UK-EU RELATIONSHIP AFTER BREXIT: AN EXERCISE IN SCENARIO-BUILDING

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Abstract. In 2010s, the mainstream academic debate slowly but surely shifted towards European Union's internal crisis and the possibility of its disintegration. United Kingdom applying to exit the Union in 2017 is the most recent and arguably the strongest indicator of such possibility. "Brexit" (as this process was dubbed) provides an interesting testing ground for latent European disintegration theories proposed by some political scientists. As the withdrawal negotiations have just started, one can only raise causal arguments for the future (if..., then); therefore this article employs scenario-building methodology recently established in political science with an aim to develop a set of scenarios of possible UK-EU relationship after Brexit. Four driving forces are cross-combined: (1) U.S. involvement in European security matters and bilateral relations with UK, (2) German leadership of the integrationist projects within the EU, (3) activism of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, and (4) the stability of current minority cabinet in UK under Prime Minister May. The three scenarios that logically follow are: (1) UK as member of a nascent European security and defence union, (2) UK's return to the EU, and (3) UK as an independent power in an "anglobal" world. Rarely, however, do any scenarios composed by political scientists ever materialize in full and a mix of all three scenarios is most likely to come to pass over the course of the next five years or so.

1. Introduction

Over the past ten to fifteen years volumes of academic and analytical studies have been published on the topic of European Union enlargement (e.g., Sjursen 2002; Moravcsik & Vachudova 2003; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Grabbe 2006; Schimmelfennig 2009; Vachudova 2014). And for a good reason; the "Big Bang" Enlargement to the East (2004 through 2007) increased the number of EU members by 12 which probably amounts to a largest instant expansion of an already established international organization ever. In the 2010s, however, the enlargement process slowed down dramatically, and various intra-European and domestic challenges – from the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone to an ongoing European migrant crisis to recent democratic backsliding of several CEE (Central and Eastern European) member states – have shifted the public debate towards the possibilities of EU members reinstating national borders, recoining national currencies, or – at least temporarily – abandoning membership rights and obligations altogether (Dinan, Nugent & Patterson 2017; Jones 2015). Arguably the strongest ground for this debate was laid by the 2016 referentum in the United

Kingdom, in which the British people voted to leave the EU. As a result, the UK government invoked Artice 50 of the EU Treaty and official exit negotiations started in June 2017. As a first insance of a full-fledged member state actually leaving the Union, British exit – or "Brexit" (as this process was dubbed) – will offer an interesting testing ground for latent European disintegration theories recently proposed by some political scientists (see Webber 2014; Vollaard 2014). Which of the theories can offer the best explanation of this process will depend on the degree to which UK will actually leave the EU institutional setting. As neighbouring countries like Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey have demonstrated, there are other forms of close cooperation and deep integration with the EU that are similar but short of full membership. After all, even as a member UK does not take part in such important integration projects like the Economic and Monetary Union, the Schengen Area, or the Charter of Fundamental Rights, when even some non-EU countries participate in some of them.

The aim of this article is to construct a few possible scenarios of UK-EU relationship 5 years from now (around year 2022-2023) according to the established scenario-building methodology in political science. Although under the provisions of Article 50 of the EU Treaty a member applying to exit the Union has to terminate its membership within two years period after the official notification, negotiating and ratifying a withdrawal agreement between the UK and EU-27 is likely to take more time; thus the parties may agree to extend the deadline provided in the Treaty; transition periods (of semi-membership) are also likely to be included in this agreement. Therefore, constructing a set of so-called medium-term (3 to 10 years) scenarios is methodologically better founded than a set of short-term (1 to 3 years) scenarios. Short-term scenarios tend to be more accurate than medium- or long-term ones, but the latter have more analytical value-added.

