provide valuable insights into the future of the European project and the potential for further fragmentation or consolidation.

Lastly, it is crucial for scholars to consider the potential implications of Brexit for the theoretical frameworks themselves. The unique nature of Brexit may challenge or reinforce existing

theories, necessitating a re-evaluation and potential expansion of these frameworks to better account for the complexities of contemporary international relations. This process of theoretical adaptation and expansion will be crucial in ensuring that our understanding of international politics remains relevant and accurate in the face of rapidly changing global dynamics.

In summary, the theoretical framework surrounding Brexit presents opportunities for scholars and policymakers to expand their understanding of power politics, European integration theories, and the unique challenges posed by the UK's decision to leave the EU. By adapting and expanding these theoretical frameworks and exploring new directions for future research, we can gain valuable insights into the complexities of Brexit and its potential implications for the UK, the EU, and the broader international community.

## 2 UNDERLYING CAUSES OF BREXIT AND ITS IMPACT ON UK AND EU DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES

### 2.1 Leaving the EU: A Multifaceted Analysis

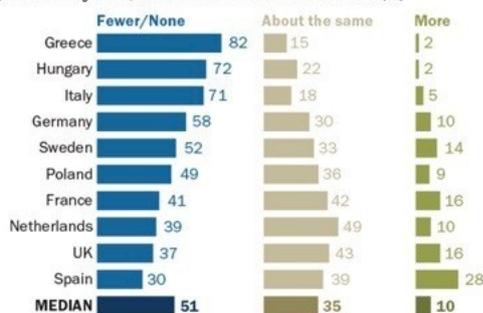
The United Kingdom's ultimate decision to leave the European Union was driven by a complex interplay of factors, encompassing economic, political, and social concerns. This section delves deeper into the key factors which influenced the Brexit referendum, how it came about, as well as the effect of immigration, regulation, national sovereignty, the EU's expansionist ambitions, and the rise of populist and nationalist political movements within the UK.

#### 2.1.1 Immigration Concerns

Migration has long been a popular topic of discussion in the UK and oft a controversial one in politics, where opinion is more divided along socio-economic rather than party lines. And one of the central pillars and concerns which led to the referendum and the ultimate vote to leave was this concern for migrants entering the Kingdom, the opinion towards migration at the time of the referendum can be observed in Figure 2. Several factors influenced this concern, including the EU's strong commitment to the free movement of people, which was seen as fuelling the rapid increase in immigration from Eastern European countries, and resulted in anxieties over the potential impact this was having on UK public services, housing, and employment opportunities for citizens (Blinder et al., 2011; Hobolt, 2016).

FIGURE 2: THE ANSWER TO NATIONALIST FERVOUR ISN'T LESS GLOBALISM. IT'S MORE

*In your opinion, should we allow more immigrants to move to our country, fewer immigrants, or about the same as we do now? (%)*



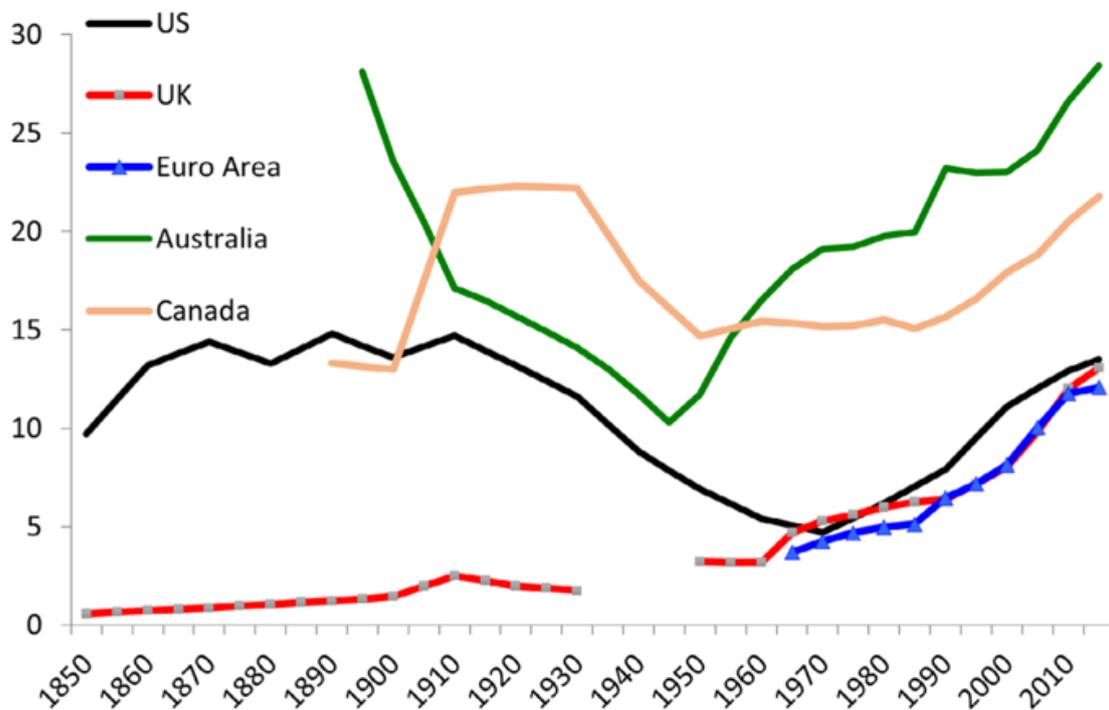
*(The Answer to Nationalist Fervour Isn't Less Globalisation. It's More, 2020)*

The free movement of people within EU's external borders has been a cornerstone of the European project since its inception (Maas, 2007). However, many of the UK citizenry, its politicians, and the media began to express concerns over the implications of this policy, particularly as it related to immigration from the "newer" EU member states which joined in Eastern Europe (Scholten & Geddes, 2016). The accession of these countries to the EU in the 2000s after an extended membership application process which was started in the 1990's led to a significant increase in migrants seeking opportunities in the UK. And with many citizens from these nations seeking especially better economic opportunities in those more prosperous Western European countries (Favell, 2008).

As immigration levels were rising prior to the referendum, the general trend can be gleaned from Figure 3, many concerns rose alongside, over the potential impact this was having on UK public services, housing, and employment opportunities (Blinder et al., 2011). Some UK citizens were beginning to worry that the influx of immigrants would strain their already limited public resources, such as healthcare, education, and other social services, as well as exacerbate housing shortages and put further downward pressure on wages (Dustmann & Frattini, 2014; Wadsworth, et al., 2016). Whilst some studies have shown that the overall impact of immigration on public services and the economy has been largely positive (Wadsworth et al., 2016), these concerns persisted in the public imagination to large extent and were often amplified there by sensationalist media coverage and populist political rhetoric (Balch & Balabanova, 2016).

FIGURE 3: GLOBAL IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Global immigrant population (percent of global population). *Source* : See Catão and Obstfeld (2019)



(Catão & Obstfeld, 2019).

The perception that UK government was unable to control immigration levels whilst it remained a member of the EU further fuelled anxieties over the issue (Barnard & Ludlow, 2016). EU membership mandates adherence to their core principle of free movement, which effectively curtailed the UK's ability to impose stricter controls on migrant citizens from other EU countries (Thielemann & Schade, 2016). This perceived lack of control over their borders became a rallying cry for those advocating for Brexit, who vociferously contended that leaving the Union would allow the UK to "take back control" over their borders and put in place more restrictive immigration policies (Gilmartin, et al., 2018).

For example, there were large numbers of Polish and Romanian immigrants who arrived in the UK following their respective countries' accession to the EU in 2004 and 2007. This led to concerns among some segments that the UK's public services and infrastructure would and were becoming strained as a result of this influx (Dustmann & Frattini, 2014).

Nigel Farage, politician, and leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), was instrumental in bringing immigration concerns to the forefront of the Brexit debate and hyperbole. Farage repeatedly claimed that the UK must regain control over its borders to reduce the influx of migrants and protect the public services and job opportunities for UK citizens (Dennison & Goodwin, 2015). Similarly, more initially moderate Conservative politicians such as Theresa May, who was Home Secretary under Cameron before becoming Prime Minister after the referendum, called for the urgent need to reduce net migration to the UK to the "tens of thousands" to alleviate the alleged pressure on public services and housing (May, 2010).

This perception of migration was in large part shaped and informed by the media. The Tabloid newspapers such as the Daily Mail, Daily Express, and The Sun published numerous articles which allegedly highlighted the perceived negative effects of immigration on the UK. For example, these outlets often reported on single instances with great fanfare where immigrants had been accused of taking advantage of the UK's welfare system or being involved in criminal activities (Baker et al., 2016b). This coverage contributed to the narrative that immigration was out of control and was threatening the UK's economic stability, opportunity and the very fabric of society and its cohesion.

### **2.1.2 Regulations and the Loss of National Sovereignty**

Another key pillar of the argument for a referendum and which drove the Brexit vote was the EU's regulatory framework and the perception that it was ever more encroaching on the UK's national sovereignty (Oliver, 2015). And that this creeping advance was negatively affecting UK businesses and the public at large. EU regulations, particularly in areas such as labour, environment, and consumer protection standards, were viewed by many as excessively burdensome, restrictive, and not adjusted to local concerns. And it was argued that these limited the UK's ability to make their own decisions and legislation in these areas (Bickerton et al., 2015).

EU regulations on food safety and hygiene are a prime example, as they were oft considered excessive by some UK farmers and were a frequent topic in popular media. Farmers argued that these dictates hindered their competitiveness (Grant, 2018). Similarly, the EU's Working

Time Directive, which restricted working hours, was viewed as problematic by certain UK employers who alleged it limited their flexibility (Johnstone & Dobbins, 2021). Furthermore, the EU's rigorous environmental regulations were viewed by some as stifling innovation and growth within the energy sector (Gawel et al., 2014).

These concerns were compounded by the rising influence of EU institutions, such as the European Court of Justice (ECJ). This only served to further heighten concerns and the perception that national sovereignty was slowly but surely eroding in favour of a supranational control in Brussels (Hobolt, 2016). For instance, the ECJ's ruling in the case of *Factortame Ltd v. Secretary of State for Transport* (1990) invoked the primacy of EU law over UK law, which caused unease among those who believed that national and local courts should have the final say in legal matters (Craig & De Búrca, 2015).

Prominent politicians, including the likes of Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, whom were to later become key figures in the call for a referendum and its campaign to leave, were already outspoken in their concerns about the loss of national sovereignty, even before calling for an exit. They argued that EU membership had directly resulted in the UK ceding too much of its power to unelected bureaucrats in Brussels, which was ultimately undermining the UK's democratic institutions (Gove, 2016; Ross, 2016).

Once again, the popular media in the UK played a significant role in fanning the flame of these concerns, with certain outlets taking a strong Eurosceptic stance and framing the EU regulations and institutions as the greatest threat to UK autonomy. For example, the Daily Mail and The Sun, amongst others, regularly published articles which highlighted the perception of a negative impact of EU regulations on British businesses, as well as giving significant editorial space to instances where EU courts overruled UK courts on various legal matters (Moore, 2016).

In responding to these concerns, the UK government initially attempted to negotiate reforms from within the EU. The aim was to address issues such as immigration and sovereignty while remaining a member of the bloc and to better effect change from within. In 2015, then-Prime

Minister David Cameron, largely in response to pressure from segments within his own party, embarked on a diplomatic mission which was to secure a "new settlement" for the UK within the confines of the EU. This was partially successful and did result in some concessions, such as the temporary emergency brake on in-work benefits granted to EU migrants as well as a pledge that the UK would not be a part of a European "superstate" (Oliver, 2015). However, these significant concessions were widely viewed as insufficient by the growing coterie of Eurosceptic politicians and voters, and which inexorably led to the eventual call to hold a referendum on EU membership.

In summary, the perception that the EU's regulatory framework had encroached too much and was relentlessly moving to curtail the UK's national sovereignty played a momentous role in the Brexit referendum and the vote to leave. Apprehensions about the impact of EU regulations on various sectors and the influence of EU institutions, such as the European Court of Justice, wrought a sense of unease among the British citizenry and contributed strongly to the appeal to "take back control" by exiting the Union of European countries and their overbearing regulations.

### **2.1.3 The EU's Expansionist Ambitions**

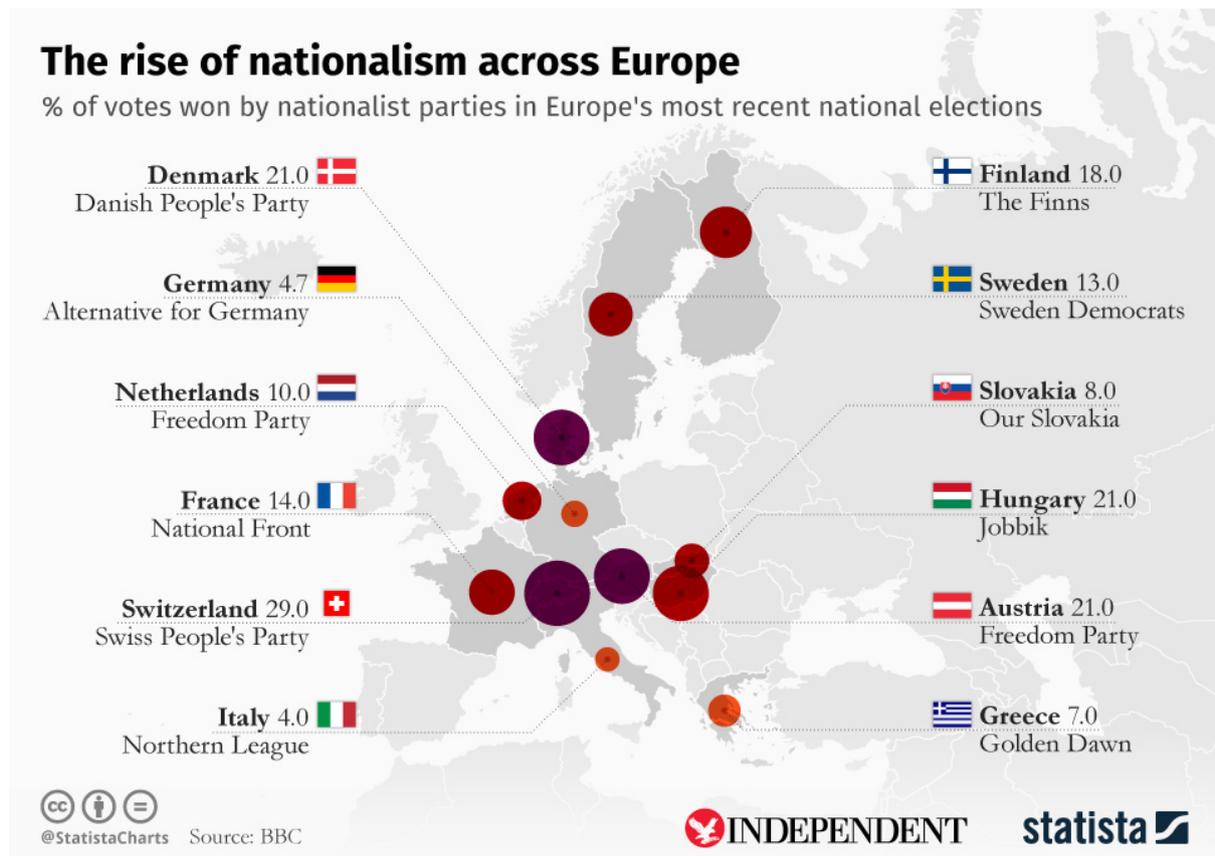
The EU was never coy about their expansionist ambitions, which had been a core tenet of their mission since the Maastricht Treaty. This called for the deepening of integration between states, as well as the enlargement of the Union. The Maastricht treaty in particular, and the ensuing debate on its adoption, had grave and lasting political consequences in the UK, and sowed the seeds for the Euroscepticism which was to come. There was a perception fuelled and promotion by some parties of these ambitions by the EU as inexorably implying a further relinquishing of control and sovereignty and thereby consequentially contributing to the growing anti-EU sentiment in the UK. The prospect of even further EU accession to the East, already a tender topic in the UK, and particularly the potential accession of even more geographically and culturally remote countries such as Turkey, raised tensions about the future direction of the EU and the potential impact it could entail for the UK's national interests (Oliver, 2015). These concerns were then further intensified by the EU's dedication to an "ever closer union,"

which was perceived by some in the UK as a further and greater threat to the remnants of national sovereignty and identity (Bickerton et al., 2015).

### 2.1.4 Populism and Nationalism on the Rise

Similar trends towards populism and nationalism were observed in many parts of the world concurrently with those in the UK as shown in Figure 4. The rise of populist and nationalist movements in countries such as the United States, France, and Italy, notably amongst many others, started to play a growing role in the political discourse and popular imagination (Foa & Mounk, 2016; Mudde, 2016).

FIGURE 4: THE RISE OF NATIONALISM ACROSS EUROPE



(McCarthy, 2016)

This global trend was driven by a combination of factors, including economic hardship, partially as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, as well as dislocation, cultural backlash, and the ever-

present fears of uncontrolled immigration, which led to a general current of dissatisfaction with the political establishment and a surging demand for change (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mounk, 2018). The Brexit referendum in the UK can be viewed in the light of this larger trend, and as an example of the potential consequences if fringe elements are left unchecked and gain influence on this political discourse. This serves also to reflect the similar concerns and sentiments which have fanned the flames of populist movements elsewhere.

As previously noted, the growing influence of populist and nationalistic political movements in the UK was to play a significant role in shaping the Brexit debate and the outcome of the resulting vote (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). The rapid emergence of these movements can be traced back to long-standing concerns about the EU's influence on the UK's politics, culture, and society, as well as larger societal trends related to globalization and economic inequality (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mudde, 2016).

Several political parties and factions, most significantly the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Leave.EU campaign, and other Eurosceptic factions germinating in the Conservative Party, were influential in driving the Brexit agenda (Ford & Goodwin, 2014). These segments capitalized on a growing dissatisfaction with the EU among the UK population, exploited immigration concerns, economic stagnation, and the erosion of national sovereignty to build backing for leaving the Union (Dennison & Geddes, 2019).

A large part of the success of the strategy of these populist and nationalist movements was due to the framing of the Brexit vote as an opportunity to "take back control", by which was meant the borders, laws, and the economic situation in the UK (Ford & Goodwin, 2014). This message received a strong response from many disaffected UK citizens who felt that their concerns had been ignored by the political establishment, both in London as well as in Brussels (Clarke et al., 2017).

These Brexiteers also successfully calculated that the concerns over immigration within the UK would be one of the central themes of the Brexit campaign, as one of the leading concerns among certain segments of the population (Hobolt, 2016), whilst at the same time it was downplayed and largely ignored in communications from the Stronger In campaign (Shipman, 2016). Through capitalising on the perceived negative impacts of immigration which could affect public services, housing, and employment, the Brexit movements were able to tap into a deep-seated sense of anxiety and economic insecurity among certain segments of the UK population (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014).

In addition to immigration, populist and nationalist movements placed a strong focus on the EU's regulatory framework as another area of concern which could be amplified in favour of an exit (Kriesi, 2016). They proceeded to argue that the UK was being held back by an EU imposed excessive bureaucracy and red tape to their rueful detriment, and that leaving the Union would provide the UK with a renewed chance to forge its own path, liberated from these continental constraints (Menon & Salter, 2016).

The rise of these populist and nationalist movements together with their success in amplifying and utilising existing concerns over immigration, regulation, and national sovereignty in the public discourse, played a decisive role in the result of the Brexit vote (Clarke et al., 2017).

They achieved an unrivalled influence on the debate by highlighting the deep divisions within the UK's society over the country's relationship with the EU, and by playing on the complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors which ultimately led to the decision to leave the Union (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016).

The decision of the UK to leave the EU in the end was the result of decades of complex interplay of factors which tapped into deep-seated and growing concerns about immigration, regulation, national sovereignty, as well as the future direction of the EU, these were magnified by the campaign. However, the Brexit vote was influenced not only by these specific issues but also by the broader political and social context of the era, which was manifested by the rise of populist and nationalist movements which sought to capitalize on a growing sense of discontent among the citizenries. Understanding this complex array of factors which drove the Brexit vote is essential for analysing the diplomatic strategies which were adopted by the UK and the EU during the resulting Brexit negotiations and in terms of assessing their impact on the future relationship between these two complex entities.

## **2.2 Economic Factors**

An equally significant factor and to a large extent influential in the social issue noted in the previous section was the economic situation in the UK, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. This played a substantial role in the decision to leave the EU and the increasingly louder calls for a referendum in the period between 2008-2015. Many in the UK felt that the EU's focus on austerity and fiscal discipline was not helping the country recover from

the crisis (Blyth, 2013). This focus on austerity led to widespread public sector cuts, elevated unemployment, and slower economic growth in the UK. This strongly fuelled a sense of resentment and frustration among many people who felt that their economic circumstances were not improving, or not improving fast enough, and had to endure extended economic hardship (Clarke et al., 2017; Krugman, 2015)

In addition to the apparent negative impact of EU-driven austerity measures, there was a growing unease among UK citizens about an alleged relatively unequal distribution of the economic benefits which resulted from EU membership (Springford & Tilford, 2014). There were critics who argued that the benefits of EU membership were primarily bestowed upon London and the Southeast, whilst other regions experienced much greater economic stagnation or decline without a similar amount of aid (Los et al., 2017). This regional disparity contributed to the perception that the UK was not benefiting from its EU membership economically and equally and further fuelled anti-EU sentiment, especially outside of London and the Southeast (Becker et al., 2017), the regions which were to especially support leaving the Union in the vote.

Simultaneously, there was a widespread belief in the UK that certain EU regulations and an inflated bureaucracy were hindering UK businesses and stifling their potential for growth (Whyman & Petrescu, 2017). EU critics argued that the UK would be significantly better off economically if it were to regain control over its trade policy and reduce the alleged excessive regulatory burden on its businesses (Baker et al., 2016b). This perspective was music to the ears of much of the populace, who believed that exiting the Union would enable the country to pursue more favourable trade deals with other nations and serve as a boost to economic growth (Emmerson et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the crisis in the Eurozone and the economic hardship of countries like Greece, Spain, and Italy also contributed to a perception that the EU project was economically unstable and a risk (Jones et al., 2016). Many of the UK citizens questioned the wisdom of continuing to be a member of a union which appeared to be struggling with deep-rooted economic problems and which were potentially going to drag the UK down along with it (Jones, et al., 2016).

In conclusion, these economic factors contributed greatly to the UK's decision to leave the EU. These include the negative result of EU-driven austerity measures, the regional disparities in the distribution of economic benefits from the EU within the UK, a perceived regulatory burden on businesses, as well as growing concerns over the overall economic stability of the EU.

These factors taken together served to create a climate of economic discontentment and uncertainty, which was to play a significant role in the decision to leave the EU (Blyth, 2013; Springford & Tilford, 2014).

## **2.3 The Impact on Diplomatic Strategies**

These underlying causes of Brexit noted in the previous section were to have a profound and prolonged impact on the diplomatic strategies executed by the UK and the EU, even prior to the referendum taking place it had begun to seep into manner of diplomacy on both sides. The Brexit negotiations would turn out to be marked by great amounts of tension and mistrust, with both sides adopting a hard-line diplomatic strategy in an effort to secure the best possible deal for their respective countries (Whitman, 2016a). The economic and political factors which contributed to the Brexit vote taking place also were to shape the priorities and objectives of both the UK and the EU during the negotiations, influencing the strategies they employed to achieve their goals in order to satisfy a population for whom these concerns had been proved to be of great concern.

### **2.3.1 The Diplomatic Strategy of the United Kingdom**

During the Brexit negotiations the strategy of the UK was informed by the main concerns which had become evident in the referendum debates. Especially the desire of the people and the government to regain national sovereignty, reduce immigration severely, as well as secure favourable trade deals for the future economic benefit of the Kingdom (Menon & Salter, 2016; Oliver, 2016b). These goals initially led the UK government at the time to prioritize a "hard" Brexit, which was to entail leaving the EU's single market and customs union as soon as possible (Allen, 2018). This approach served the aim to provide the UK with greater control over its own laws, borders, and trade, but was also to carry significant risks, these included potential economic disruption and the deterioration of future relations with the European Union (Chalmers, 2017).

In the course of the negotiations which were to settle its departure from the membership of the Union, the UK faced many internal conflicts and a division of opinion, particularly among members of the ruling Conservative Party, which were to complicate their diplomatic strategy (Shipman, 2016). Prime Minister Theresa May's initial approach upon her succession to David Cameron, was characterized by the much vaunted and inflexible "red lines," and who's hard-line would ultimately be replaced by a more conciliatory and pragmatic stance under her successor, Boris Johnson (Bulmer & Quaglia, 2018).

When Boris Johnson became Prime Minister in July 2019 upon the implosion of the Theresa May government and in a rebuke to her strategies from her party, he was also to bring along a new approach to the Brexit negotiations. His government pursued a strategy which focused on securing a trade deal with the Union, whilst also preparing for the possible eventuality of a "no-deal" Brexit which threatened to wreak havoc upon the economy, trade, and immigration (Owen, et al., 2019). This dual approach was characterized by a significantly more confrontational stance toward the EU and a firm commitment to the public to leave the bloc by October 31, 2019, "do or die" (Honeycombe-Foster, 2019).

One of the key pillars of the Johnson strategy was first to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement, and particularly the contentious Irish backstop, which had been a major obstacle to securing parliamentary approval for the withdrawal negotiated by his predecessor, Theresa May (Barker & Parker, 2019).

The Irish backstop was a key provision in the original Withdrawal Agreement which had been negotiated by Theresa May's government. Its original intention had been to serve as an insurance policy in order to prevent the re-emergence of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland should the event occur that the UK and the EU fail to agree on a future trade relationship (Ryan, 2019). This backstop would have kept the UK in a customs union with the EU and would have kept Northern Ireland aligned with some EU single market rules, effectively creating a regulatory border and conundrum in the Irish Sea (House of Commons Library, 2019).

This backstop was to prove to be one of the most contentious aspects of the negotiations. It was opposed by many UK politicians, including the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and hard-line Brexiteer supporters within the realm of Conservative Party. They argued that it could potentially trap the UK in the EU's regulatory orbit indefinitely and undermine the UK's newfound

resumption of sovereignty and therefore would be a faux-Brexit (Baczynska, 2019). This opposition contributed greatly to the failure of Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement to pass through the UK Parliament on three separate occasions, and which ultimately led to her resignation as Prime Minister (Stewart, 2019a). The diplomatic effect of the backstop was significant, as it not only complicated the Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU but also severely strained the relationships between different factions within the UK's political landscape.

Johnson's government upon its assumption of leadership therefore sought to replace the backstop with alternate solutions which could ensure the avoidance of there being a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, also including such measures such as customs checks removed from the border and technological solutions (Karlsson, 2017).

In pursuing this strategy, Johnson's government was pursuing the aim to demonstrate to both the European citizenry as well as the British public that its intentions were serious about leaving the bloc, even if it meant doing so without a deal and the disastrous consequences this might ensue. This approach was intended convey its leave at all costs attitude and to put pressure on the EU to make concessions on the Withdrawal Agreement, while also reassuring the Brexit supporters that the UK would never remain indefinitely tied to EU rules (The Guardian, 2019).

Johnson's strategy was to involve a high degree of brinkmanship, as the government sought to use the threat of a "no-deal" Brexit as leverage to the Europeans in the negotiations. This approach, although ultimately effective, led to increased diplomatic tensions between the UK and the EU, as well as within the UK itself, the prospect of leaving without a deal raised great concerns about the potential economic and social consequences which could ensue to such a untested and unprecedented occurrence (Martill & Staiger, 2018).

Finally, Johnson's strategy did indeed lead to a revised Withdrawal Agreement, which did include a new protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland which replaced the backstop with a more complex arrangement involving customs and regulatory checks in the Irish Sea (Skoutaris, 2020). This new deal was ultimately approved by the UK Parliament after much debate in January 2020, which then finally paved the way for the formal departure of the UK from the EU on January 31, 2020.

### 2.3.2 The EU's Diplomatic Strategy

Simultaneously, and conversely, the EU's diplomatic strategy was more muted during the Brexit negotiations and was driven by the insurmountable desire to maintain the integrity of the single market and to protect the interests of the remaining member states (Turner, et al., 2019). This led the EU to adopt a united, disciplined and more cautious and measured approach, with negotiators consistently emphasizing the indivisibility of the core "four freedoms" - the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people which must remain a part of the European Union (Carrel, 2016).

The EU was simultaneously seeking to deter other member states from potentially pursuing a similar exit strategy by demonstrating the complexity, agitation, as well as the great potential costs and financial burden of leaving the bloc (Piris, 2016). As a result, the EU throughout the negotiation was to maintain a firm stance towards the UK on certain key and publicly noteworthy issues, such as the UK's financial settlement of its fees and dues, as well as the rights of EU citizens living within the UK sphere, in order to ensure and display to the world that the UK did not enjoy the benefits of membership without fulfilling its obligations (Leruth et al., 2022).

Overall, the diplomatic strategies which were employed by both the UK and the EU during the Brexit negotiations were deeply influenced by the underlying political and economic factors which led to the UK's vote to leave the European bloc. The complex interplay of these various factors shaped the priorities, objectives, and tactics employed by both sides, and would ultimately determine the outcome of the negotiations and the agreements reached.

## 3 DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES PRIOR TO BREXIT

### 3.1 EU's Diplomatic Strategy

The EU's diplomatic strategy towards the UK in the era prior to the Brexit vote was equally characterized by the commitment to maintaining the unity and integrity of the Union, as well as addressing concerns of its citizens and demonstrating the benefits of membership (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). This approach was later to be equally utilised and enforced during the Brexit negotiations. This strategy was at the time reflected in the EU's approach to the UK's membership in the years preceding 2015. The EU worked closely together with the UK to find an appeasing and mutually beneficial solution which would allow them to remain a member whilst also addressing the concerns of the country, the party, and the citizens (Bickerton, et al., 2015).

One particularly notable example of this diplomatic strategy in action was the EU's willingness to engage in negotiations with then-Prime Minister David Cameron as he sought to renegotiate the UK's terms of membership, at the time it was hoped that this would appease the majority of the euro-sceptical factions in the UK, if not the hard-line Brexiters. European leaders, notably German Chancellor Angela Merkel, demonstrated a strong commitment to accommodating the UK's concerns within the membership of the Union, with Merkel stating that "where there's a will, there's a way" in terms of finding a solution to the UK's demands and concerns (Reuters, 2015).

However, the EU's diplomatic strategy was also not without limits to appeasement and collaboration. The EU naturally was seeking to balance the UK's concerns with the interests of the other member states and the overarching principles of the union, which was to falter without a commitment to matters such as the four freedoms (free movement of goods, capital, services, and people) that underpin the entire single market. This was especially evident in the reluctance and refusal of many EU leaders to grant the UK significant concessions on the free movement of people (Schimmelfennig, 2018), especially as it could have initiated a watershed of other complaints from other nations.

Ever since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which laid the foundation for the European Union as we know it today and significantly expanded its role beyond trade and towards the ever-closer union. The relationship between the UK and the EU which resulted had been marked by ongoing negotiations and increasing demands for special concessions. The Maastricht Treaty itself saw the UK obtain certain opt-outs from the Union, such as them not participating in the single currency (euro) as well as a exemption from the Social Chapter, which focused on social and employment policies (Schmidt, 2009).

Following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the UK continued to push for more concessions from the EU, often using as leverage its position as one of the largest member states to secure special arrangements. A notable example occurred during the 2007 Lisbon Treaty negotiations, where the UK was able to secure a number of further opt-outs related to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, justice as well as home affairs, and the defence policy (Schimmelfennig, 2018).

In the lead-up to the 2015 EU referendum, then-Prime Minister David Cameron sought to renegotiate the terms of the UK's membership in the EU in order to appease the sections within his party which were attempting to force him into calling for the referendum. The negotiations had a focus on popular issues such as immigration, welfare benefits for immigrants, and the role of national parliaments in the decision-making of the EU. The EU leaders engaged in an intense diplomatic efforts to accommodate certain of the UK's demands whilst attempting to maintain the overall integrity and unity of the Union (Adler-Nissen, 2014).

Throughout this period, the EU's diplomatic strategy towards the UK was heavily characterized by a delicate balancing act of principles. On the one hand, EU leaders sought to accommodate the UK's requests for concessions to a certain extent where possible in order to appease their interest and concerns and recognizing the value and importance of keeping the UK within the EU as a member. On the other hand, they were increasingly concerned about setting precedents which might encourage the other member states to start to demand similar special treatment, and which could potentially weaken the cohesion of the Union as a result (Tusk, 2017).

During the renegotiation process which occurred under Cameron, the EU leaders also emphasized the importance of maintaining the unity amongst the other 27 member states. For example, the European Council President Donald Tusk expressed grave concerns that in granting the UK too many concessions it could result in leading to the "disintegration" of the Union, as

some other member states might start to demand special treatment on an equal footing (Borońska-Hryniewiecka, 2015).

Ultimately, the EU's diplomatic strategy and principles were to be severely tested by the Brexit vote and the subsequent negotiations, much more so than in the already contentious era before. While the EU continued to demonstrate a willingness to engage with the UK and address its concerns, the limits of this approach were exposed as the Brexit process unfolded evermore.

### **3.2 UK's Diplomatic Strategy Prior to Brexit**

The UK's diplomatic strategy towards the EU in the era prior to the Brexit vote was characterized by a desire to negotiate a better deal with the EU than other member states due to particularly national concerns and the public debate surrounding them. This was to focus on the issues of immigration, regulation, and the loss of national sovereignty (Menon & Salter, 2016). The UK sought to secure greater control over its own affairs and special concessions as one of the largest member states, whilst initially attempting to remain member of the Union (Boer, et al., 2019).

Under Tony Blair's Labour government (1997-2007), the UK's strategy towards the EU was characterized by a far more pro-European approach as compared to the previous Conservative governments led by John Major and Margaret Thatcher. Whilst Blair's government sought to establish the UK as a major player within the EU, it simultaneously also aimed to protect and promote the UK's national interests through the combination of engagement with the EU, selective integration, and maintaining still some degree of distance from certain EU policies (Jesop, 2004).

In the early years of Blair's government, the UK actively collaborated and engaged with the EU in areas such as social and employment policy, environmental matters, and defence. Concurrently, in 2004, the Labour government would opt to not impose the heavily debated transitional controls on the free movement of workers from the recently acceded Eastern European states, this demonstrated the UK's commitment to the principles of the EU at the time as well as its positive attitude towards the expansion of the European project (Liddle, 2014). Later,

however this would prove to be a source of great controversy and is often blamed for having contributed to the public concerns regarding immigration, which would play a significant role in the Brexit referendum outcome (BBC News, 2017e). Additionally, Blair's government was to pay a leading role in the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which had the aim to strengthen the EU's capacity for military and crisis management operations (Howorth, 2000).

However, despite this pro-European stance evident under Blair, the UK remained significantly cautious about fully integrating itself into all aspects of the EU project. This was particularly evident in the UK's decision to maintain loyal to its opt-out from the single currency (euro) as well as the Schengen Agreement, which abolished all border controls amongst the participating EU countries (Winzen & Schimmelfennig, 2015).

Then, under Gordon Brown's leadership (2007-2010), the UK's strategy towards the EU maintained its focus on engagement and selective integration whilst continuing its cautious policy with regards ceding too much sovereignty. Brown's government was to play a key role in shaping the EU's response to the global financial crisis which occurred in 2008 and was to have great consequences for the EU and the UK, Brown pushed for a coordinated fiscal stimulus and financial sector reforms (Daddow, 2011).

Throughout this period of successive Labour governments led by Blair and Brown, the UK's diplomatic strategy towards the EU involved the combination of engagement with selective integration, whilst seeking to maximize their influence within the Union and simultaneously maintaining control over key aspects of its national sovereignty.

To some extent this did not differ greatly, initially when Prime Minister David Cameron came to power until he attempted to renegotiate the UK's relationship with the EU in order to settle the old scores from the Eurosceptic factions of his party. This led to a series of high-profile meetings with EU leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande to attempt to convey the necessity in order to protect a future collaborative and harmonious relationship and to forestay a referendum. Cameron's demands at the time included restrictions on access to benefits for EU migrants, the greater protection for non-eurozone countries, and an opt-out from the core EU commitment to an "ever closer union" formulated in the Maastricht Treaty (BBC News, 2016a). These negotiations were to culminate in the historic European Council Summit in February 2016, where the UK was able to secure a package of reforms designed to address its concerns (Oliver, 2016b).

However, despite being viewed as significant concessions by EU leaders the deal was met with mixed responses from UK politicians, diplomats, as well as public and media. Critics argued that the concessions were insufficient and failed to adequately address the core concerns of the Kingdom. For example, Sir Ivan Rogers, the UK's former Permanent Representative to the EU, stated in opposition that the deal "fell far short" of Cameron's initial objectives in going to the summit and did not go far enough in addressing the UK's concerns (Elgot, et al., 2017). Many Eurosceptic politicians, such as Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg, argued the deal was "thin gruel" and would not satisfy the UK public's desire for change (Stone, 2016).

The diplomatic strategy employed by the UK prior to Brexit ultimately failed to secure a deal which could or would satisfy both its domestic audience as well its European partners and this was to lead to the Brexit vote in June 2016. The negotiations also revealed deep divisions within the UK government themselves as well as within the ruling conservative party, the wider political establishment, and underscored the complexities and challenges of navigating the UK's complex relationship with and within the EU.

### **3.3 Alternative Approaches and Avoiding the Referendum**

With the advantage of hindsight, both the EU and the UK could have pursued different diplomatic strategies to address the underlying issues and tensions and to avoid the issues which ultimately led to the Brexit referendum. Several major catalysts occurred which contributed to the Brexit vote, and had they been handled differently and perhaps more rooted in diplomacy, it is possible that the referendum could have been avoided altogether or that the outcome might have been different had it still occurred.

#### **3.3.1 Addressing the UK's Concerns about EU Membership**

The UK and EU's relationship had long suffered from ambivalence, which largely stemmed from the growing concerns about national sovereignty, economic policy, and immigration (Oliver, 2015). Prior to the referendum, it is possible that the EU and the UK could have proactively engaged in a more constructive dialogue which would have directly addressed these concerns and fostered a deeper sense of common interests and understanding in the minds of the public (Liddle, 2016). For example, the EU could have been a lot more flexible in their approach

to the UK's demands for reform which could have allayed their concerns, whilst the UK could have sought to build stronger alliances within the EU to advance their policy objectives preemptively.

### **3.3.2 To Manage Migration and the Free Movement of People**

Unfettered Migration and the free movement of people within the EU was one of the most significant issues in the Brexit campaign and the run-up to the referendum, with many in the UK voicing concerns, rightly or wrongly, about the impact this could have on public services, housing, and employment (Clarke et al., 2017), these were never satisfactorily allayed in the public discourse and became an ingrained part of the narrative which led to the vote to exit the Union. Both the EU and the UK could have cooperated more closely and proactively to address these concerns, which would have been achieved by implementing more targeted policies which would have managed migration flows or by providing greater support for local communities affected by rapid population change to facilitate integration and understanding (Collier, 2016).

### **3.3.3 Communicating the Benefits of EU Membership**

One of the greatest failures which should have been addressed in the UK, and still needs to be addressed in large parts of the EU is effectively communicating the benefits membership brings to those disaffected citizens who do not appreciate the positive impact it can have on their lives. Both the EU and the UK could have done significantly more in order to communicate this to the British public (Hobolt, 2016), instead the remain campaign would be focused on the risks of leaving hence came to derogatively known in the medias as “Project Fear” (Shipman, 2016). More effective public diplomacy efforts, such as public information campaigns, educational initiatives, and greater cultural exchanges for the youth as well as the middle-aged population could have had a greater effect in the run-up to the referendum. This would have served to highlight the advantages of EU membership in terms of economic prosperity nationally and locally, security, and global influence (Prikhodko, 2022).

### **3.3.4 A More Cautious Approach to the Referendum**

Lastly, what could have saved and solved the relationship and will be remembered as one of the great failures of diplomacy is that the decision to hold the Brexit referendum could have been approached more cautiously by the UK government. Prime Minister David Cameron had the opportunity to have sought a broader consensus on the timing and terms of the referendum, or rather than confidently proceed along this road he could have considered alternative methods of gauging public opinion on the issue of EU membership, such as a consultative rather definitive or even multi-option referendum (Offe, 2017).

In conclusion, while it is difficult to predict the counterfactual outcomes even with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that both the EU and the UK could have pursued alternative diplomatic strategies prior to the Brexit referendum which might have altered the course of history. Addressing the underlying issues and tensions more effectively and proactively might have either averted the need for a referendum or resulted in a different outcome.