Political science literature on Brexit has not yet been accumulated in volumes (it almost certainly will be as this process will reach its earliest aftermath which is typical of the field). Nonetheless, several scholars have already put forth certain projections into the future imagining the world after Brexit. For example, Tim Oliver and Michael J. Williams (2016: 565-567) proposed three scenarios (which they called "the Good", "the Bad" and "the Ugly") of EU relations with the U.S. after the Brexit referendum; Richard Whitman (2016: 520-524) constructed two scenarios of how the British foreign and security policy would look like in the future depending on whether Britain stays in or leaves the EU ("Brexit" and "Bremain"); as both of these loose scenario-building attempts came as early as May 2016, one of the variables (if not the only one) on which the plot-lines were dependant was the outcome of in/out referendum in UK which was planned for June 2016. Now that the result of this referendum (~52% of voters opted for exit) and the subsequent actions of British government (official notification of withdrawal was handed to European Council on 29 March 2017) are well known, a new set of scenarios needs to be explored. In the two important volumes that came after the referendum (Special Issue of *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* and a selection of articles *Brexit: Sociological Responses*) most of the pieces are addressing the causes of the referendum results; only a few are looking into the future (worth mentioning is Karen E. Smith and Megan Dee's projection of British position within the UN framework after Brexit; Smith & Dee 2017). Simon Susen (2017: 171-173) comes closest to scenario-building in his article "No Exit from Brexit?"; however, the six scenarios he puts forth ("Straight Hard Brexit", "Straight Soft Brexit", "Relegitimized Hard Brexit", "Relegitimized Soft Brexit", "Authocratic No Brexit", and "Legitimized No Brexit") are not specific enough in terms of enabling conditions under which they are likely to materialize; nor are they in anyway aligned with any theoretical presuppositions. These are exactly the contributions this article is set to make.

2. Scenario-building methodology in political science

Causal inference and theory (re-)construction has always been at the core of political science. To pass for "scientific" in this field, any descriptive and / or explanatory account of any phenomenon has to "adhere to a set of rules of inference on which its validity depends" (King, Keohane, Verba 1994: 9). These rules are what is usually meant by the term "methodology". By definition, inference can only be drawn from empirical observations of current order of things and the course of past events leading to it. In fact, a method known as "process-tracing" (Bennett 2008; Bennett & George 2005: 205-232; Checkel 2008; Panke 2012) has been almost predominantly used in "small-N" research settings, typical of International Relations and European integration

studies. According to Peter A. Hall, "process tracing has sometimes been denigrated as a simple injunction to study history, [although] it should be apparent that systematic process analysis [employed by political scientists] is <...> guided more extensively by theory than are most of [investigations] undertaken by historians" (2003: 395). Thus even when political scientists say they are testing theoretical "predictions", they are actually trying to explain events that have already come to pass.

Even though strategic forecasting and planning has been an integral part of policy-making since the Cold War, only recently have political scientists (re-)turned to future studies with scenario-building methodology at the core of this research programme (Neumann & Øverland 2004; Bernstein *et. al.* 2007). Today proponents of such methodology consider forward reasoning to be an innovative way of "empirical" research and theory (re) construction, i.e., a path towards advancement of "science". According to Steve Bernstein *et. at.*, scenario-building "is simply a form of process-tracing <...> in future rather than past time" (2007: 238). The main difference from traditional process tracing is that none of the competing *explanants* (causal or "driving" variables) are sought to be eliminated in order to arrive at a story closest to the "truth"; simply because the "true" story is yet to unfold.

In the literature on scenario-building, scenarios are defined as "descriptive narratives of plausible alternative projections of a specific part of the future. They are methodically researched and developed in sets of three, four, or more. <...> They are a combination of estimations of what might happen and assumptions about what could happen, but they are *not* forecasts of what will happen" (Fahey & Randall 1998: 6-7). As any method, scenario-building has certain rules of application to ensure if not replication then at least "reconstruction" of any causal inference by anyone who cares to do so. There are at least five building blocks of any set of well-founded scenarios: identification of the driving forces, specification of so-called predetermined elements, resolution of critical uncertainties, composition of clear scenario plot-lines, and stipulation of the early indicators for each scenario (see Fahey & Randall 1998: 10-12; Marsh 1998: 33-34; Weber 1997: 171-174; Bernstein *et. al.* 2007: 238-242).