## 4 CAUSE AND EFFECT

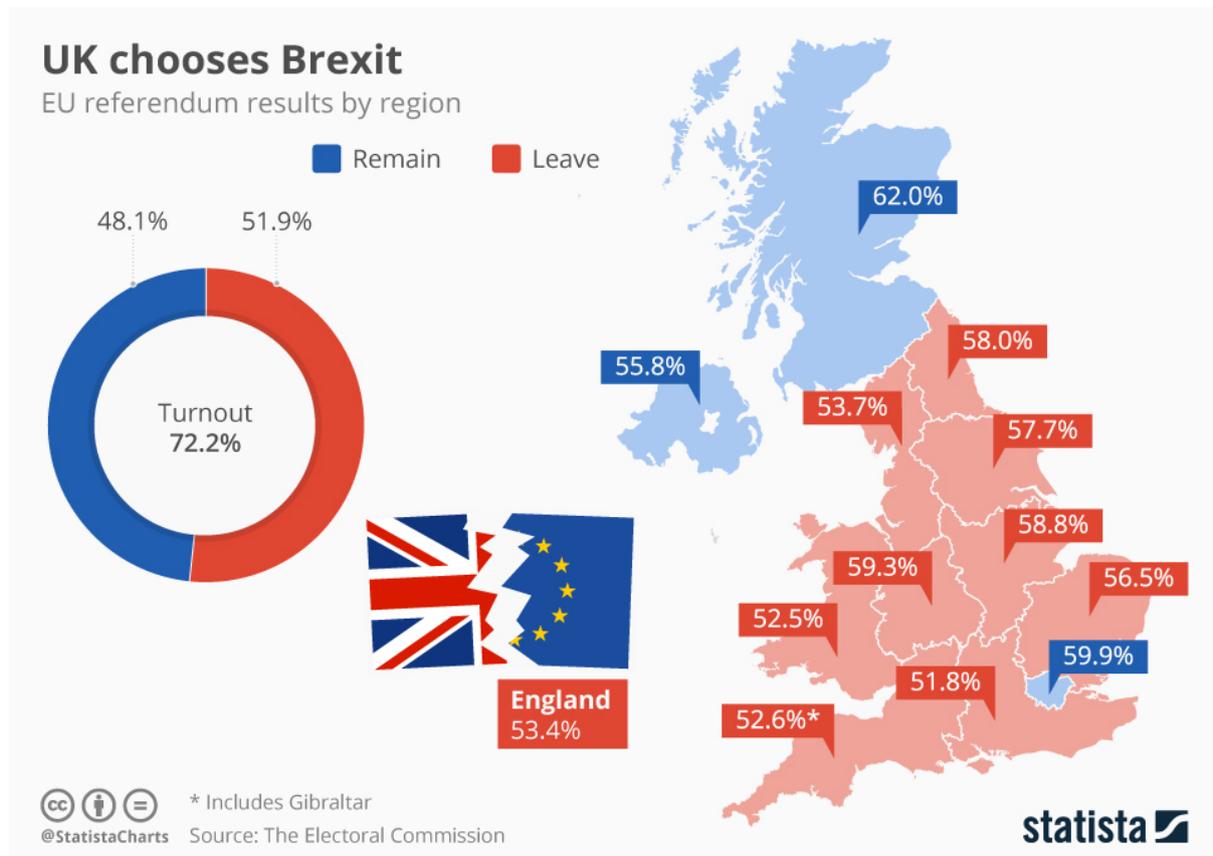
### 4.1 The Brexit Vote and its Implications

The Brexit vote was a clear and probably final expression of the UK's desire to chart a new course for their relationship with the EU (Hobolt, 2016). The result of the vote ultimately reflected the deep-seated concerns of many UK citizens about their place in the EU and the impact of EU policies on their lives (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). From the EU's perspective, the Brexit vote was seen as a major challenge to the cohesion and vision of the Union and a reflection of many broader challenges which currently face the EU, including the unimpeded rise of anti-establishment sentiment in many nations, growing concerns over immigration which are widespread, and economic instability in many regions (Bickerton et al., 2015).

The Brexit finally took place on June 23rd, 2016, with 51.9% of voters choosing to leave the EU and 48.1% voting to remain (Electoral Commission, 2016). The result sent shockwaves throughout the political establishment nationally and abroad, especially as polls and many experts had generally predicted a narrow victory for the Remain campaign (Saiidi, 2016). In the immediate aftermath of the vote, the value of the British pound plummeted, and the UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron, in defeat announced his resignation (Inman & Elliott, 2016; Stewart, 2016).

The Brexit vote also revealed significant regional and demographic divisions within the UK. A majority of voters in England (53.4%) and Wales (52.5%) voted to leave the EU, whilst voters in Scotland (62%) as well as Northern Ireland (55.8%) strongly favoured remaining (Electoral Commission, 2016). London was the exception within England, with a rousing 59.9% of its voters supporting Remaining in the Union. Age was another major factor in the vote, with younger voters showing a strong preference for Remain and older voters favouring to Leave. According to a post-referendum analysis by Lord Ashcroft Polls (Ashcroft, 2016), 73% of voters aged 18-24 and 62% of voters aged 25-34 voted to remain within the EU, whilst 60% of voters aged 65 and over supported Brexit to the detriment of the previous age group.

FIGURE 5: UK CHOOSES BREXIT



(Armstrong, 2016)

The Brexit vote was to have significant implications for both the UK and the EU. For the UK, it set in motion an unprecedented and highly complex process of disentangling itself from the EU's legal and institutional framework, which in time would prove to be lengthy and highly contentious (Wiener, 2017). The vote also sparked a period of political turmoil in the UK, following the resignation of Prime Minister Cameron, the rise and fall of Theresa May as his initial successor, and the eventual appointment of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister in 2019 (BBC News, 2019a).

For the EU, the Brexit vote exposed the first cracks in its armour and revealed the first hints of the fragility of the entire European project and highlighted the need for urgent reform in order to address the concerns of all its citizens on a national level (Bickerton et al., 2015). The Brexit vote also prompted other Eurosceptic movements across Europe to call for their own referendums on EU membership, although so far none of these calls have materialized into actual referendums (Menon & Fowler, 2016)

Furthermore, the Brexit vote significantly impacted the UK economy, with the effects still in abundant evidence today and amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic and other events. Initially several multinational companies announced their plans to move their operations out of the UK and into other EU countries (Howarth & Quaglia, 2018) displaying a disapproval and scepticism of this new course in history. The uncertainty surrounding the Brexit process also led to greatly reduced investment in the UK and a slowdown in economic growth (Bank of England, 2018).

## **4.2 Impact on Diplomatic Strategies**

The eventual result of the Brexit vote to leave significantly impacted the diplomatic strategies of both the UK and the EU. The UK's decision to leave the EU required both parties to evolve and adopt new diplomatic strategies in order to successfully navigate the murky new uncharted waters, sailing towards a complex and contentious negotiation process (Whitman, 2016a). The Brexit vote also served to highlight the need for the EU to more noticeably address the concerns of its citizens and to demonstrate the benefits of membership to citizens, nations and the media which also influenced its diplomatic strategy during the negotiations (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015).

Throughout the course of the negotiation process, both the UK and the EU had to strike a very delicate balance between protecting their respective interests whilst seeking to maintain a cooperative relationship for the future and not aggravate the other party too much. The UK's diplomatic strategy over time had shifted towards asserting its inviolable sovereignty while securing a favourable trade agreement with the EU, which at the same time would minimize disruptions to existing economic and security ties (Dhingra & Sampson, 2016). This involved utilizing classic diplomatic techniques such as "constructive ambiguity," where the negotiators left certain issues deliberately vague during the process in order to facilitate progress in other areas first (Jönsson & Aggestam, 2009).

The EU, on the other hand, was seeking to maintain its unity among other members and integrity of the project, adopting a strategy of "principled pragmatism" (Biscop, 2018). This involves clearly outlining one's priorities, in the case of the EU this consisted of protecting the Single Market, safeguarding the rights of EU citizens already residing in the UK, and ensuring the UK's financial commitments and obligations were met to the EU. However, at the same time, the EU did demonstrate a willingness to compromise on certain key issues that were highly contested

and combustible to the UK media, in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial agreement without extended combat. The use of this strategy allowed the EU to present a united front among its remaining member states towards the UK and to prevent the further disintegration of the Union (Magone, et al., 2016).

These diplomatic strategies employed by both the UK and the EU were also shaped by the broader geopolitical context in force at the time. For example, the UK was seeking to strengthen its relationships with non-EU countries, such as the United States, the first and foremost "special relationship", as a means to offset the potential economic and strategic losses which could result from Brexit and the widening of the divide with the EU (Marsh, 2018). The EU, meanwhile, also sought to bolster its position on the global stage by emphasizing their commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international order (Biscop, 2016).

The full impact of the Brexit vote on diplomatic strategies also extended to the realm of public diplomacy. Both the UK and the EU engaged in widespread public diplomacy campaigns in order to shape and mould the public opinion and perceptions of the Brexit process in their respective favour, with the UK government promoting its vision of a "Global Britain" (Oliver, 2016b), as opposed to one previously tethered to the EU, whilst the EU was seeking to emphasize the continued benefits and relevance of the European project towards an scarred and sceptical audience (Schmidt, 2017).

In summation, the Brexit vote and outcome served to significantly influence the diplomatic strategies employed towards one another of both the UK and the EU, as they now sought to navigate the complex and contentious negotiation process and foster a new and unprecedented type of relationship. Both parties must adapt to their new diplomatic approaches, and utilize techniques such as constructive ambiguity and principled pragmatism, whilst also considering the broader geopolitical context and engaging in greater and wider reaching public diplomacy efforts to inform and reassure a now sceptical populace.

### **4.3 Changes within the Tory Party**

Brexit also served to have a profound impact on the Conservative party, leading to vast internal divisions, frequent leadership changes, as well as monumental shifts in their policy direction. The referendum result exposed and unveiled great rifts within the party, as the pro- and

anti-Brexit factions struggled and were ultimately unable to reconcile their differences and could not chart a unified course for the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

These divisions were at their most evident during the tenure of Prime Minister Theresa May, who faced significant opposition within her own party. Certain hard-line Brexit supporters, especially the European Research Group (ERG), continuously challenged May's approach to the negotiations, and consistently argued that a more uncompromising stance was needed when dealing with the EU. This pressure ultimately contributed to her resignation in July 2019 (Kuenssberg, 2019)

The leadership changes which followed May's departure further underscored the impact of Brexit on the Tory party. Boris Johnson's rise and fall in the prime ministership saw a shift in policy direction, as he pursued a more aggressive, assertive, and uncompromising approach when it came to the Brexit negotiations. This change in leadership, strategy and overall direction was, in part, a strong response to the growing influence of the Brexit Party which was led by Nigel Farage, and which threatened to erode and absorb the Conservative party's electoral base, as well as a notable section of the Labour party base.

Johnson's approach to Brexit also resulted generally in major policy shifts within the conservative party. During his tenure as leader, the Conservatives adopted a much harder line on issues such as immigration and national sovereignty, adopting positions which aligned more closely with the demands of the Brexit supporters and revealed their newfound importance in British politics. This shift in policy direction was exemplified by the revised version of the Withdrawal Agreement, which sought to provide the UK with the desired and much vaunted greater control over their borders and laws, even should it come at the cost of a potential economic disruption and place a strain on the relations with the EU.

Whilst the Conservative party managed to maintain their grip on power tightly throughout the Brexit process, these internal divisions and policy shifts which it has undergone demonstrate the profound impact which Brexit had on the party, their identity and their political direction. The long-term consequences of these changes on the overall political landscape in the UK remain to be seen, as the UK and the EU continue are continuing to navigate the treacherous shoals of their post-Brexit relationship and the broader implications which his historic decision will undoubtedly have.

## 4.4 The Labour Party and Brexit

Brexit also had significant implications on the other side of the political aisle in UK politics. The Labour party struggled to achieve a cohesive position on the issue throughout the turmoil of the referendum campaign as well as the negotiations which followed. The party lacked a clear stance on Brexit, and was widely perceived as having failed to provide effective opposition in this critical period, which can be attributed to internal divisions and major electoral challenges.

Even though during the referendum campaign the Labour party was officially in favor of remaining in the EU there was also a large amount of internal division when it came to this position which resulted in the lukewarm support for the remain campaign, largely as a result of the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Critics were to argue that Corbyn, who had been a noted Eurosceptic for a long time, did not campaign passionately or dedicatedly enough for the UK to remain in the EU, which some see as having contributed to the ultimate success of the Leave campaign.

In the aftermath of the referendum, the Labour party struggled to articulate and present a unified and cohesive position on Brexit. Some within the party called for a second referendum to reverse the decision or accepting the result argued for a soft Brexit that would maintain close ties with the EU, whilst others from among the ranks advocated for respecting the result of the referendum and prioritizing the needs of their Leave-voting constituencies. This lack of a clear stance on Brexit led to great confusion among the party's supporters and elected officials and further fuelled internal divisions.

Labours indecision on Brexit was also in evidence during the prolonged negotiations between the UK and the EU. Whilst the Conservative party was facing challenges from within their own ranks, the Labour party wasn't able to provide the public and party with a strong and united opposition to the government's approach. This absence of a clear alternative vision for the course of Brexit further weakened their position and contributed to its electoral decline in the 2019 general election.

In conclusion, the Labour party's inability, and ineptitude to unitedly adopt a cohesive position on Brexit and to foster an effective opposition during the referendum campaign and succeeding negotiations has had far-reaching consequences for the party's internal and external dynamics and their prospects in future electoral battles. Moving forward, Labour must address

these issues and redefine its stance on Brexit as well as present a clear vision on the UK's future relationship with the EU to regain some of the trust of its supporters and to rebuild its political standing to be an effective and challenging opposition party for a healthy democracy.

## 5 COMPARISON OF RESPONSES

### 5.1 UK's Response

Initially, in response to the Brexit vote, the UK government focused first on establishing its negotiation position and laying the groundwork for the negotiations with the EU (Menon & Salter, 2016). The UK first sought to build alliances with countries outside the EU in order to bolster its position and leverage and to secure the best possible deal for its future relationship with the EU (Oliver, 2016b).

In the immediate aftermath of the referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron announced his resignation in defeat, acknowledging the need for a new leadership which must navigate the UK through the difficult Brexit process (Stewart, 2016). After some internal party contentions, Theresa May emerged as his successor and promptly appointed a firm and dedicated Brexit minister, David Davis, to lead the newly formed Department for Exiting the European Union (Reuters Staff, 2016).

The UK government's initial response was characterized by a certain measure of ambiguity, with the now-famous phrase "Brexit means Brexit" being used often in public diplomacy to signal the government's commitment to deliver on the referendum result without actually providing specific details on how they intended to approach this (Shipman, 2016). This ambiguity, in part, was a reflection of the internal divisions and tensions within the governing Conservative Party, as well as the wider UK political landscape, over the nature of the future relationship with the EU and how to proceed (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2016).

Throughout the process, the UK government was facing considerable criticism at home and abroad for their perceived lack of preparation for this result and absence of a clear strategy. This was exemplified by the oft cited Lancaster House speech in January 2017, when Prime Minister May outlined her priorities for the Brexit negotiations, which including leaving the Single Market and ending the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, but which offered few concrete details on how these goals would be achieved and much ambiguity for the public and media to speculate over, purposefully or not (May, 2017).

The Lancaster House speech also initially claimed and aimed to provide greater clarity on the UK's approach to Brexit but was met on all sides with both praise and criticism. The speech outlined 12 key objectives for the negotiations, such as controlling immigration, ensuring the rights of EU citizens in the UK, and forging new trade agreements (May, 2017). However, the speech was also criticized for its ambiguity and lack of greater detail on how these objectives would actually be met, which led to widespread concerns and sounded the alarm bells over the government's preparedness and strategy for the Brexit negotiations, in effect it served to reveal the lack of clothes for the emperor.

This momentous speech can be viewed through the lens of „strategic ambiguity“, a diplomatic strategy which allows the party flexibility and avoids committing to any specific positions (Eisenberg, 1984). This approach can certainly be advantageous in negotiations, as it can provide greater room to maneuver and allows the flexibility to adjust positions in response to rapidly changing circumstances. However, on the other side and as employed in this instance the strategic ambiguity can also create confusion and uncertainty, both domestically and internationally, and severely undermine trust of the public in the negotiating process. The Lancaster House speech perfectly exemplified the double-edged nature which can result from employing strategic ambiguity, it served to leave many questions unanswered for a concerned and uncertain public and fuelled the speculation about the UK's true intentions and capabilities in pursuing the Brexit negotiations.

The UK's response to the Brexit vote was also noted by the efforts to strengthen their diplomatic ties and trade relationships with non-EU countries, as a part of the broader vision of a "Global Britain" (Oliver, 2016b), they were intending to pursue. This included high-profile and much publicised visits by Prime Minister May and other senior ministers to countries such as the United States, China, India, and Japan, with had the aim of laying groundwork for future trade agreements and deepening strategic partnerships whilst serving to bolster their negotiation position to the EU for the withdrawal agreement (Elgot & Phillips, 2018; Wright, 2017a).

Further in-line with this "Global Britain" vision, the UK government also pursued diplomatic strategies which had to aim to reinvigorate its historic relationships with the Commonwealth nations, which share historical and cultural ties to the UK, often contentious as well. The Commonwealth is a political association of 54 member states, many of whom were former colonies, possessions, or territories of the United Kingdom, but which were seen as a potential platform for boosting the UK's global trade and influence in the post-Brexit era through utilizing these past yet strong cultural and also linguistic ties (Carver, 2018).

The UK's diplomatic strategy towards the Commonwealth at first also included hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, where Prime Minister May spoke to emphasize the importance of a "renewed" and "reform-driven" Commonwealth (May, 2018). This approach also had the aim to signal the UK's commitment to strengthening the partnerships with these countries towards the EU, and particularly focusing on trade, investment, and cooperation in areas such as security, education, and climate change to make up for the lack of future cooperation with the EU (Buchan, 2018).

However, these attempts by the UK to rekindle its relationships with the Commonwealth faced several challenges, including a scepticism by many over the sincerity of the UK's interest in the region, whilst facing competition from other and invigorated global powers such as China, which has been actively expanding its presence and influence in the Commonwealth countries in the vacuum which resulted from the UK's departure and refocus of interest (Alden & Large, 2015). Nevertheless, the UK's diplomatic strategy to engage with vigour in the Commonwealth realm demonstrates their effort to diversify their international relationship portfolio and to establish a new global identity following Brexit.

In the realm of public diplomacy, the UK government was seeking to manage and sculpt the domestic and international perceptions of the Brexit process following much scepticism in especially the international media. They especially sought to emphasize the opportunities this could bring and to highlight the potential benefits of leaving the EU whilst downplaying potential risks and challenges that were to result (Schmidt, 2017). This involved a concerted effort by the UK government to frame the Brexit vote as the first necessary step towards regaining their national sovereignty and to charting a new course to sail in the global economic waters (Oliver, 2016b).

To summarize, the UK's initial response to the Brexit vote was branded by the combination of ambiguity, concerted efforts to strengthen the diplomatic ties with non-EU countries, combined with a renewed interest in the Commonwealth, whilst focusing on public diplomacy in order to shape the perceptions of the process among the public and media. The government's approach was informed by the highly complex political and social context which followed the Brexit vote and sought to serve the need to balance competing interests and priorities within the country, the government, the public and media.

## 5.2 EU's Response

Crossing the channel to consider the EU's response to the Brexit vote, where efforts were conversely characterized more internally by the determination to maintain and sustain the integrity of the Single Market and to protect the rights and future of EU citizens (Bickerton, et al., 2015). The EU at the same time also sought to reassure its remaining member states of its strategy and to demonstrate their commitment to the founding principles of European integration (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). Throughout the murky negotiation process, the EU consistently emphasized the importance of unity to its members and adopted a coordinated approach to the Brexit negotiations to present a unified front towards the UK (Whitman, 2016a).

Immediately following the Brexit vote, certain key EU figures such as European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, European Council President Donald Tusk, and newly appointed chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier expressed their displeasure with the UK's decision to leave as member but emphasized the need for the EU to remain united and focused on their own priorities with their partner across the channel (Zalan, 2017). This message of unity was echoed by the leaders of the key EU member states, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande, who also stressed the importance of maintaining a strong and cohesive European Union whilst facing the unprecedented Brexit challenge (Wintour & Neslen, 2016).

To ensure that a coordinated approach to the Brexit negotiations could come about and that they would be able to negotiate as a united front, the EU established the dedicated task force led by Michel Barnier, who received the appointment as the European Commission's chief negotiator (Crisp & Crisp, 2016). The EU also developed a set of negotiating guidelines, which had to be agreed upon by the remaining 27 EU member states in April 2017 (European Council, 2017). These guidelines prioritized key issues such as citizens' rights, the UK's financial settlement of outstanding obligations, as well as the contentious Irish border issue, and sought to emphasize that the integrity of the Single Market and the four freedoms (free movement of goods, capital, services, and people) would be non-negotiable for the EU (European Council, 2017).

Michel Barnier is a seasoned French politician and noted diplomat and was appointed as the EU's chief Brexit negotiator in July of 2016 (Crisp & Crisp, 2016). Prior to this appointment, Barnier had held various high-profile positions within the EU network, including serving as European Commissioner for Regional Policy (1999-2004) as well as European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services (2010-2014). He also had served as France's Minister of Foreign Affairs (2004-2005) and as Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (2007-2009) (Moshinsky, 2016). Barnier's extensive experience in the field of European affairs and his reputation as a tough yet fair negotiator made him the natural choice to lead the EU's Brexit negotiation task force (Brunsden & Barker, 2016).

Barnier's views on the Brexit process was shaped by his commitment to the core principles of European integration and the belief in the importance of maintaining a strong and united EU front in the face of the UK's departure. Throughout the negotiations, Barnier consistently was to emphasize the need to protect the integrity of the Single Market as well as the rights of EU citizens. He also played a central role in shaping negotiating stance of the EU (BBC News, 2017c). As the chief negotiator, Barnier was responsible for coordinating the EU's approach, strategy and tactics to the Brexit negotiations, ensuring that the interests of the remaining 27 member states were represented, and engaging in regular dialogue and negotiations with the UK's team (Laffan & Telle, 2023).

Throughout this negotiation process, the EU was to adopt a firm, solid, stance, with Michel Barnier and other EU officials frequently reiterating their bloc's commitment to the core principles of the union and their refusal to allow the UK to "cherry-pick" benefits which EU membership provides without assuming the corresponding obligations and commitment to a union (BBC News, 2017a). This approach was carefully crafted to demonstrate to the remaining member states that leaving the EU comes with severe consequences and costs and that the EU would never waver or compromise on its core values in order to accommodate the UK's demands (Jensen & Kelstrup, 2019).

The EU's response to the Brexit votes also involved concerted efforts to address the broader challenges which were facing the Union and which this process had exposed, including the rise of anti-establishment sentiment, which was sweeping the continent unchecked, widespread concerns over immigration, as well as economic inequality. In response to these challenges, the EU leaders adopted a series of initiatives which were aimed at strengthening the bloc's resilience, unity, and was to promote greater convergence and integration among its member

states, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, the revised Posted Workers Directive, and the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 (European Commission, 2017a, 2018).

Conclusively, the EU's response to the Brexit vote was characterized by the resolve to maintain the integrity of the Single Market, to protect the rights of EU citizens, and to demonstrate the commitment to European integration to the public and the media. This involved adopting a coordinated approach among members to present a united front, and the firm approach to the Brexit negotiations, led by chief negotiator Michel Barnier and guided by the set of principles agreed upon by the remaining 27 EU member states in order to give him ammunition in the negotiations. The EU's response also encompassed efforts to address wider challenges which were facing the Union and to strengthen its resilience in the face of an uncertain future.

## 6 NEGOTIATION INTERPLAY

### 6.1 Negotiation Strategies

In the course of the post-Brexit referendum negotiations on the withdrawal from the union, both sides of the channel divide were to adopt differing negotiation strategies, this was influenced by their respective goals, priorities, as well as domestic and global political and public considerations. Combined this served to facilitate a complex interplay of strategies which informed the back and forth of compromises and solutions and which led to the eventual withdrawal agreement.

The UK initially pursued a strategy of requesting concessions from the EU for certain key areas, such as trade and immigration which had been the main topics which had pushed the populace over the brink of voting for the exit. This strategy was driven by the UK's desire, and demanded by the citizens and media, to secure the best possible deal for itself, originally this was to include access to the Single Market, whilst maintaining the control over the borders and strongly reducing the influence of EU regulations on all domestic affairs (Oliver, 2016b) In order to achieve this, the UK employed complex mixture of bargaining tactics, including distributive bargaining, where each party tries to maximize their own gains at the expense of the other, combined with integrative bargaining, which involves finding mutually beneficial solutions for both sides (Park, et al., 2019).

Concurrently, the UK was seeking to strengthen their position through building new alliances abroad and strengthening old ones, both with countries outside the EU, as well as in the commonwealth of nations for alternative trading arrangements and new opportunities (Menon & Salter, 2016). This strategy intended to provide the UK with leverage during the negotiations and to demonstrate their ability to thrive outside of the EU framework with new and old partners and thereby to influence the bargaining position towards the EU.

In stark contrast to the UK, the EU was to adopt a more unified approach, emphasizing the need to protect the interests of the remaining member states and to preserve the integrity of the Single Market (Whitman, 2016). The EU's strategy focused on maintaining a strong and cohesive negotiating position, with the 27 remaining member states working together under the

leadership of the EU's Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier. The EU's strategy was influenced by their desire to prevent other member states from following the UK's example and pursuing their own exit negotiations or starting down the same road (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015).

The EU's negotiation strategy involved a combination of cooperative as well as competitive tactics. On the one hand, the EU was seeking to find common ground with the UK on issues such as citizens' rights and the final financial settlement due for its preceding membership, whilst emphasizing the importance of an orderly and fair withdrawal (Fabbrini, 2020). On the other hand, the EU adopted a more confrontational stance on certain key issues, such as the Irish border as well as continued access to the Single Market, utilizing their collective bargaining power as a bloc to pressure the UK into making concessions in their favour (Whitman, 2016).

Throughout the negotiation process, both the UK and the EU employed various negotiation techniques and theories, using deadlines, signalling, and issue linkage, to advance their respective interests (Zartman & Berman, 1982). These strategies were shaped by the complex interplay of domestic and international political considerations, the constantly evolving and shifting balance of power between the UK and the EU, and the broader geopolitical context in which the negotiations took place.

## **6.2 Interplay between UK and EU Negotiation Strategies**

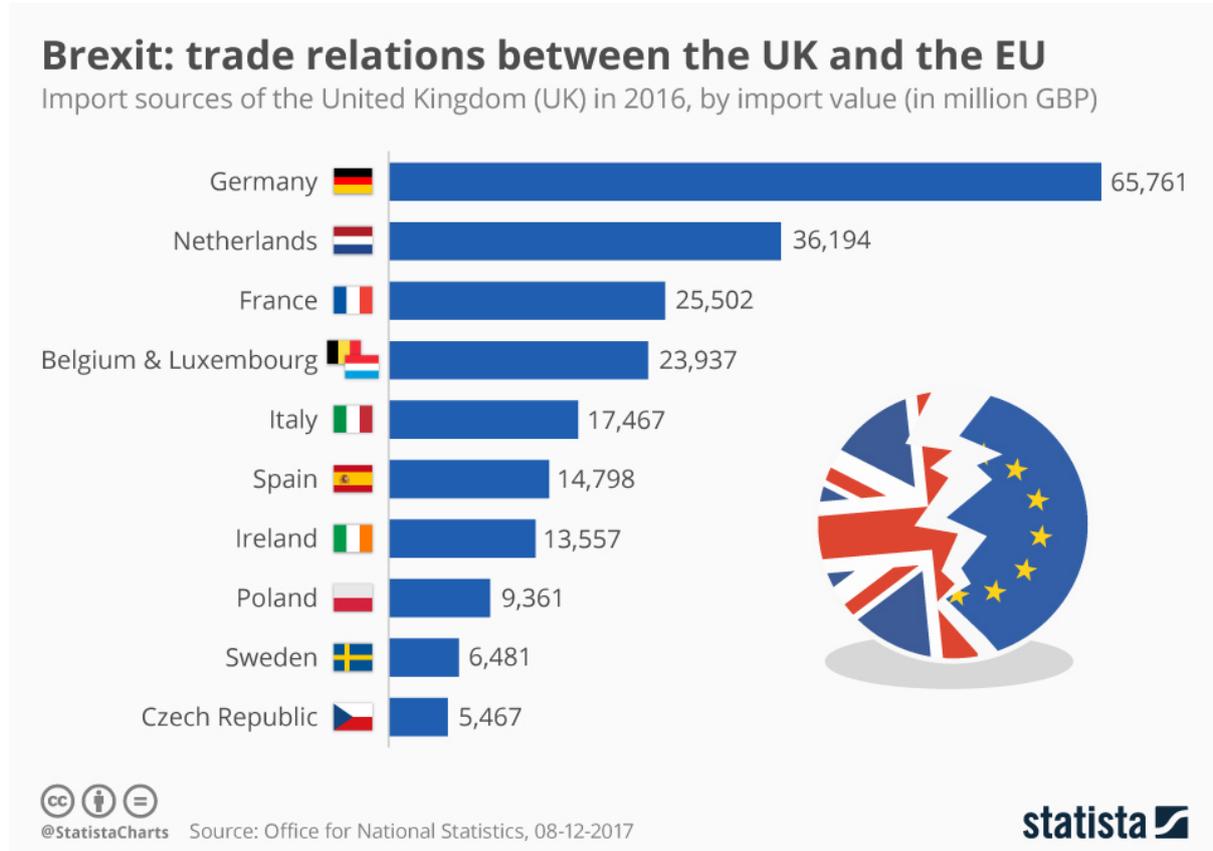
The resulting interplay between the UK's and EU's negotiation strategies led to a complex and dynamic negotiation process, characterized by moments of cooperation as well as stark confrontation. As the negotiations unfolded and advanced, both sides adjusted and moderated their strategies in response to the rapidly changing circumstances and in defence to the actions of the other party.

One notable aspect of the negotiation interplay was the UK's efforts to "divide and conquer" the members of the EU by attempting to negotiate directly with individual member states and thereby bypassing and seeking to undermine the EU's unified negotiating framework to their advantage (Menon & Salter, 2016). This approach proved largely unsuccessful, as the EU mem-

bers remained committed to maintaining a cohesive front, with few willing to make concessions or deals away from the pack, and consistently insisted on negotiating as a single bloc. The UK's attempts to exploit internal divisions within the EU to gain an advantageous negotiating position were to ultimately serve to reinforce the EU's determination to preserve their unity and might have contributed to an even more inflexible negotiating stance on the part of the EU (Whitman, 2016).

A further significant aspect of the negotiation interplay was the role of issue linkage in the context of the negotiations. Both the UK and the EU sought to use their respective strengths and leverage points to extract concessions from the other party on the key issues at play. For example, the UK sought to use its security cooperation and intelligence-sharing capabilities as bargaining chips to endeavour to secure more favourable terms on trade and market access (Oliver, 2016b). Conversely, the EU was to emphasize the indivisibility of the "four freedoms" (free movement of goods, services, capital, and people) and remained insistent that the UK would not be able to just cherry-pick the aspects of the Single Market it wished to keep whilst discarding others by rescinding its membership (Dickinson, 2017).

FIGURE 6: BREXIT: TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UK AND THE EU



(De Best, 2017)

The interplay between these negotiation strategies by the respective parties was also shaped by the broader geopolitical context in which the negotiations took place. The UK's domestic political landscape, which would continue to be marked by internal divisions within the ruling Conservative Party as well as the nation at large, competing visions for what Brexit ought look like, as well as the need to maintain the support of key political allies within the parliament, greatly influenced the UK's negotiating stance and its ability to make concessions, due to a greater scrutiny by the government, parties, public and media (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). Likewise, the EU's strategy was shaped by the need to find the balance of the interests of the member states and the requirements of them to address the broader challenges facing the EU internally, such as the rise of anti-establishment sentiment in many countries concurrently as well as concerns over immigration present and growing tendentially in other nations within the union (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015).

Throughout the entire negotiation process, the UK and the EU engaged in a complex dance of give-and-take, employing various negotiation techniques, and responsively adjusting their marginally strategies in response to the evolving situation, both in response to each other as well as seeking to maintain the support internally. The ultimate result of the negotiations and the final withdrawal agreement was a product of this intricate interplay, reflecting competing interests, priorities, and political and social constraints to negotiation faced by both sides.

### **6.3 Points of Convergence and Divergence**

Throughout this process, there were several points of convergence and divergence between the UK and the EU in terms of negotiation. Both parties did recognize the need for a mutually beneficial agreement, at least at a higher level of governance, but severely diverged in their interpretations of what such an agreement would entail and ultimately look like, and what would be acceptable to their respective audiences to maintain the spirit of Brexit and the Union.

One of the key negotiators on behalf of the UK was David Davis, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, who sought to craft a bespoke trade arrangement for the UK (Dallison, 2017). On the EU side, Michel Barnier, the EU's Chief Negotiator, insisted that maintaining the integrity of the Single Market was paramount and non-negotiable, and which involved the four inviolable freedoms: the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people (Brunsden, 2017).

Key areas of divergence also included the UK's desire for this bespoke trade arrangement posited by Davis. The UK aimed for a deal that would continue to grant them access to the EU's Single Market whilst allowing them the flexibility and power to negotiate their own separate trade deals with other countries around the world and the commonwealth whilst enabling them control migration (Oliver, 2015). The EU, however, was unwilling to cede a compromise on their principles, insisting that access to the Single Market must continue come with adherence to all four freedoms (Brunsden, 2017), and that no exceptions would be made, as it might lead to similar demands from other members, and would be a dangerous road to traverse for their future.

Another area of divergence concerned the "divorce bill," or the financial settlement of obligations that the UK would have to pay to the EU as part of its withdrawal to honour previous commitments. The UK initially resisted the idea of a substantial financial settlement, whilst the EU argued that the UK had financial commitments which needed to be honoured (The Guardian, 2017b).

Despite these significant divergences, there were also points where the two parties converged in strategic elements. Both the UK and the EU were to agree on the need to protect the rights of EU citizens already residing in the UK as well as UK citizens living within the boundaries of the EU (Maas, 2020). They also expressed the desire to maintain a strong security cooperation, recognizing the vital significance of collaboration in areas such as counterterrorism and the sharing of intelligence (Brunsden, 2017).

As the negotiations continued to unfold, there were moments of strong tension as well as notable acrimony. One of these instances was when the EU accused the UK of "cherry-picking" the benefits of EU membership without the willingness to accept the responsibilities (Crisp, 2017). However, both parties were to eventually reach an agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU, known as the Withdrawal Agreement, and which included provisions on citizens'

rights, the financial settlement, and the contentious issue of the Irish border (BBC News, 2018a).

## 6.4 The Final Agreement and Its Implications

After months of intense and acrimonious negotiations, with much internal debate and comment, the UK and the EU finally were to reach an agreement, known as the Withdrawal Agreement, in November of 2018 (BBC News, 2018b). This agreement covered key areas which had been contended, such as the financial settlement, citizens' rights, and the Irish border, whilst also laying the groundwork for the future negotiations on the UK's continued future relationship with the EU.

The financial settlement, often referred to as the "divorce bill," did in the end require the UK to pay the EU approximately £39 billion to settle the outstanding financial commitments (BBC News, 2018b). This amount was considerably less than what the EU had initially demanded but was still a source of controversy within the UK political and public sphere.

On the important matter of citizens' rights which was to effect and continually a large amount of people, the Withdrawal Agreement served to ensure that the rights of the EU citizens whom were living in the UK as well as those UK citizens living in the EU would be protected in perpetuity, with provisions for the continued and uninterrupted access to healthcare, pensions, as well as other benefits (BBC News, 2018b). This aspect of the agreement was widely viewed as a positive outcome for both sides.

The issue of the Irish border, however, remained and would continue to remain contentious. The Withdrawal Agreement included a "backstop" arrangement, which had aimed to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to respect historic tensions and to avoid a flare-up of strife after many years of peaceful cooperation. It sought to achieve this by keeping the UK in a customs union with the EU until a more permanent solution could be found (BBC News, 2018a). This arrangement faced significant opposition from within the UK, particularly from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), who argued that it would still create a de facto border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK (Settle, 2018).

The Withdrawal Agreement was to face numerous hurdles in its passage through the UK Parliament, with the then Prime Minister Theresa May's government struggling to gain support for the deal as it stood. After multiple failed attempts to pass the agreement through Parliament, May eventually resigned in disappointment, and her successor, Boris Johnson, renegotiated the terms of the deal to be more favourable, particularly in relation to the Irish border issue (BBC News, 2019b).

The final version of the Brexit deal, known as the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, eventually passed the UK Parliament in January of 2020, thereby facilitating the UK's formal and final departure from the constraints of EU on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 (BBC News, 2020b). The UK then entered an extended transition period, during which it continued to follow EU rules while negotiating their future relationship with the bloc.

Conclusively, the negotiation interplay between the UK and the EU was marked by moments of convergence and divergence, with both sides seeking to protect their interests and attempting to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. The negotiations were achieved by utilising a mix of diplomatic strategies and negotiation tactics, which ultimately resulted in the Withdrawal Agreement and the UK's departure from the EU.

## **6.5 A Timeline of the Negotiations and Analysis of Key Events**

- June 23, 2016: The Brexit referendum takes place, 52% of the UK public voted to leave the EU (Hobolt, 2016). This event is to set the stage for the upcoming negotiations and highlights the deep divisions within the UK, regionally, politically, and demographically over their future relationship with the EU.
- March 29, 2017: UK Prime Minister Theresa May officially triggers Article 50, thereby starting the two-year negotiation period for the final withdrawal agreement (BBC News, 2017d). This move pressures both the UK and the EU that they must reach an agreement within the specified timeframe.

- June 19, 2017: Formal Brexit negotiations commence between the UK and the EU, led on the part of the UK by newly appointed Brexit Secretary David Davis as well as the EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier (Niklewicz, 2017). The negotiations initially centre on the financial settlement, citizens' rights, as well as the Irish border.
- December 8, 2017: After months of contention, the UK and the EU reach a preliminary agreement after the first phase of negotiations, including a final financial settlement, citizens' rights, and the Irish border "backstop" (BBC News, 2017a). This agreement lays the groundwork for future finetuning of the negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU.
- November 25, 2018: The UK and the EU agree on the first draft of the text of the Withdrawal Agreement and the conclusive Political Declaration on the future relationship (BBC News, 2018a). The agreement is met with mixed reactions within the UK public and media landscape, particularly meeting resistance and consternation concerning the Irish border "backstop" and the effects it might cause for the Kingdom and Union.
- January 15, 2019: The UK Parliament overwhelmingly to reject this version of the Withdrawal Agreement after much public debate, with 432 votes against and 202 in favour (Stewart, 2019b). This defeat highlights the significant opposition to the agreement within the UK as well as the challenges faced by Prime Minister Theresa May in attempting to secure support for this deal as it stands.
- March 12, 2019: The UK Parliament once again votes against the Withdrawal Agreement for the second time, with slightly less opposition and 391 votes against and 242 in favour (BBC News, 2019b). However the continued opposition to the agreement underscores the difficulties in eventually reaching a consensus within the UK to this version of the agreement.
- April 10, 2019: The EU now grants the UK a six-month extension to their Brexit deadline, moving it from April 12, 2019, to October 31, 2019 (Boffey & Mason, 2019). This

extension serves to allow for further negotiations and fine tuning of the agreements and allows for further attempts to gain the support required to pass the Withdrawal Agreement through the hurdles within the UK Parliament.

- July 24, 2019: Boris Johnson becomes the new leader of the Conservative party and thereby the UK Prime Minister, replacing Theresa May who was thought incapable of overcoming the hurdles facing the parliamentary support required, and who's track record to negotiated further concessions had come to be viewed as inadequate. Johnson vows to renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement and to secure the removal of the contentious Irish backstop (Perrigo, 2019).
- October 17, 2019: The UK and the EU finally agree on a revised Withdrawal Agreement, which includes changes to the Irish border arrangements and backstop (BBC News, 2019e). This new agreement is seen as a significant victory for new Prime Minister Boris Johnson, although it still faces significant opposition within the UK.
- January 23, 2020: The UK Parliament passes the revised Withdrawal Agreement Bill, paving the way for the UK's final exit from the EU on January 31, 2020 (BBC News, 2020a).

Throughout the negotiation process, both sides faced numerous challenges and disagreements internally and externally, particularly on contentious and complex issues such as the Irish border and the financial settlement. The timeline highlights the complexity of the negotiations and the need for both sides to compromise and concede on certain points in order to reach the final agreement. Ultimately, the negotiations did result in a Withdrawal Agreement acceptable to both sides and the UK's departure from the EU, marking a significant milestone in the history of European integration and diplomatic efforts.