Driving forces usually derive from theory as "independent variables", but a practical scientist who has carried a thorough background research of a case at hand is always free to include a driving factor or two that are not suggested by the theory. Some proponents of scenario-building tend to differentiate between environmental (structural) and action-based driving forces (Fahey & Randall 1998: 10), and since theory rarely suggests concrete actions by given actors in concrete situations this is what is usually listed by case-students themselves. *Predetermined elements* are relatively stable – or at least predictible with a relative certainty – parameters for the scope of scenario exercise; demographic tendencies and natural conditions (such as climate and geography) do not change as rapidly as particular social and political phenomena around which the scenarios are developed. *Critical uncertainties* are at the same time the strengh and the weakness of this method as such because they are the most speculative and creative steps of any scenario-building exercise. As Steve Weber (1997: 173) has pointed out, "scenarios place the critical uncertainties out in front, ahead of the plot lines or connecting principles that pull the story together"; resolutions of critical uncertainties allow the story to unfold, yet are chosen rather arbitrarily. *Plot-lines* are logical stories of how the driving forces behave under predetermined elements and different combinations of critical uncertainties; they may or may not suggest possible end-states of phenomena in question. Finally, *early indicators* are the measurable attributes of any scenario that allow observers recognize which scenario plot-ine is materializing as the time passes. Early indicators, as well as practical scenario implications are aimed primarily at policy-makers but may also be oriented towards the scientific community with regards to validity of the theory in question.

3. Theories of European (dis)integration and the driving forces in Brexit settlement

Already the "darkest days" of the Eurozone crisis (~2010-2014) prompted a serious revision of the main European integration theories by scholars in European studies; for the first time in half a century of the devoloment of this research field they are turning well-established theories inside out in order to derive the causal factors which can facilitate European *dis*integration (Webber 2014; Vollaard 2014). As Douglas Webber (2014: 342)

has correctly pointed out, "disintegration" can come about as a decline in the range of common public policies implemented at the EU level, a decline in EU membership, or a formal (treaty-based) reduction of powers rendered to supranational non-state actors (European Commission, European Parliament, European Court of Justice, etc.) in EU decision-making. For the purpose of this article, the term "disintegration" is narrowed down to denote termination of membership in the EU or in one of its institutional settings (free trade area, free movement of people, EU capital market, European security and defence policy, cooperation in justice and home affairs, etc.).

The oldest explanation of post-WWII European politics comes from the *realist* school of International Relations. Realists view relative power calculations and security concerns as the driving factor behind the behaviour of states on the international scene, including creating and maintaining international institutions. The European integration project was started in the context of Cold War bipolarity of the region; the only relative gains and losses that mattered in terms of national security were overall capabilities of NATO and the Warsaw Pact centered around the U.S. and the Soviet Union respectively. As the "founding father" of structural realism insisted back then "once the possibility of war among [European] states disappears, all of them can more freely run the risk of suffering a relative loss. Enterprises more beneficial to some parties than others can be engaged in. <...> Economic gains can be granted by one state to another in exchange for expected political advantages, including the benefit of strengthening the structure of European cooperation" (Waltz 1979: 71). The continuing presence of U.S. armed forces in Europe and the survival of NATO has been proposed by realists (Mearsheimer 2001) as the main explanation for the continuation of peaceful cooperation among the European states after the Cold War (albeit not closer integration or enlargement). By that logic, degradation of the transatlantic alliance, withdrawal of American military, and loss of recognizable external threat (such as Soviet Union) ought to revive the need for national autonomy and competition among current EU members; unless, of course, a new "pacifying" power centre appears on the European stage.