## 6.6 Analysis of Negotiation Tactics Employed, Diplomatic Efforts, and Historical Comparisons

The Brexit negotiations were signified by a range of negotiation tactics employed and diplomatic efforts from both the UK and the EU to achieve objectives to their advantage. Here follows a comparison with other significant historical negotiations which serves to reveal the complexity of such a process and the unique and unprecedented challenges which were posed by Brexit.

One of the negotiation tactics employed by the UK was the risky move of brinkmanship, in which they threatened to leave the EU without any deal if their demands were not met and concessions not made (Zartman & Berman, 1982). This strategy was intended to scar and place pressure on the EU to make certain concessions. However, the EU remained steadfast in the face of threats, and insisted that the integrity of the Single Market and the rights of EU citizens were non-negotiable (Polak, 2021). The EU's strategy therefore was characterized by this coordinated and united approach, serving to ensure that the member states maintained a common position in the negotiations (Whitman, 2016).

When viewed in the context of history the Brexit negotiations are unique but can be compared to the negotiations surrounding the reunification of Germany in 1990. In both cases, a delicate balance of power was at play, and the negotiations involved multiple parties with divergent interests (Zelikow & Rice, 1995). However, unlike the Brexit negotiations, the German reunification process was marked by the spirit of cooperation and goodwill, which ultimately led to the successful outcome and a unified Germany (Zelikow & Rice, 1995).

The interplay between Germany and the UK, as well as between France and the UK, was crucial during the Brexit negotiations. Longstanding, the two most powerful EU member states, Germany and France were to play significant role in shaping the negotiating position (Turner et al., 2019) Whilst Germany was generally viewed as as more receptive to efforts at compromise, France took a more hard-line stance towards its neighbour and historical foe at times across the channel, and unwavering on their insistence on preserving the EU's core principles (Whitman, 2016).

Diplomacy was effectively utilised in certain aspects of these negotiations, such as the agreement on citizens' rights and the transition period. However, diplomacy was to fail in other areas, such as the Irish border issue and the UK's future trade relationship with the EU (Schuette, 2021).

In conclusion, the Brexit negotiations were to be marked by a complex interplay of diplomatic efforts, negotiation tactics, and few applicable historical comparisons due to the unprecedented nature of this action. Both the UK and the EU employed a broad range of strategies to achieve their respective goals, with varying degrees of success. The outcome of the negotiations was influenced not only by the positions of the two main parties but also by the broader geopolitical as well as historical context which influenced the relationships between key EU member states.

## 6.7 Key Actors in the Negotiation

The Brexit negotiations involved several key actors on both sides. These were the individuals that played crucial roles in the shaping of the negotiation process and for representing their respective positions, challenges, and opportunities. Diplomatic efforts are only as effective as their emissaries and therefore deserve to receive a reflection:

### UK:

- a. **David Davis:** As the UK's first ever Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Davis was responsible for leading the UK's initial negotiation efforts. He took a hard-line stance towards the Brexit, advocating for the clean break from the EU (Rose, 2020). Davis was to eventually resign in July 2018 over disagreements with the government's proposed approach towards the future of the negotiations (Hughes, 2018).
- b. **Dominic Raab:** Raab succeeded Davis as the Brexit Secretary, but his tenure was also short-lived in the face of the challenges. He resigned in November

2018 due to growing concerns over the proposed Withdrawal Agreement, particularly the "backstop" provision related to the Irish border (Reuters Staff, 2018).

- c. **Theresa May:** The UK Prime Minister and party leader through much of the initial Brexit negotiations following the resignation of Cameron after the referendum. May played a central role in the shaping of the strategy. She sought to compromise between hard-line Brexiteers and the pro-EU factions within the Conservative party but struggled to achieve a consensus, eventually resigning in July of 2019 (Langfitt, 2019).
- d. **Boris Johnson:** Boris Johnson became the UK's Prime Minister in July 2019, following the resignation of Theresa May, and was to play a decisive role in finalizing the negotiations. As one of the central figures in the Leave campaign, his commitment to delivering Brexit was key to his rise to power, and his motivations during the negotiations were partially driven by the desire to fulfil this promise to the electorate. He also held the belief that the UK had the capacity to forge a prosperous future outside the bounds of the EU, and a desire to restore national sovereignty (Gamble, 2021).

However, another aspect of Johnson's motivation can be viewed as opportunism. As the prominent figure within the Brexit campaign, Johnson capitalized on a momentum and sweeping public sentiment surrounding the issue in order to advance his political career. By positioning himself as the champion of Brexit and the people he was able to garner significant party and public support, culminating in his rise and fall as Prime Minister.

- e. **Dominic Cummings:** was a key figure behind the Vote Leave campaign, and played an influential role in crafting the UK's negotiation strategy during the Brexit process. As a political strategist and senior advisor to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Cummings helped to shape that government's hard-line stance on Brexit, focusing it on issues such as immigration and national sovereignty (Shipman, 2016). His personal motivation appears to have been deeply rooted in his scepticism of the EU's bureaucratic structure and his strong belief in the

importance of national sovereignty for the UK. Cummings' strategic decision-making ability and clever messaging played a critical role in the UK's approach to the negotiations, thereby pushing for a more decisive break from the EU and ultimately influencing the outcome of the Withdrawal Agreement.

- f. **Jacob Rees-Mogg:** Long a prominent Conservative MP and known as an ardent Brexit supporter, was also to emerge as one of the key actors during the negotiations. As one of the leading figures in the European Research Group (ERG), he consistently was to advocate for the hard mode of Brexit and opposed any and all efforts to keep close ties with the EU during the course of negotiating, as he argued that this would undermine their ability to forge their own new and glorious path (De Ruyter & Hearne, 2018). His motivations appear to stem from a long-held belief in the UK's ability and need to prosper independently of the EU, as well as the commitment to upholding traditional conservative values. His influence on the Brexit negotiations was significant, as he helped shape the discourse within the Conservative party and the public and pushed the government to adopt more uncompromising stances towards the EU. This unwavering advocacy for the hard form of Brexit contributed to the polarization of the debate and ultimately influenced the negotiations with the EU.

#### **EU:**

- a. **Michel Barnier:** The EU's Chief Negotiator for the Brexit agreement, Barnier was the primary and steadfast point of contact for the UK throughout the negotiations. He adopted a firm but at times pragmatic approach, he sought to protect the EU's interests while acknowledging the need for compromise in negotiation (Associated Press, 2019)
  
- b. **Donald Tusk:** As the President of the European Council, Tusk was to represent the collective interests of all member states of the EU during the course of the negotiations. He played a key role in maintaining the unity among the EU-27

and in consistently advocated for a close future relationship between the UK and the EU despite the current disagreements (Durrant, et al., 2018).

- c. **Jean-Claude Juncker:** As the President of the European Commission, Juncker was primarily responsible for oversight of Barnier on the EU's side of the negotiations. He emphasized the importance of the EU's core principles and the inviolability of them but acknowledged the realistic requirement for the fair and balanced agreement (Juncker, 2018).

These key actors and their respective personalities each played their significant role in shaping the eventual course of the Brexit negotiations, and their diplomatic efforts were to evolve over time as the process unfolded and new challenges emerged. The interactions and relationships between these figures greatly influenced the negotiation outcomes, highlighting the importance of diplomacy for and despite personal connections when conducting complex international negotiations.

## **6.8 Interplay Among the Key Actors in the Negotiation**

This section explores the dynamic and contentious interplay among the key actors in the Brexit negotiations, it examines in greater detail how their personal and professional interactions shaped the negotiation process, the interplay, and the outcome. The interplay between the UK and the EU as nations, as well as among different factions within each respective party in contest, did play a crucial role in determining the direction and outcome of the negotiations.

### **6.8.1 Interplay within the UK government**

The UK government experienced significant internal divisions and tensions throughout the Brexit negotiations, with some factions advocating for various approaches ranging from the "soft" Brexit, which could maintain close ties with the EU, to the "hard" Brexit, which would entail a more complete disruptive break from the Union (Hayton, 2022). Key figures, such as the then-Prime Minister Theresa May, were seeking to balance these competing interests, which at times resulted in a lack of consensus and the absence of a clear direction by attempting to satisfy and not aggravate certain factions (Jennings & Lodge, 2019). The dynamics within

the UK government, as well as the public and media landscape greatly influenced the overall negotiation strategy and did hamper the government's ability to present a unified stance in negotiations towards the EU

### **6.8.2 Interplay within the EU**

Whilst the EU did maintain a relatively unified position during the negotiations, it did also suffer from differences among the member states regarding certain aspects of the Brexit process and how to approach the negotiation, sometimes fostered by influence from the UK. For example, certain countries prioritized the economic concerns, whilst others emphasized the need to maintain political stability or the protection of the EU's core principles (Archick, 2016). Despite these differences, the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, was able to preserve the overall cohesion among the member states, which allowed the EU to present a united front and a strong and consistent negotiating stance (Barnier & Mackay, 2021).

### **6.8.3 The Interplay between the UK and the EU Actors**

The interplay between the UK and the EU key actors was characterized by the complex mix of cooperation versus confrontation, and was shaped by the personal opinions, challenges, and actions of the key players. Both sides engaged in a series of high-stakes gambles during the negotiations, in order to attempt to reach agreements on key issues such as citizens' rights, financial settlements, and the Irish border (Sowels, 2021) which would be acceptable to both sides. The European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, for instance, expressed concern over the UK's negotiating tactics at times, stating that "Brexit cannot be a success" (Gutschker, 2017).

The negotiations were also marked by moments of breakthrough and compromise, whilst suffering from periods of deadlock and tension (Oliver, 2015). Prime Minister Theresa May's struggle to gain support internally for her proposed Brexit deal from within her own party as well as the UK Parliament showcased the strong internal divisions which impacted the negotiation process and threatened its ultimate success. The EU's chief negotiator on the other hand, Michel Barnier, also was to play a key role in shaping the discussions, he emphasized the need for a "level playing field" in order to ensure fair competition between the UK and the EU in the negotiations (PubAffairs Bruxelles, 2020).

Ultimately, the interplay between the UK and the EU key actors was what shaped the final outcome of the negotiations, which resulted in the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration on the future relationship between the two entities. In summary, the interplay among key actors during the Brexit negotiations was the crucial determinant of the negotiation process and outcomes. The dynamic interactions between the UK and the EU, as well as within their respective governments, influenced the direction and ultimate outcome of the negotiations.

Understanding the complexity of these interactions provides us with valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities which arose during the Brexit process and highlights the importance of effective communication, cooperation, and negotiation skills in navigating these complex diplomatic endeavours, now and in the future. By examining the interplay among the key actors, this section adds depth to our analysis of the Brexit negotiations, shedding light on the highly complex and nuanced methods which underpinned the high-stakes interactions of diplomatic efforts. An understanding of this can serve as the foundation for further research to be made on the role of interplay in diplomatic negotiations and could contribute to the development of effective negotiation strategies for future international relations challenges by learning from this process.

## **6.9 External Factors in the Negotiation Process and their Role**

This section analyses the significant influence of external factors and parties on the negotiation process, taking into account global economic climate, geopolitical developments and players, and highlighting the regional security concerns which both sides faced. These factors could have shaped many of the priorities, preferences, and bargaining positions of both the UK and the EU over the course of the Brexit negotiations. Through examining the impact which external factors had on this negotiation process, this section seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which the negotiations took place and the challenges that it wrought for the negotiators.

### **6.9.1 A Rise in Populism**

For the era prior to and during the negotiations saw a broad rise in populism across Europe, the UK, and beyond. This sudden surge in anti-establishment sentiment and Euroscepticism was to greatly influence the negotiation strategies of both the UK and the EU, with the latter

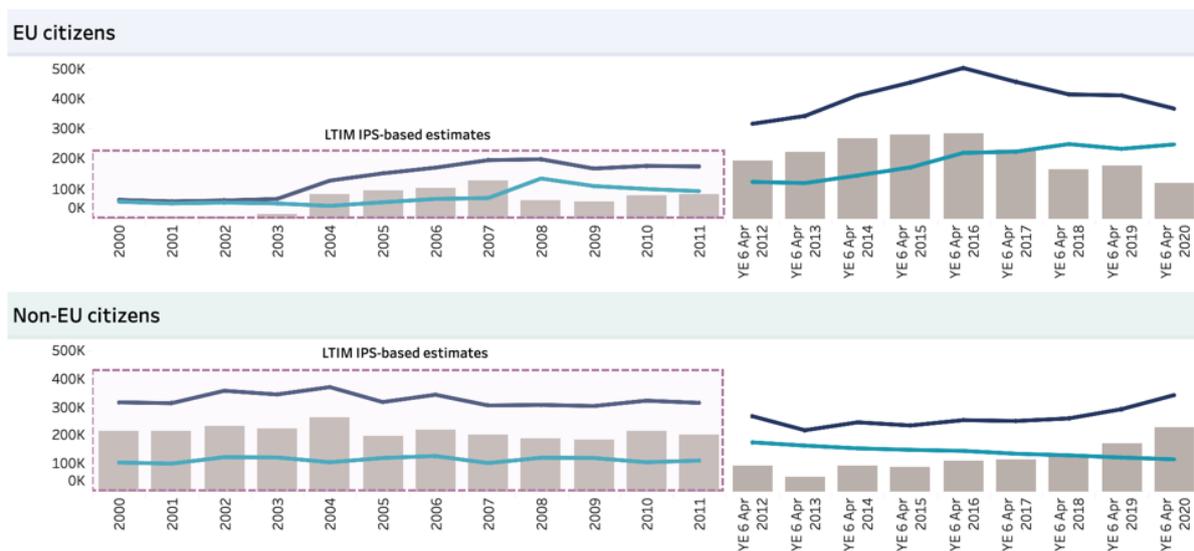
therefore striving to demonstrate the value of EU membership to these factions and their supporters in order to avoid fuelling any further disintegration (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Populism may have also contributed to the UK's more hard-line stance in the negotiations, as the government was seeking to formulate a response to the public's desire for greater national control and sovereignty and to appease those factions which had voted for the exit (Oliver, 2016b).

### 6.9.2 Migration Crisis

A migration crisis unfolded in the years leading up to the referendum and significantly affected the public opinion and the political debates within the EU, also significantly including the UK in the extreme. Grave concerns about immigration and control of the borders were to be central issues in the Brexit campaign and most likely influenced the UK's negotiation priorities in response, such as seeing to end the freedom of movement to the UK (Dennison & Geddes, 2018). The EU, in turn, also faced pressures to address these migration concerns from large sections of its populations whilst maintaining their commitment to humanitarian values and their international obligations (Zaun, 2018). As can be observed in Figure 7, one of the after-effects of Brexit was to severely curb migration from Europe into the UK compared to previous levels,

FIGURE 7: ESTIMATED LONG-TERM IMMIGRATION, EMIGRATION, AND NET MIGRATION TO THE UK PER YEAR, BY CITIZENSHIP, 2000 TO 2020

#### Estimated long-term immigration, emigration, and net migration to the UK per year, by citizenship, 2000 to 2020



*(EU Migration to and From the UK - Migration Observatory, 2022)*

### **6.9.3 COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic was to emerge in the final stages of the Brexit negotiations, this posed unprecedented challenges to public health, the economic stability of the nation and the region, as well as to international cooperation. The pandemic's great impact on the global supply chains, on trade, and public finances might have influenced the negotiation priorities and strategies of both the UK and the EU (Gourinchas, 2020). For example, the urgency to address the pandemic's effects could have added increased pressure to reaching a deal and to avoid further economic disruption which a no-deal exit would have wrought (Marshall, et al., 2020).

### **6.9.4 Role of Third Countries and International Organizations**

The positions and the interests of third countries in the negotiations, such as the United States, Russia, China, as well as international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the United Nations, may have also played their part in shaping the negotiation outcomes. The UK was seeking new trade agreements with many of the countries outside the EU to bolster their position, including the United States, whilst endeavouring to navigate the complex dynamics of international trade politics (Wright, 2017b). The EU, meanwhile, had the aim to maintain their global influence and to protect their interests in the face of a growing competition from other major powers, especially nations such as China (Corre, 2019).

## **6.10 The Role of Third-Party Mediation in the Brexit Negotiations**

The Brexit negotiations were a complex process with the highest possible stakes. It involved not only the UK and EU but its impact rippled onto other international actors who took on third-party mediation roles and exerted influence. Whilst the primary negotiations occurred between the UK and the EU, these third-party mediators played a crucial role in facilitating a dialogue, providing technical expertise, and assisted in bridging the gap between the two parties (Herrmann, 2017).

One example to be noted of successful third-party mediation over the course of the Brexit process was the involvement of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO was able to supply

both sides with valuable guidance and expertise on trade-related issues, to the extent this was accepted as relevant by the public, both the UK and the EU needed to establish a new trade relationship in the aftermath of the exit (Swinbank, 2021). The WTO's participation in these negotiations ensured that any new trade agreements concocted were in line with the international rules and norms.

A further instance of third-party mediation was the significant role played by the Republic of Ireland as arguably the most impacted EU member by the exit, in the discussions surrounding the Irish border issue, as a party which was to have a grave effect because of Brexit. As an EU member state with a significant vested, historic, and practical interest in the outcome of the negotiations, Ireland was an active participant in the attempts to find a workable solution for the sensitive border question, which would prove to be of the most contentious, and risky aspects of the Brexit process (Hayward & Phinnemore, 2017). Irish diplomats worked in close proximity with their UK and EU counterparts to develop the "backstop" proposal, which had sought to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland between north and south whilst respecting the UK's desire to leave the EU (Dooley, 2023).

Third-party mediation was successfully applied in several other high-profile international negotiations as well. For example, the fraught negotiations which led to the Iran Nuclear Deal (formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) involved the direct participation of several international actors, including the United States, Russia, China, France, Germany, as well as the European Union (including the UK at the time). These actors, collectively known as the P5+1, worked together to mediate in the negotiations between Iran and the international community, thereby ultimately reaching a comprehensive agreement in 2015 (Fakheri, 2017).

In the case of the Brexit negotiations, third-party mediation was able to facilitate dialogue between the UK and the EU in order to address specific issues, such as trade and the Irish border. However, it is notable that the overall impact of third-party mediation on the final outcome of the negotiations is difficult to assess and quantify, as the success of the Brexit negotiations was ultimately determined by the willingness of the UK and the EU to reach compromise and to reach a mutually beneficial agreement, despite or because of external pressure applied (Schimmelfennig, 2022).

## 6.11 Critical Moments and Turning Points during the Negotiations

### 6.11.1 The triggering of Article 50

- Description of the event: Following the referendum, on March 29th, 2017, the UK officially triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which provided the formal beginning of the two-year negotiation process for withdrawal from membership of the union (Craig, 2017).
- Analysis of the UK's and the EU's initial negotiation positions: The UK initially sought to achieve a bespoke trade deal with continued access to the single market but to exercise control over immigration, whilst the EU prioritized the integrity of the Single Market and the obligations that come with it as well as the interests of its member states (Whitman, 2016).
- The diplomatic interplay between both sides and how it shaped their strategies: The triggering of Article 50 was to set the tone for the negotiations, with both sides vying to establish their positions and entrenchments and to signal their priorities to the other party.

### 6.11.2 The "Chequers Plan" and its aftermath

- Description of the event: The UK government presented the "Chequers Plan" in July 2018, this outlined its vision for the future relationship with the EU (Barker, 2018).
- Analysis of the UK's and the EU's reactions to the plan: The EU initially strongly rejected the plan as it was to threaten the integrity of the Single Market, while the UK government also faced internal divisions over the proposal (Hopps, 2018).
- The diplomatic interplay between both sides and the implications for the negotiations: The strong rejection of the "Chequers Plan" led to a stalemate of the negotiations, both sides hardening their positions and becoming increasingly entrenched thereby increasing the likelihood of a "no-deal" Brexit.

### **6.11.3 The Irish border issue and the "backstop" proposal**

- Description of the event: How to maintain an open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was difficult issue due to historic tensions and troubles and emerged as one of the key issues during the Brexit negotiations (Cauvet, 2019).
- Analysis of the UK's and the EU's positions on the Irish border: The UK needed to avoid a hard border in Ireland, whilst the EU insisted on a "backstop" arrangement to ensure the continuation of the Good Friday Agreement (Cauvet, 2019).
- The diplomatic interplay between both sides and the role of Ireland in facilitating a solution: Intense diplomacy efforts led to the inclusion of the "backstop" in the Withdrawal Agreement, which ensured that no hard border would be established in Ireland (European Commission, 2018).

### **6.11.4 The conclusion of the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration**

- Description of the event: The UK and the EU finally reached agreement on the terms of the UK's withdrawal and established a framework for their future relationship in November 2018 (European Commission, 2018d).
- Analysis of the UK's and the EU's final positions and the compromises made: The UK agreed to a financial settlement of outstanding commitments, guarantees for the citizens' rights, as well the Irish "backstop," whilst the EU provided a framework for the basis of future cooperation in areas such as trade, security, and foreign policy (European Commission, 2018b).
- The diplomatic interplay between both sides and how it contributed to the final agreements: Persistent diplomatic efforts by key players and an increased willingness to compromise on both sides in order to avoid the "no-deal" scenario, was to lead to the conclusion of the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration, which set the for the UK's ultimate exit from the EU and issued in a new era in the tumultuous UK-EU relations.

## 7 THE FINAL RESULTS

### 7.1 Outcomes of the Negotiations

The Brexit negotiations were to culminate in the Withdrawal Agreement and a Political Declaration on the nature of the future relationship between the UK and the EU. Both documents outlined the terms to be applied to the UK's exit from the EU, which included financial settlements, citizens' rights, and the Irish border, and provided the framework for future cooperation between the two entities, covering areas such as trade, security, and foreign policy (European Commission, 2018).

The financial settlement, which was often referred to as the "divorce bill," determined the amount that the UK would pay to the EU to cover outstanding financial commitments, liabilities, and obligations. The sum eventually agreed upon was approximately £39 billion, which had the aim to ensure a fair distribution of costs and responsibilities between the UK and the remaining EU member states (European Commission, 2018).

Citizens' rights were an important aspect during the negotiations, both sides did agree that they needed to protect and safeguard the rights of those EU citizens who were living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU. The Withdrawal Agreement secured their rights to live and work in perpetuity, whilst continuing access to social security benefits, healthcare, and education uninterrupted in their respective host countries (European Commission, 2018).

The Irish border issue however proved to be one of the aspects most fraught with contention during the negotiations. The UK and the EU eventually agreed on the Northern Ireland Protocol, this was aimed to prevent the formation of a hard border on the Irish isles, and ensured the UK, which included Northern Ireland, could conclusively depart as a member of the EU's Customs Union. This was exceedingly complex in the arrangements, and included regulatory alignment between Northern Ireland and the EU Single Market for goods, as well as new customs procedures to avoid a hard border (European Commission, 2018).

The Political Declaration then set out the framework for the nature of the future relationship between the UK and the EU, this included areas such as trade, security, as well as foreign policy. It acknowledged the UK's desire to be independent also in terms trade policy but set the basis for a free trade agreement with zero tariffs and quotas on goods. It also emphasized the requirement for continued cooperation in areas such as security, law enforcement, and foreign policy, with both sides being stating their commitment to maintaining a close partnership (European Commission, 2018).

Overall, the results of the negotiations illustrated the delicate balance achieved between the UK's desire for greater autonomy and the EU's insistence on maintaining the integrity of its Single Market and the rights of its member states. The Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration provided a foundation for a post-Brexit relationship between the UK and the EU, though many aspects of this relationship would continue to necessitate further negotiation and clarification in the years to come (European Commission, 2018).

If one were to the Liberal Intergovernmentalism Theory of European Integration to the the outcome of the Brexit negotiations it lends us an interesting perspective on the results achieved. This theory posits that the interplay between the national preferences combined with interstate bargaining is what drives the process of integration or disintegration, as the case may be. Looking at the outcome of Brexit, the UK's alleged desire for greater autonomy, regain control over immigration, and the ability to strike independent trade deals drove the government's decision to leave the EU, whilst the EU sought to maintain the integrity of its Single Market and the rights of its member states.

When examining the applicability of this theory in predicting the outcome of the Brexit negotiations the effectiveness can be assessed by examining the degree to which national preferences and interstate bargaining helped shape the agreements. In most aspects, the theory does appear to hold true, as the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration reflect the delicate balance achieved between the desire for greater autonomy and the insistence on maintaining the integrity of its Single Market.

For instance, the Northern Ireland Protocol clearly represents a compromise between the UK's preference for avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland and the commitment of the EU to preserving the integrity of the single market. Similarly, the financial settlement and the protection of citizens' rights are illustrative of how interstate bargaining led to mutually acceptable solutions which addressed the concerns of both sides.

However, some other elements at play in the Brexit process, such as the role of nationalist and populist sentiments, cannot not perhaps be fully explained by liberal intergovernmentalism theory alone. This theory does tend to emphasize rational decision-making based on material interests, which these factors tend to ignore. Other factors, such as identity politics and the influence of key political actors on the process, played a significant role in the shaping of the outcome.

Whilst the liberal intergovernmentalism theory does provide some useful insights when applied to this case in examining the outcomes of the Brexit negotiations, it cannot not fully account for all the factors which were influential. Further analysis using complementary theoretical frameworks, such as constructivism or power politics, might be needed to fully understand the complex interplay of factors that led to the UK's decision to leave the EU and the subsequent negotiations.

## **7.2 Successes and Challenges**

The Brexit negotiations were marked by both successes and challenges. Successes included the preservation of the rights of citizens, ensuring that EU citizens currently residing in the UK and UK citizens conversely residing in the EU would maintain their residency rights and access to social benefits (European Commission, 2018). Additionally, both parties agreed on a transitional period to minimize disruption, providing businesses and governments with the time needed to adapt to the new arrangements (European Commission, 2018).

Challenges also included the difficulty in reaching a consensus on certain key issues, such as the Irish border, where both sides were seeking to avoid the reintroduction of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland whilst respecting the UK's decision to leave the EU's Single Market and Customs Union (Whitman, 2016). The future trade relationship between the two parties would prove to be equally contentious, with the UK desiring a close trading partnership whilst wishing to maintain its regulatory autonomy and therefore to be given special treatment compared to the other members and non-member states, as well as the EU aiming to preserve the integrity of its Single Market and thereby avoid a "cherry-picking" of the benefits approach which was attempted by the UK (Oliver, 2015).

### 7.3 7.3 Historical Context of the Outcome and Future Implications

The Brexit negotiations were truly unprecedented in terms of their complexity and scale, marking the first time a member state chose to leave the post-war project which was to become the European Union. The negotiations exposed the challenges of disentangling a member state from an intricate web of EU policies and regulations built up over many decades of participations since its inception (Alegre, et al., 2018).

Observing the outcome from a historical perspective, the Brexit negotiations can be viewed as a test case for the EU's ability to manage crises as an institution and its ability maintain a unity among disparate members whilst facing internal divisions (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). Comparatively, in the 19th century, there came about the Concert of Europe, which was a system of dispute resolution and maintenance of the balance of power among the European nations, and it faced similar challenges as it sought to manage tensions and rivalries between states extant at the time. The 1815 Congress of Vienna, which at the time sought to establish a balance of power in post-Napoleonic Europe, as well as chronicled tensions between UK and European interests, can be seen as a parallel and precursors to the Brexit negotiations if viewed in terms of the complexity and the need for diplomatic finesse and skill (Kissinger, 1994).

The Concert of Europe and the Congress of Vienna can provide an observer with valuable insights into the challenges and successes of certain diplomatic strategies in their ability to manage exceedingly complex political situations, which have only grown more complex over time. The Concert of Europe was established as the mechanism for maintaining the peace and stability in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. It prescribed and required regular meetings between the great powers in order to resolve ongoing disputes and to maintain the balance of power in Europe (Schroeder, 1994). The Congress of Vienna, conversely, was key event in the establishment of the Concert, as it brought together the representatives and emissaries from across the Europe of the time, in order to redraw the map and create a new political order which had the aim to prevent the resurgence of any single, dominant power (Kissinger, 1994).

The relative success of the Congress of Vienna in maintaining a measure stability in Europe for several decades is to be attributed to the skilful diplomacy and willingness to compromise among the great powers in contention at the time. For instance, the great powers did agree to restore the Bourbon monarchy in France, despite ideological differences, as a way to maintain a balance of power and prevent further conflict (Kissinger, 1994). Additionally, the Congress

was to establish principles such as the right of nations to self-determination, thereby foreshadowing some of the issues which would resurface the discourse during the Brexit negotiations, such as national sovereignty and the nature of national identity (Rapport, 2008).

The Concert of Europe and the Congress of Vienna can thus serve us historical examples of the importance of diplomacy and cooperation in their ability to navigate complex political situations and tensions on the European sphere. They demonstrate the potential for diplomacy to achieve positive outcomes if the combatants are willing to engage in constructive dialogue and to seek compromise, despite different priorities and international factions. This historical context can provide us valuable lessons for the future of diplomacy when dealing with crises such as Brexit.

The Brexit negotiations however also revealed the potential limitations which such traditional diplomacy has dealing with highly complex and emotionally charged issues especially when amplified by a nationalist and populist faction in the respective sides, matters such as national identity and sovereignty especially. In this regard, the 1848 Revolutions, when they swept across Europe to demand greater national self-determination and sovereignty as well as representation, offer a fascinating comparison to Brexit of today as they highlight the power of public sentiment to influence diplomatic outcomes, for better or worse (Rapport, 2008).

The Italian are notable during the 1848 Revolutions, as the nationalist leader Giuseppe Mazzini's call for a unified Italy gained significant support among the people, and led to uprisings against the established order in various parts of the peninsula (Clark, 2018). Likewise, the Hungarian Revolution, led by Lajos Kossuth, wanted to establish an independent Hungarian state outside the sphere of the Habsburg Empire, and reflected a strong desire for self-determination and sovereignty among the Hungarian people (Deák, 2015). In both these cases, public sentiment fuelled the desire for greater national autonomy and thus significantly influenced the course of events and history by placing pressure on traditional and trusted diplomatic channels to adapt and respond to these demands, of this echoes are clearly evident today.

When drawing parallels to Brexit, the rise of Euroscepticism in the public discourse and the stated desire for greater national sovereignty within the UK was to significantly impact the outcome of the referendum, and which was to lead to the unprecedented challenge of negotiating the UK's withdrawal from the EU (Hobolt, 2016). In much the same way as the 1848 Revo-

lutions, Brexit did highlight the power of public sentiment in terms of shaping political and diplomatic outcomes, and underscored the need for diplomacy to evolve and adapt to the new reality and changing nature of political demands and aspirations.

In terms of future implications, the Brexit process serves as a cautionary tale for other EU member states contemplating withdrawal or wishing to renegotiate their relationship with the Union. The negotiations have clearly highlighted the difficulties and pitfalls of disentangling oneself from the EU's web of complex legal and institutional structures, and the potentially disastrous economic and political consequences which we are still observing to this day (Hobolt, 2016). Besides, the Brexit negotiations can also lead to a re-evaluation of the diplomatic strategies employed when dealing with similar crises in the future, and the evolution thereof, which would place greater emphasis on communication, trust-building, and the finding of common ground between the parties.

#### **7.4 Diplomatic Achievements and Failures**

Diplomacy by its nature is a complex and multifaceted art and skillset which involves conducting negotiations and delivering communication between the representatives of different nations or international organizations in order to achieve specific objectives or resolve conflicts (Berridge, 2015). Historically, diplomacy has played a vital role in the management of international relations, by fostering peace, and facilitating cooperation and diffusing contention between the states of our world. From the time of the ancient civilizations, Egypt and Mesopotamia, to the modern era of international diplomacy which shaped by the rise of the nation-state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, diplomacy has evolved, and must continue to evolve in order to address the changing needs of our global community (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2010). If viewed in the context of the Brexit negotiations, diplomacy has been employed successfully and at times unsuccessfully by both the UK and the EU when navigating the unprecedented challenges associated with a member state's withdrawal from the Union, the evolution of this particular art of management was perhaps not speedily enough to cope with the significant of complex challenges it was called on to resolve, and a new type of diplomacy needed to be found, resulting in successes and failures in the experiment which was the Brexit process.

Diplomacy did play a crucial role in process of Brexit negotiations, in achieving compromises and in managing the myriad challenges which arose throughout. Diplomatic efforts were notably successful in the areas dealing with the preserving of citizens' rights and the agreement on a transitional period, where both sides demonstrated a willingness to find common ground (European Commission, 2018).

However, diplomacy was also beset by significant failures, most particularly in addressing the more contentious issues at hand, such as the Irish border question and the nature of future trade relationship which faced intransigence on both sides. These negotiations were marked by periods of extended and unproductive stalemate and tense exchanges, with the level of trust between the two parties often appearing strained and dissipated (Whitman, 2016). In instances such as these, the limitations of diplomacy in its current form became apparent, as this new complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors made it increasingly difficult to find mutually acceptable solutions where in the past the level of complexity would have allowed this art to succeed and flourish, also due to a lesser degree of public involvement, comment and controversy.

Overall, Brexit and the resulting negotiations underscore the importance of diplomacy in terms of attempting to manage complex international relationships, whilst highlighting the pitfalls and limitations of traditional diplomatic approaches when dealing with such unprecedented, complex, and emotionally electrified situations.

## **7.5 Lessons Learned**

The Brexit negotiations can provide us with valuable lessons for both the UK and the EU, as well as for the practice of diplomacy in general. Some of the key takeaways include:

The importance which trust and transparency play in such a negotiation: Trust between negotiating parties is crucial for the achievement of successful outcomes. Maintaining open lines of communication and thereby engaging in a transparent dialogue can help build and rebuild trust and foster the collaborative atmosphere required (Menon & Salter, 2016).

Flexibility and creativity: In such complex and contentious negotiations, flexibility and creativity are paramount for the discovery of mutually acceptable solutions. Both parties ought to be

willing to explore alternative approaches to their methods and to think outside the box to address seemingly intractable issues (Martill & Staiger, 2018).

The value of compromise: Compromise is one of the fundamental aspects of diplomacy, without which it becomes inoperable and loses its applicability. Both parties must be willing to make concessions and sacrifices in order to reach an agreement. Striking the balance between the interests of both sides and the factor at play is critical for the achievement of a sustainable, mutually beneficial, outcome (Snyder & Diesing, 2015).

Domestic Bliss: Domestic political considerations played a significant and contentious role in shaping the positions of both the UK and the EU during the course of the Brexit negotiations. The understanding of the internal political dynamics within each party's home country and appreciation for the difficulties it brings is essential for the successful engagement of diplomacy (Dunlop, et al., 2020).

Long-term planning and thinking: The Brexit negotiations were to highlight the need for long-term planning and strategic thinking when involved in diplomatic engagements. Both parties ought to consider the potential implications their decisions might entail, not only in the short term, but also for the fate and future of their relationship and as well as geopolitics at large (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015).

The lessons learned from the Brexit negotiations can now serve as a valuable guide for future diplomatic efforts, both within the context of the future UK-EU relationship as well as in other complex and challenging international negotiations which are no likely bound to occur more frequently if the factors which gave rise to this dilemma do not abate.

This is one of the key areas to consider, the underlying reasons behind these observed trends and phenomena, such as the rise of nationalism and increased immigration which caused this fracas. The examination of the factors which drove these developments, such as economic disparity and concerns over national identity, assists us in understanding the political climate and social context in which the Brexit negotiations took place (Goodwin & Heath, 2016).

Another of the many lessons to be learned from the Brexit negotiations is the role of the Labour party. The Labour party's lack of opposition and inability to find a stance during the referendum was a notable aspect of the process. The motivations behind their stance, as well as the impact of their passive approach on the referendum result, could shed light on the role that political parties play in shaping significant political decisions (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016).

Another important takeaway from the Brexit negotiations pertains to the aftermath of this decision and resulting negotiations, and one which is arguably more significant than the referendum result itself. The consequences of this decision are continuing to unfold around us and to impact various sectors of the economy, social dynamics, as well as the standing of the UK around the globe.

## **8 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES**

### **8.1 Implications**

The future of diplomatic relations between the UK and the EU is forever impacted and shaped by this recent strife much as it previously was by other major political events in history. The negotiations have refreshed the importance of effective diplomatic strategies when addressing such complex political challenges and the essentialness of flexibility and ability to compromise when in the pursuit of common objectives (Whitman, 2016). The process has underscored the role of key diplomatic actors, their strengths and shortcomings in their ability to shape the outcomes of negotiations, as was seen with the contributions of Michel Barnier and David Davis (Oliver, 2015). Additionally, the Brexit negotiations shined a spotlight on the potentially disruptive impact which media and public opinion can have on the effectiveness of diplomatic relations, and thereby shaping the strategies and priorities of both parties (Vargo et al., 2018)

### **8.2 Recommendations for the Future**

Based on the findings that this study brought to light, several recommendations for the future of the diplomatic strategies employed can be made:

1. Increase focus on the building of trust as well as the fostering of open communications between the parties involved in order to facilitate a more constructive dialogue from the outset. This could include a series of regular high-level meetings between officials on both sides to maintain open channels of communication and to promote transparency in decision-making processes as well as increase public confidence in their respective constituencies (Barston, 2019).
2. To have prioritized the protection of citizens' rights during the negotiation to in future promote cooperation in the areas of mutual interest, such as security, research, and environmental protection. This is possible to emphasise through joint initiatives and partnerships which demonstrate the value of continued collaboration between the UK and the EU after the separation (European Commission, 2018).

3. To engage in diplomatic efforts which seek to address the root causes of the issues which led to the current state, including addressing the economic and social concerns which have given rise to the inflammation of the public discourse and voting habits of the citizenry. This could involve and increase in investment by both sides in the regions most affected by economic inequality, fostering a greater sense of social cohesion, as well as addressing the concerns related to migration and border control directly (Hobolt, 2016).
4. Develop innovative diplomatic strategies which promote unity amongst the EU member states and which constructively demonstrate the benefits of EU membership at various social strata. This could include renewed efforts to enhance democratic accountability within the EU institutions, strengthening the EU's social dimension and programs, and to reinvigorate the mission to foster a greater sense of supranational European identity among citizens, especially the younger ones (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015).
5. Learn from the lessons provided by the Brexit experience to improve the EU's crisis management resources and capabilities, to enhance their ability to respond in future to such challenges. This includes refining the EU's decision-making processes to be adaptable, improving the communication strategies, and investing in development of more robust and resilient European project generally (Korosteleva, 2020).

By implementing these recommendations and finding new manners of operation and cooperation, the UK and the EU can start to work towards building a more effective and constructive diplomatic relationship in the post-Brexit era in order to meet future challenges which will require cooperation between the nations. And will ensuring that the future relationship rests on a solid foundation of mutual respect and a recognition of shared interests, values and aims.

## 9 THE IMPACT OF BREXIT

### 9.1 Political Impact

The Brexit referendum left a significant political impact on other EU member states in its wake. It saw a surge increased Euroscepticism immediately in some member countries, coinciding with a similar populist and nationalist momentum that wrought this exit, where they used it as leverage for an example of the possibility to reclaim national sovereignty and faded national glory (Börzel & Risse, 2018). The rise of anti-EU sentiments which was observed in countries like France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Hungary, where calls for referendums on EU membership have grown increasingly louder (De Vries, 2018). However, Brexit also led in many instances to a renewed commitment and dedication to proceed with the project European integration in other countries, which has been seen as one of the great causes of Brexit, as they witnessed the challenges which were faced by the island in leaving the rest behind (Leruth, et al., 2018).

### 9.2 Economic Impact

The economic impact which Brexit has had on some EU member states is varied. Some nations which had strong economic ties to the UK, namely Ireland, the Netherlands, and Belgium, to name but a few, faced significant economic uncertainties due to the ongoing disruptions in trade, investment, and supply chains (Dhingra et al., 2016a). One notable instance of which received wide public dismay, the famous queues at the border during the Christmas period amidst the COVID-19 pandemic showcased the vulnerability of cross-border trade, when thousands of trucks were stranded, causing significant delays and economic costs for businesses and the public at large (Mey, 2020).

Conversely, some member states have seen benefits and opportunities arise from the ashes of Brexit. Immediately following the referendum we saw businesses and financial institutions relocate to the continent, most leaving London for other European cities such as Frankfurt, Paris, and Dublin (European Parliament, 2017) as they were able to better serve their needs in the

global financial system. For example, soon after Brexit, several major banks which had operated in London for many years, including Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, and Barclays, moved portions of their operations and staff to cities within the EU in order to maintain important access to the European market (Noonan & Crow, 2019). Similarly, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), which was previously headquartered in London, has had to relocate to Amsterdam as a direct result of Brexit (Wouters, et al., 2020).

In addition, Brexit led to increased investment in certain sectors within the EU. For example, Ireland experienced a surge in investment due to its strategic location as the bridge between Europe and the UK, as well as its exceedingly favourable corporate tax rates (Lyttle, 2022).

Overall, the economic impact which Brexit has on EU member states has been and is a mix of challenges and opportunities. Whilst some countries faced disruptions in trade and investment, others quickly capitalised on the changing economic landscape by attracting businesses to relocate and seducing institutions which sought to maintain access to the European market.

### **9.3 Diplomatic Strategies**

Brexit was to greatly influence the diplomatic strategies of other EU member states as well as to the EU collectively. These member states sought to navigate the morass of challenges which the UK's departure posed for them. The EU's collective approach to the Brexit negotiations highlighted the importance to maintain a united front among its members, no matter what turmoil might be below the surfaces (Laffan & Telle, 2023). For instance, EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, consistently emphasized the need for a unified stance among the member states, displaying his belief the unity of the 27 remaining EU members will play to his strength during the negotiations (Schuette, 2021).

However, the Brexit process prompted some member states to seek to strengthen their bilateral relationships with the UK separately from the union in order to secure their individual interests in areas such as security, trade, and investment (Whitman, 2016). For example, France and the UK signed the Sandhurst Treaty in 2018, which as neighbours aimed to improve their strategic cooperation on border security, migration, and defence (Drake & Schnapper, 2021). French President Emmanuel Macron, spoke at the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, selected as a symbolic location for this agreement, where he underscored the importance of this treaty, making clear that the UK's decision to leave the EU does not mean that the historic bilateral

relationship between the two countries should weaken (Chassany & Parker, 2018) specifically referring to defence.

Similarly, German Chancellor Angela Merkel also expressed at the time the need to maintain close ties with a post-Brexit UK, emphasizing that "even after Britain's exit from the European Union, it is in our interest to have a strong, economically prosperous and confident Britain with which we can continue to cooperate closely on economic and foreign policy matters" (Merkel, 2017).

On the other hand it has also led to stark contrasts in diplomatic strategies among other EU member states. While countries such as Poland and Hungary expressed some sympathy for the UK's desire to regain sovereignty and control over its borders (Ryder, 2020), others were far more critical of Brexit and have called for more integration of the European Union to respond proactively to the challenges this poses. French President Emmanuel Macron has advocated for further and increased European integration, including the creation of a European army, to counter the potential weakening of the EU due to Brexit (BBC News, 2018c).

In conclusion, the process inaugurated by the Brexit referendum and the negotiations has had a significant impact on the diplomatic strategies of other EU member states. While they maintained a united front during the negotiations, several cracks began to appear in this façade immediately following the conclusion with individual countries pursuing varying strategies to secure their own interests and building renewed strong bilateral relationships with the UK.

#### **9.4 Increased Euroscepticism or Strengthened Commitment to European Integration?**

Whilst inauguration of Brexit fuelled the rise of Euroscepticism in some countries, it has also had the opposite effect among some and strengthened their commitment to European integration in retaliation. Some EU member states have witnessed the proverbial "rally around the flag" effect, with their citizens observing the challenges and hardship faced by the UK in attempting to leave the EU and the potentially negative consequences of disintegration of the Union (Hobolt, 2016). This is particularly evident in countries like Germany, where support for the EU was bolstered following the Brexit referendum in response (Risse, 2019).

### 9.4.1 Impact of Brexit on Foreign Investment

The Brexit decision was to have significant implications for foreign direct investment (FDI) to the UK. In the years prior to the referendum, many were concerned about how the UK's withdrawal from the EU would affect the FDI. The UK had historically been an attractive and lucrative destination for investment by virtue of its strong links to the EU market (Ebell & Warren, 2016). One of the key factors which was to influence the future of FDI to the UK after Brexit is the remaining uncertainty surrounding the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

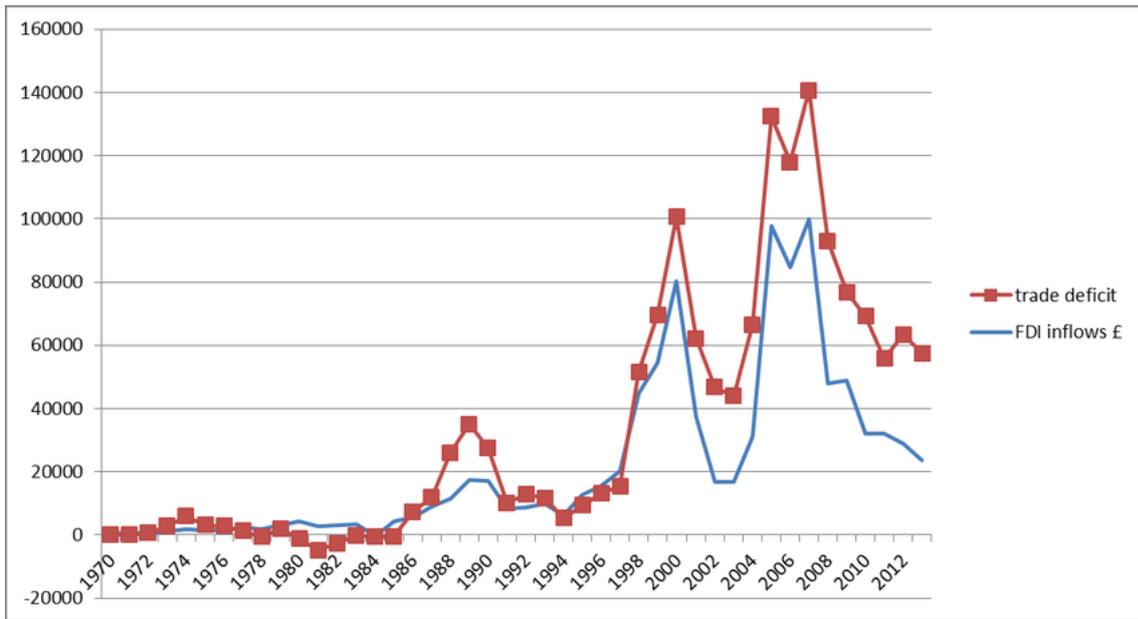
After Brexit, the depreciation of the British pound had a complex impact on the FDI. Whilst it might make some UK assets more attractive to foreign investors, it was suggested that the depreciation would also deter FDI for a prolonged time should the UK experience a period of near-zero growth, inflation, and policy rates, as has been observed in recent years (Dhingra et al., 2016). A positive growth of FDI could only be expected if the UK's economy were to experience greater levels of volatility in growth, inflation, interest, and exchange rates.

Additionally complicating matters aside from the currency fluctuations and economic uncertainty is the regional distribution of FDI within the UK, which has been influenced by the policy responses originally aimed at attracting investment. However, these policy interventions have so far had a limited effect on the aggregate FDI levels (Dhingra et al., 2016).

The impact of Brexit on FDI in the UK remains still uncertain and will largely depend on the future relationship between the UK and the EU. The depreciation of the British pound and the increased economic uncertainty could potentially impact FDI to the country severely.

We can say that Brexit has triggered significant shifts in the foreign direct investment (FDI) patterns within Europe, notable is an increase in the outward FDI from UK companies investing into Germany in order to retain their post-Brexit presence in the EU. FDI into Germany rose to €25.3bn in 2022, up from €7bn in 2021, in large part this was due to Frasers Group and Mura Technology establishing operations on the continent (Chazan & Giles, 2023). However, major factors like the rise in energy prices and the lure of US clean energy subsidies may serve to temper this surge, this most recent situation highlights the intricate interplay of various factors shaping FDI trends post-Brexit.

FIGURE 8: UK TRADE DEFICIT AND INWARD FDI



(Driffield & Karoglou, 2016)

## 10 THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION IN THE BREXIT PROCESS

### 10.1 Media Influence on Public Opinion

The media played an especially crucial role in the run-up and execution of the exit by shaping public opinion throughout. Various news outlets, particularly the UK tabloid press, as well as social media platforms provided information and opinion pieces, often with a partisan slant, which influenced the way people perceived the EU, its influence and effects on their lives, and the potential consequences of leaving the Union (Tucker et al., 2017) The media's intense focus on emotive issues such as immigration, sovereignty, and the economic concerns of certain segments of the public contributed to the formation of a more polarized public opinion on Brexit (Moore, 2016).

A key figure, and founding member, in the Brexit campaign in the run-up and during the aftermath was Dominic Cummings, serving as the campaign director for the "Vote Leave" group. Cummings is widely credited for developing the campaign's messaging and eventually effective strategy, which focused on the slogan "Take back control" and incited voters' concerns over immigration and the loss of sovereignty (Shipman, 2016). Cummings revolutionarily made extensive use of data-driven techniques in his targeting and optimised the use of social media to target undecided voters and maximize the impact of the campaign's messaging (Cadwalladr, 2017), where the remain campaign lagged far behind.

The EU responded to media narratives surrounding Brexit by staunchly and ineffectively attempting to counter misinformation to attempt to present a more balanced and sober view of the EU's role and benefits. The European Commission, for instance, launched a widely ignored communication campaign called "EUandMe" to highlight the positive sides of EU membership, such as the freedom to travel, work, and study across the member states (European Commission, 2018). However, this effort was largely overshadowed by vastly more sensationalist and emotive coverage in the UK media, which tended magnified the negative aspects of the EU to much greater effect (Hobolt & Wratil, 2015).

In the context of Brexit, the evolution of the media, its spread and influence, significantly impacted diplomatic strategies that could be employed by both the UK and the EU, as it was scrutinised to a degree never before seen. The rise of social media platforms and their increasing influence on the public discourse versus traditional media, as well as the increasing prominence of digital media outlets allowed for the faster and wider dissemination of information and the greater capacity for grassroots movements to shape and impact public opinion (Tucker et al., 2017). This shift in the media landscape required diplomats and policymakers to become adept in more public communication strategies and to engage more directly with citizens through various channels than had been accustomed in this art of policymaking.

The Brexit negotiations saw the UK and the EU utilising social media and data driven dissemination as well as other digital platforms to originally communicate their positions and to respond to public sentiment instantly and targeted. Diplomats were required monitor public opinion closely to adapt their strategy and attempt to address misinformation, while simultaneously effectively communicating their objectives, achievements and strategy in the negotiations (Zerfass, et al., 2018). This unprecedented media environment in which diplomats had to learn to operate also gave rise to a greater need for transparency and accountability within in the diplomatic process, as for the first time in history the public can now scrutinize and engage with negotiations more readily and openly and achieve counterproductive effects in the subtle and previously hidden art of deal making.

In conclusion, the evolving media landscape added another layer of complexity to diplomatic strategies that could be employed during Brexit. Diplomats and negotiators had to adjust their tactics, and were restricted in their movements, they needed to develop communication strategies to effectively navigate this new media minefield and ensure that the message reached the intended audience not just the adversary. This highlighted the growing importance of a new type of digital diplomacy and the requirement for effective diplomats to display greater agility and be more adaptive in their approach to engaging the public and communicating broadly.

## **10.2 Campaign Strategies and Media Tactics**

Both the Leave and Remain campaigns utilized innovative media tactics in order to promote their respective positions. The Leave campaign was to successfully capitalize on a growing anti-establishment sentiment and to harness the desire for greater control over national policies by using catchy slogans such as "Take Back Control" and "Breaking Point" (Curtice, 2017). The Leave campaign also focused heavily on immigration concerns in their media efforts and played on the perceived loss of sovereignty to the EU. They emphasised incidents such as the European refugee crisis and repeated claims that the UK could not control their borders effectively so long as it remained within the EU (Goodwin & Heath, 2016).

Historically speaking, political campaigns often relied on such emotive slogans and appeals to mobilize support for their platform (Jerit, 2004). In this sense, the Leave campaign's "Take Back Control" and "Breaking Point" slogans were highly reminiscent of earlier campaigns which sought to tap into prevalent nationalist sentiments and anti-establishment feelings and to amplify them for political gain. Similarly, the Remain campaign's stark focus on the economic risks of leaving the EU can be compared to other campaigns that have emphasized the potential negative consequences of change, but which lacked the emotive appeal of the other side (Bartels, 2002).

However, the campaigns also demonstrated some key innovations and transformations from more traditional political campaigns, particularly in harnessing the power of social media to their advantage and the revolutionary speed at which information, both accurate and misleading, could be disseminated among the citizenry (Tucker et al., 2017). This new form of rapid dissemination of information and the formation of echo chambers within social media platforms have amplified the polarization and division amongst the electorate and made it much more challenging for traditional political theories and strategies to account for these evolving dynamics (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018).

The Leave campaign also garnered the support of many influential figures, popular politicians such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, who were active participants in the public discourse over the campaign due to media appearances, debates, and public events in which they promoted the Leave message (Curtice, 2017). The campaign's messaging was simplified and emotionally resonant among certain segments of the population, with the infamous claim that the UK sends £350 million per week to the EU, which could instead, theoretically, be used to fund the National Health Service (NHS). Although this figure was later debunked by many, initially it served as a powerful and memorable message that resonated with many voters and sparked

public outrage and debate despite questions over its veracity falling on deaf ears (Henley, 2016).

In the meanwhile, the Remain campaign was attempting to emphasize the economic risks of leaving the EU, dismissively referred to as "Project Fear" by its critics (Higgins, et al., 2018). The Remain campaign played on potential job losses, the threat of economic downturns, and a risk of reduced investment in the UK by foreign entities as potential consequences of leaving the EU (Armstrong & Portes, 2016). However, the Remain campaign also faced criticism for focusing too heavily on negative messaging instead of positive, and thereby failing to articulate a positive vision for the EU and the UKs membership therein (Dhingra et al., 2016b).

The Remain campaign's media tactics included utilizing the expert opinions and research from renowned institutions such as the Bank of England, the International Monetary Fund, as well as the London School of Economics to support their economic arguments, which did not resonate with the public which holds them in low esteem (Levy, et al., 2016). And the Leave campaign easily countered these expert opinions by using the claim that such experts had been wrong in the past therefore could not be trusted. Additionally, the Remain campaign was perceived as being in line with the political establishment of yore, making it exceedingly difficult for them to connect with voters whose main motivation was discontent and disappointment with the status quo (Curtice, 2017).

As noted, social media played a significant role in the campaign execution and dissemination, with both sides using platforms like Facebook and Twitter to spread their message, drive viral bursts of content, and to engage with voters (Tucker et al., 2017). However, concerns were increasingly being raised about the spread of misinformation and such use of targeted advertising, which in turn raised questions about the transparency and fairness of the campaigns, largely ignored (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018).

In conclusion, both Leave and Remain employed distinct media strategies to promote their sides during the Brexit referendum. Whilst the Leave campaign harnessed the power of emotionally resonant messages and anti-establishment sentiment, the Remain campaign unsuccessfully attempted to appeal to rational arguments and to emphasize the economic risks associated with Brexit. The effectiveness of these strategies in shaping public opinion and the eventual outcome of the referendum offers valuable insights into the new role of media tactics in political campaigns and the shaping of the public discourse.

### 10.3 Social Media and Echo Chambers

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others, first played a significant role in the Brexit campaign by allowing users themselves to share news and opinions, unverified and unfiltered, which reinforced and spread their existing beliefs, thus reating echo chambers (Del Vicario et al., 2016). Echo chambers are these spaces in which those like-minded individuals interact primarily with those who share their views, thereby reinforcing existing opinions and limiting exposure to alternative or edited perspectives (Quattrociocchi et al., 2016).

A study by Del Vicario et al. (2016) found that during the Brexit campaign, social media users were increasingly likely to engage with and share content which already aligned with their pre-existing views on the EU membership issue, thereby ignoring opposing views. This selective exposure to information contributed greatly to the polarization of public opinion, as users were less likely to encounter views which might challenge their beliefs.

Misinformation, disinformation and emotionally charged content played a significant role in exacerbating these divisions on social media platforms. Vargo et al. (2018) found that during the Brexit campaign, the use of fake news and sensationalist stories were shared widely, distorting the public discourse. For example, the now infamous and often debunked claim that leaving the EU would enable the UK to free up £350 million to spend on the National Health Service (NHS) was still spread virally on social media even to today (Henley, 2016).

The negative effects of these echo chambers was measured in various ways, including analysis of sharing patterns and metrics of engagement (likes, comments, and shares) on these social media platforms. Tracking the circulation of specific pieces of content, researchers observed the extent to which users engaged with ideologically congruent information (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

The future implications of social media echo chambers are vast and overwhelmingly negative for the public discourse, these phenomena have the potential to further polarize public opinion and erode the public's trust in our political institutions. As political campaigns continue to utilise social media to reach and mobilize supporters, there is a growing need for platforms to address the spread of misinformation and to foster a healthier public discourse. Policymakers as well as these technology companies, and educators must collaborate to develop strategies

which promote media literacy and to encourage critical thinking among social media users to prevent this occurrence of echo chambers.

## **10.4 Impact of Public Opinion on Diplomatic Strategies**

Public opinion now shaped the diplomatic strategies of both the UK and the EU during the Brexit negotiations as never before. A pressure to deliver on the Brexit vote results for the voters and the increased polarization of public opinion greatly influenced the UK government's negotiation stance, often leading to a more hard-line approach in order to satisfy these elements (Gamble, 2018). The influence of public opinion was clearly evident in the UK government's decision to prioritize immigration control whilst pursuing a "clean break" from the EU (BBC News, 2017a). This stance aligned with the sentiments expressed by swathes of Leave voters who had voted to regain national sovereignty and to restrict the influence the EU supposedly had on domestic policies (Hobolt, 2016).

However, the EU was seeking to demonstrate the benefits of membership to its remaining adherents and to counter the concerns of the citizenry in order to allay further fragmentation within the Union (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). EU leaders, the likes of Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Emmanuel Macron, consistently stressed the importance of unity in the face of Brexit (Erlanger & Bennhold, 2017). The EU's commitment to integrity within the Single Market and the staunch defence of the four freedoms (goods, services, capital, and people) was key to their negotiation strategy and didn't falter, it aimed to signal the value of EU membership to others and stressed the need for cooperation among member states (Wivel & Thorsvall, 2018).

Historically, public opinion has played a crucial, if not as vociferous a role in shaping the diplomatic strategies and outcomes of nations and conflicts. A prime example to note is that during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, public opinion in the United States and the Soviet Union to certain extent served influence the decisions made by President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, which led to a peaceful resolution of the crisis (White, 1996). Similarly, growing public opposition to the Vietnam War in the United States was to effect the eventual withdrawal of American troops and served to herald and end to the extended conflict (Mueller, 1973).

In stark contrast to these historical examples however, the Brexit process demonstrated a potential for the public opinion to exacerbate divisions and to complicate diplomatic efforts as never before. The polarizing of the debate and the excessive influence of social media echo chambers created an environment where finding common ground became increasingly challenging (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

Diplomacy will continue to evolve into the 21st century and must increasingly take account of the impact which public opinion can have on new diplomatic strategies. An understanding and recognition of the role which public opinion has in shaping diplomatic outcomes and navigating the increasingly complex political challenges will be crucial for the future success of any diplomatic efforts, particularly in this increasingly interconnected and ever more globalized world.

The Brexit process underscored the need for diplomats and policymakers alike to more carefully consider the influence which public opinion has currently on the negotiation process and the development of diplomatic strategies. As demonstrated by Brexit, public opinion now drives political agendas and can shape the priorities of both the negotiating parties. In order to achieve successful diplomacy, it is essential for the diplomats of today to actively engage with the electorate, as well as incorporate the addressing of their concerns whilst seeking to navigate the already treacherous shores and complexities of international negotiations.

Going forward, it is crucial for diplomats and political leaders to acknowledge the role of media in today's diplomatic efforts and its effect on the public discourse and limiting factor in negotiations. Particularly social media, will continue to shape and steer public opinion and has potential consequences on any diplomatic efforts. Strategies must be developed which will effectively counter the spread of misinformation and will encourage more open and transparent communication in a dialogue with the public to foster a renewed and better, more informed, decision-making process which will promote constructive dialogue and critical thinking. This could potentially involve deeper engagement with the public through also using social media channels, the promotion of public forums, and other, newer, means of communication currently evolving. But these efforts ought to always be combined with programs to promote media literacy and independent critical thinking among citizens.

In addition, diplomatic efforts must now be geared towards addressing root causes of the public discontent and thereby fostering an environment of trust and cooperation among the na-

tions of this world. By prioritizing the topics such as the protection of citizens' rights, cooperation in areas of mutual interest, and diplomatic efforts to address pressing global challenges, diplomats and political leaders can work alongside towards building a more inclusive, effective and influential diplomatic sphere of influence which is responsive to the modern needs and concerns of the public.

In conclusion, Brexit highlighted the importance which public opinion plays in the shaping of diplomatic strategies and heralded in the need for diplomats to take account of these factors in their approaches accordingly. Through an understanding of the role which public opinion and media influence have in the shaping of diplomatic outcomes and by incorporating these insights into their strategic efforts, diplomats have the opportunity towards more effective and successful negotiation outcomes.

## 11 THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AFTER BREXIT

### 11.1 The Future of European Integration

Brexit profoundly impacted the future of the European Union. It raised questions about the overall viability and direction of European integration project (Hodson & Puetter, 2018). The UK's departure led to discussions about reforms necessary within the EU, in particular in contentious areas such as democratic accountability, the principle of subsidiarity, as well as the fostering of solidarity among its member states (Calliess, 2021). Key figures in the EU governance bodies, such as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, called for a new "Conference on the Future of Europe" to discuss and address these challenges (Von der Leyen, 2019).

In a speech he delivered in September of 2019, the French President Emmanuel Macron called for a "European renaissance" and proposed certain reforms which seek to strengthen the EU. This included the creation of a common defence strategy, an overall eurozone budget, and a European general minimum wage (BBC News, 2019c). Similarly, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has likewise been calling for greater integration in matters such as defence, foreign policy, as efforts to tackle climate change (*Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 13 November 2018*, n.d.)

Brexit has also had implications for those countries which had been endeavouring to join the EU, such as the much contested Turkey. The EU's process of ongoing enlargement was faced with greater and increasing scepticism, with some member states now questioning the wisdom of further expansion (Aydın-Düzgüt & Kaliber, 2016). The Brexit vote might have contributed to a greater degree of scepticism, as it served to highlight concerns about the EU's ability to manage and align the differing and often competing interests and priorities of their member states. Turkey's ongoing and stalled accession process, which began in 1987, has seen little progress made in the negotiations due to concerns about Turkey's democratic backsliding and questionable human rights record (Aydın-Düzgüt & Kaliber, 2016). The uncertainty which surrounded Brexit might have further dampened their prospect of acceding to the union, as it grapples first with their own internal challenges.

The further impact of Brexit on the future of European integration is complex and multifaceted, and has yet to show its full ramifications. While it has prompted calls for reform by many and raised questions about the direction of the EU, it also led to renewed commitment among some member states in order to strengthen the Union and address its challenges collectively and internally. As the EU navigates the new post-Brexit minefield, maintaining unity and promoting

cooperation among its members will be crucial in shaping a new course for European integration.

As the EU attempts to move forward in the post-Brexit era, several key challenges have emerged which must be addressed in order to ensure stability and success. These include the ongoing rise of Eurosceptic and populist movements still rampant across the continent, sowing seeds of discontent. As well as the underlying cause of such movement which is the economic disparity between member states and social segments, this must be addressed to ensure that the EU remains relevant and an effective actor on the global stage.

As often noted, the growth of Eurosceptic and populist movements has been of grave concern for the EU in recent years, especially when noted that unchecked they can lead to drastic contentions such as Brexit. These movements often advocate for weakening of the EU's institutions and the return to a more nationalistic type of policy (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018). The Brexit vote itself is manifestation of these trends, and raised concerns among many in the establishment about the potential for similar referendums or demands for reform in other member states. Responding to this challenge, the EU must engage with their citizens directly and more effectively to address the underlying issues at the grassroots level which fuels Euroscepticism, this include concerns about globalization, migration, and the perception of an erosion of national identity feared by many (Kriesi, 2016).

Economic disparities between the member states have long been a major challenge for the EU, particularly illustrated in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008 and a subsequent eurozone crisis (Gros & Alcidi, 2014). To address these disparities will be crucial for the EU to maintain its credibility and ensure that all member states feel that they benefit from EU membership. This may involve increasing investment in economically disadvantaged regions, pursuing policies that promote economic convergence, and fostering greater solidarity among member states in times of crisis (Leonardi, 2006).

Finally, the EU must ensure that they will remain a relevant and effective actor on the global stage. This involves the development of a coherent and unified foreign policy, which strengthens their defense capabilities towards external foes, and a greater engagement in strategic partnerships with key allies (Mayer, 2016). In doing so, they can maintain their influence in a rapidly changing world and can continue to promote the values of the union and their interests on a global scale.

In conclusion, the future of European integration in the post-Brexit era will depend on the EU's ability to address these challenges and adapt to a changing political and economic landscape. By doing so, the EU can strengthen its foundations and ensure that it remains a vital and influential actor in the 21st century.

## 11.2 EU's Response to Brexit

The EU's response to Brexit included efforts which aim to strengthen the Union's resilience and will seek to promote a greater unity among the member states. This is illustrated by Initiatives such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 which have the aim to address certain of the underlying causes of Euroscepticism and to foster greater cohesion within the EU (European Commission, 2017a).

## 11.3 Potential Implications for EU Policies

Brexit might have implications for EU policies in areas such as trade, defence, and migration. With the UK's departure, the balance of power within the EU could shift significantly, and could potentially lead to new policy priorities and alliances being pursued at the behest of new powerful actors that fill the vacuum (Schlecht, 2019). Furthermore, Brexit might prompt the EU to reassess their approach and desire to enlarge and its neighbourhood policies, as well as to deepen cooperation in areas such as security and defence (Biscop, 2018).

## 11.4 Brexit as a Catalyst for Reform

Brexit highlighted a need for the EU to address challenges which are posed by the disintegration and to adapt to an ever faster evolving political landscape. In the smouldering ruins of the Brexit referendum, the EU leaders launched a series of discussions and initiatives aimed at fostering greater unity, addressing key challenges, and aims to reforming the Union to better positioned to respond to its citizens' concerns (European Commission, 2017b).

One of the most notable and laudable steps to have been taken since Brexit has been the development of the "Future of Europe" debate, which was launched by the European Commission in 2017. This initiative had sought to foster a Europe-wide dialogue about the direction of the EU and which priorities it ought to pursue in terms of security, migration, economic growth, and social cohesion (European Commission, 2017b), this was received with limited fanfare. The European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stated in his 2017 State of

the Union address, "The wind is back in Europe's sails... Now we have a window of opportunity, but it will not stay open forever" (Juncker, 2017).

The EU has also taken strides towards enhancing its unified defence capabilities and cooperation, launching the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017. This initiative has the goal to deepen defence integration amongst the EU member states and improve a collective capacity which can respond to security threats (Fiott, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the EU has introduced reforms aimed at strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union, which has included the creation of the European Stability Mechanism, which can provide swift financial assistance to member states in financial distress, as well as the establishment of the Banking Union, aimed at enhancing the ongoing stability of the European banking sector (Moloney, 2018).

Despite these laudable efforts, the public opinion on the EU remains divided, recent polls showing varying levels of support for the Union across the different member states (Eurobarometer, 2021). However, the overall support for the EU has increased in many areas since the Brexit referendum, which seems to indicate that the Union's efforts at addressing key concerns and to demonstrate its value might be having a positive, if limited, impact (Eurobarometer, 2021).

Learning from the Brexit experience, the EU should continue to implement reforms which enhance its lustre of legitimacy, effective responsiveness, and ensures a stronger and more resilient Union in the future (Archick, 2016).

## **12 DIPLOMATIC BACKCHANNELS IN THE BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS**

### **12.1 Introduction**

Diplomatic backchannels are informal yet vital communication networks which by their nature have to operate outside of the official diplomatic channels to be effective, they allow the engaged parties to engage in more candid and open discussions in order to explore potential solutions to conflicts without the pressure of an ever-growing public scrutiny (Berridge, 2015). In the context of the Brexit negotiations, the UK and the EU utilized these types of diplomatic backchannels in order to facilitate communication, build mutual trust, and to promote an informal feeling of understanding of each other's positions and interests.

### **12.2 The Importance of Backchannels during the Brexit Negotiations**

The Brexit negotiations were characterized by high levels of political tension, an unusually excessive public scrutiny and interest, as well as mass and social media attention, this created a challenging atmosphere for achieving diplomatic engagement and success. Diplomatic backchannels offered an opportunity for negotiators to discuss the sensitive issues and explore potential compromises without the risk of public backlash or political interference (De Magalhaes, 1988).

### **12.3 Examples of Backchannel Diplomacy during Brexit**

One notable example of backchannel diplomacy which was employed effectively in the course of the Brexit negotiations involves the so-called "Sherpa meetings," where chief negotiators from both sides met privately to discuss the more technical aspects of the negotiations and to explore potential solutions to contentious issues (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2019). These meetings played a crucial role in maintaining momentum and facilitating dialogue, despite the often difficult and contentious public rhetoric surrounding the negotiations.

Another instance of backchannel diplomacy occurred when the UK Prime Minister Theresa May engaged in private conversations with EU counterparts, such as with German Chancellor

Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, to discuss key issues and to seek support for her proposed Brexit deal (Berridge, 2015). These informal discussions allowed May to build personal relationships with her European counterparts and to gain a deeper understanding of the concerns and priorities on the other side of the channel.

## **12.4 Impact of Backchannels on the Brexit Negotiations**

The use of diplomatic backchannels in the negotiations can be said to greatly have contributed to a more nuanced, constructive, and productive dialogue between the parties, as well as to have enabled both sides to informally explore compromises and to discuss the contentious issues in a less confrontational and public environment and more practical manner (De Magalhaes, 1988). Whilst backchannel diplomacy could not ultimately avert the challenges which emerged during the negotiations, it played an essential role in maintaining open communication and fostering understanding between the two parties.

## **13 EXTERNAL ACTORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS OF BREXIT**

### **13.1 Introduction**

Whilst the Brexit negotiations primarily involved the UK versus the EU, some external actors, such as the United States, China, Russia, and others played a role in how the diplomatic interplay was shaped and took form between the two parties. This chapter analyses the interests, potential influence and effects of these external actors.

### **13.2 The United States and Brexit**

The United States has long been an important ally of both the UK and the EU, due to strong economic, cultural and security ties to both parties, especially the UK has long considered this connection a part of the much vaunted “special relationship”. During the Brexit process, the US adopted a dualistic approach, whilst expressing support for the UK's decision it also emphasized the importance for the world in maintaining a strong and unified EU (Brattberg & Rome, 2018).

In the run-up to the referendum President Barack Obama expressed strong support for the Remain campaign, the Leave campaign had been touting the existence of the “special relationship” as a guarantee of a new trade deal following Brexit and this expectation and argument was scuppered during a visit of Obama to the UK where he suggested that the greater priority is trade with the “larger bloc” and the UK was to go to the “back of the queue” (Shipman, 2016)

However, in the succeeding administration of Donald Trump, the government, and the person, were especially vocal in their support for Brexit, with President Trump suggesting that the UK could benefit greatly from a clean break from the bounds of the EU and could thus potentially secure a new and favourable trade deal with the US (Sloat, 2019). However, the succeeding Biden administration adopted a more cautious and classically diplomatic stance and rhetoric, stressing the need for a negotiated settlement which preserves the Good Friday Agreement and maintains the arduously begotten stability in Northern Ireland (Sandford, 2020).

### 13.3 China's Interest in Brexit

China was closely monitoring the Brexit negotiations, scouring the ashes of the conflict for potential opportunities yet exceedingly wary of challenges which were arising from the UK's departure from the EU. On the one hand, Brexit has the ability to offer China an opportunity to negotiate a bilateral trade deal with the newly untethered UK, thereby gaining greater penetration into the British market (Xiong, 2022). In fact, even the idea of the dawn of a "Golden Era" in China-UK relations was frequently mentioned in the tenure of former Prime Minister David Cameron, who strongly envisaged increased economic cooperation between the two nations (Spectator, 2022).

President Xi Jinping of China also expressed a strong interest in striking a post-Brexit trade deal, stating that China respects their decision to leave the EU and is ready to increase the cooperation in various areas (Gutteridge, 2016), the effects of which were observed immediately afterwards. One is able to view this approach in the wider context of China's "Belt and Road Initiative," which aims to increase their economic influence, penetration and connectivity across Eurasia (Yu, 2017).

However, when examining the contrary, a severely weakened EU could undermine the influence on the global stage of the entire bloc, which China positively views as the necessary counterbalance to a US hegemony (Schweller & Pu, 2011). Throughout history, China has vied for a multipolar world order, where no single power can dominate the international system (Clegg, 2009). In this context, a strong and unified EU is seen as exceedingly beneficial to China's global strategic interests, as it balances the weight of power dynamics in the dark hull of global affairs.

Moreover, Brexit highlighted great complexities as well as uncertainties which follow the attempt to untangle a member state from the EU web, which can serve as a cautionary fable for China their own entrenched relations with the European bloc. As China seeks to deepen their engagement with the EU, it must carefully navigate the evolving political landscape and moving pieces on the chess board to protect their own interests, and to promote stable relations concurrently with UK and the EU (Casarini, 2016).

### 13.4 The Role of Russia in Brexit

Russia was repeatedly accused of wishing to and actually interfering in the process of Brexit referendum and was seeking to exploit and utilise divisions within the EU in order to weaken the entire bloc and undermine its unity for its own advantage (Cadwalladr, 2017). Whilst the full extent of Russia's influence on the Brexit process remains a subject of much debate, it is

undoubted that the destabilization and disintegration of the EU as well as UK's departure from the bloc could serve Russia's interests by weakening a key Western alliance which stands in their opposition (Allan & Bond, 2022).

### **13.5 Conclusion**

The negotiations which shaped Brexit were influenced not just by the diplomatic interplay between the UK and the EU themselves but were highly subjected to the interests and influence of external actors on the world stage such as the United States, China, Russia and others. A full review of the role of these external actors in the process provides us with valuable insights into the complex and dense web of global diplomacy which holds and moulds the intricate balance of power that shape international relations.

## 14 CONCLUSION

The Brexit process brought many successes and failures serves to highlight the vital nature of effective diplomatic strategies when called to address challenges of such great complexity in the context of such a major political event. The diplomatic strategies which were employed by the UK and the EU during the Brexit negotiations were shaped by a myriad of factors, including the underlying causes, such as the immigration concerns and a perceived loss of national sovereignty, as well as the relative objectives and priorities of each side. Through an in-depth examination of the successes and challenges in the Brexit negotiations, this study has provided valuable insights into the diplomatic strategies of the UK and the EU and illuminated the potential impact on the future relationship between the two now separated entities.

Throughout the course Brexit negotiations, it became increasingly evident that the diplomatic strategies which were being utilised by both were influenced not only by the specific goals of each side but also by their respective historical, political, and social contexts which influenced the public discourse in an unprecedented manner. These negotiations demonstrated the importance of an understanding and taking into account these contexts when formulating new diplomatic strategies.

Additionally, the need for flexibility, creativity, and compromise in complex diplomatic engagements was underscored. Both the UK and the EU had to carefully navigate the dangerous shoals of numerous challenges and divergences, which demanded of them to think outside the box and to find innovative solutions to matters of contention. Simultaneously they had to maintain a delicate balance between the addressing their own interests whilst attempting to accommodate their counterpart.

Moreover, it highlighted the crucial role which trust, and transparency play in these diplomatic negotiations. Both parties needed open lines of communication and transparent dialogue in order to foster trust and facilitate cooperation. This level of trust, which often wavered, was essential for the eventual reaching of the goal of a mutually acceptable agreement, even when faced with divergent interests and priorities, and great public interest and comment on the outcome.

Also revealed was the influence which domestic politics has these international diplomatic strategies. Domestic political considerations served to shape the positions of both the UK and

the EU throughout the negotiations and rendered it essential for both parties to comprehend to the extent possible as an outside the dynamic interplay within the respective countries.

This study has delivered new insights into the Brexit process, including an in-depth examination of the behaviour and motivations of key political actors in the process such as the likes of Johnson, May, Farnier, Farage, and how their personal objectives, opportunism, beliefs and personal standard of diplomacy influenced the negotiating stance. This analysis also sheds some light on the impact of Brexit on the Tory and Labour parties as well as the European Union, revealing the internal divisions and shifts in political alignments.

A further insight to be gleaned from this research is the application of theoretical frameworks and their ability to be utilised or not in predicting Brexit outcomes and the extent to which their predictions were accurate or more often mistaken and needs a new framework for analysis. By delving deeper into these various theoretical frameworks, this study uncovered additional perspectives and factors which contributed to the complexity of the Brexit process.

The broader implications of Brexit, such as its effect on international trade, migration patterns, and the balance of power within Europe have been examined in detail. This comprehensive analysis has served to provide us with a richer understanding of Brexit, its causes, consequences, and possible lessons for future diplomatic endeavours. Through illustrating these new insights, this thesis has significantly expanded the existing knowledge on Brexit and its implications for the continent, the island, and the broader international landscape.

In conclusion to the conclusion, the Brexit negotiations and the diplomatic interplay serve as a case study and a warning for the importance of effective diplomatic strategies when addressing exceedingly complex and unprecedented political challenges. By examining the interplay of factors and actors which shaped the diplomatic strategies of the UK and the EU during the Brexit process, this study offers insights into the successes and challenges of diplomacy in the modern era and how it must adapt to preserve its effectiveness. The lessons which we learned from the Brexit negotiations can serve as a guide for future diplomats, both those operating in the context of a new UK-EU relationship and as well as in other challenging international negotiations which will no doubt arise. Understanding and applying these tactics accurately will be crucial for the continued evolution and effectiveness of diplomatic strategies in an increasingly interconnected, interpersonal, and rapidly changing geopolitical scene.

Through the detailed analysis of the key points at play, this study has delved deeper into the reasons behind the observed trends and phenomena, notably the rise of nationalism and populism, the immigration concerns, as well as the impact of Brexit on various sectors in society and economy. It is crucial to recognise that the Brexit process was driven by the complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors, which ultimately culminated in this momentous decision which has had, and will continue to have lasting consequences for the UK and the EU.

The role of the Labour party and their lack of forceful opposition to the Leave campaign during the referendum was one of the factors which shaped the outcome, and one of many tragic accidents which could have swayed the result. Corbyn's ultimate inability and lack of fervour to present a clear and unified stance on Brexit contributed greatly to the general confusion and division which characterized the opposing sides in the campaign (Shipman, 2016), and ultimately led to a strong lack of effective counterarguments produced against the Leave campaign's narrative.

Furthermore, this study has highlighted conclusively that the real loss of Brexit lies not only in the referendum result but also in the aftermath. The protracted contentious negotiations, alongside the political and economic upheaval which followed, exposed deep divisions within the UK and strained their relationship to the EU. The long-term implications of Brexit will continue to be felt as both parties attempt to navigate and grow into their new relationship, the lessons learned from this process will inform the future political and diplomatic roles on the global stage.

Brexit marked a turning point in UK politics, driven by the rising populism, the adoption of populist policies, and diplomacy in a globalised economy, also observed in the EU but especially influential in the UK governance. For the UK this is compounded by a finance-focused economy and a too centralized political elite, which led to this event. Jennings & Lodge likened the political and local struggle to resist global economic demands to King Canute's historical attempt to hold back the tides (Jennings & Lodge, 2018). However, whether this can tide can be successfully held back or will breach the new walls arisen from Brexit and what the impact will be on British politics and economy, remains to be seen.

Through presenting these new insights in this study, particularly the dangerous role which political brinkmanship played, the newfound impact of public opinion and the effect of domestic political pressures, the broader geopolitical context, as well as the need for a more nuanced

approach when it comes to analysing the implications which Brexit has and will have, this thesis contributes to a profounder analysis and understanding of the process of Brexit and the far-reaching consequences it will entail. It also stresses the paramount importance at hand when one considers the complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors which shape these types of major political events and clearly emphasizes the need for a new type of effective diplomacy when addressing such unprecedented challenges.

This thesis underscores the need for several key reforms which were identified as part of the Brexit process. Including the need for transparent and precise political messaging during campaigns, enhanced efforts to foster greater political literacy and engagement in the citizens to fully understand the repercussions of their votes, as well as greater focus on achieving party cohesion during significant national negotiations. Additionally, the economic impact of Brexit heralds a reassessment of the UK's economic strategies, particularly in relation to foreign direct investment, both inbound and outbound. And lastly, given the enduring social and political changes instigated by Brexit, policymakers should strategize to ensure social cohesion, stability, and respect for democratic outcomes amidst evolving immigration patterns and rising nationalism.

Through examining the multitude of factors which were at play and how they influenced the negotiations, this study not only enhances our understanding of the Brexit process but offers valuable lessons for future diplomatic engagements and the study of complex political phenomena. These lessons can be considered and applied to future political decisions, negotiations, and diplomatic strategies, both in the context of the UK-EU relationship as well as beyond. In doing so, the thesis contributes to the field of diplomatic studies and the broader global political landscape, providing a foundation for further research and analysis of the ongoing dynamics between the UK, the EU, and the international community.

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