By contrast, the *neoliberal* school of IR focuses on absolute (rather than relative) gains, as well as interdependence between states across various issue areas (as opposed to security sector being the only one that matters). International institutions are functional in a sense that they provide information and reduce transaction costs of cooperation, but, as Robert Keohane (1993: 295) concedes, "without a basis either of hegemonic dominance or common interests, international institutions cannot long survive". Hegemons usually agree to be constrained by such institutions and bear the short-term costs of enforcing rules on potential defectors out of long-term self-interest (Martin 1992: 784). Neoliberals have argued that EU member states have mutually much to benefit from participation in the Single Market in terms of productivity and output, i.e., they share a common interest in maintaining the regulatory EU framework (Garrett & Weingast 1993). Moreover, to ease the tensions emanating from unequal distribution of absolute gains, the big powers – first and foremost Germany – supply the financial cushion without which the little players would hardly survive the market pressure and institutional restrictions. Although somewhat reluctant hegemon (Bulmer & Patterson 2013), Germany has a vested interest in maintaining this leadership position: "in as far as the EU guarantees German firms access to a large European market and protects Germany against <...> diplomatic isolation, its very existence provides Germany with substantial economic and political advantages that have hitherto been regarded as outweighing the cost of Berlin's net contribution to the EU budget" (Webber 2014: 356). The shared interest of all EU members in common market will hardly ever diminish as long as production is rooted in capitalist system, but the German willingness to foot the bill for economic "laggards" and fiscal "scruffs" is largely contingent on the domestic politics in Germany (Bulmer 2014; Harnisch & Schieder 2006) and the synchronization of Franco-German duo (Schild 2010); in other words, hegemonic vacuum is one of the main factors of potential EU disintegration.

Neofunctionalist theory of international integration – even more so than neoliberals in IR – view policy process in different issue areas as functionally tied in terms of synergies and externalities. Back in 1950s, the European integration project was initiated in the area of "low politics", but created functional pressure to integrate ever more policies that have previously been definitive of national sovereignty (Burley & Mattli 1993; Niemann 2008). Unlike most scholars in the field of IR (including both neorealists and neoliberals), neofunctionalists

see this pressure as first addressed by sub- and supra-national actors rather than national governments: "the expansion of transnational exchange [accross Europe], and the associated push to substitute supranational for national rules, generates pressure on the [EU]'s organizations to act. Generally, <...> the Commission and the Court respond to this pressure by working to extend the domain of supranational rules, in order to achieve collective transnational gains" (Sandholtz & Stone Sweet 1997: 299). In other words, the integration dynamics – usually encapsulated by the term "functional spillover" – is dependent upon concerted efforts of transnational interest groups and supranational bodies. Scholars of neofunctionalist stripes have tried to employ this theory to explain the geographic expansion of the EU as well (Niemann & Schmitter 2009: 61-63); dispite the nominally intergovernmental nature of the enlargement process, gradual integration and upgrading of status of candidates is reportedly advocated by the European Commision and organized business interests within members and candidates alike (MacMillan 2009). In turn, the form EU disintegration and withdrawal from the EU may take will depend on which transnational interests will win the ear of the Commission, and how successful the supranational level will be at defining and defending the "community interest".

Finally, the theory of *two-level intergovernmental bargaining* (integral to *liberal intergovernmentalist* school in European studies) ties international outcomes to the basis of domestic politics and double-win startegies pursued by political leaders. As Andrew Moravcsik (1993b: 483) put it, "the primary interest of governments is to maintain themselves in office; <...> this requires the support of a coalition of domestic voters, parties, interest groups and bureaucracies, whose views are transmitted <...> through domestic institutions and practices of political representation. Through this process emerges the set of national interests or goals that states bring to international negotiations". The "national interest" that the negotiating parties set to defend, however, is not a fixed value but rather a range of domestically acceptable outcomes that Robert Putnam (1988: 437) has called a "win-set". Two-level bargaining theorists also assume that governments and national leaders are not mere gatekeepers of domestic interests, but have preferences of their own which they usually try to work into international agreements and sell to their constituents (Putnam 1988: 456-459; Moravcsik 1993a: 30-31). Drawing on these theoretical assumptions, personalities of leaders and negotiators, changes in governing coalitions, and domestic political competition may also become major drivers of EU disintegration.

To sum up, four driving forces are derived from the main theories of European (dis-)integration: (1) U.S. involvement in European security architecture and bilateral relations with the UK, (2) German (or Franco-German) leadership of the integrationist projects within the EU, (3) activism of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in interpreting the EU "constitutional" setting, and addressing transnational interests, and (4) development of domestic political situation in the UK, including the stability of current minority cabinet under Prime Minister May and the continued support provided by Democratic Unionist Party to the governing conservatives. The critical uncertainties about these driving forces are, of course, rooted in their multi-dimensional nature: e.g., NATO may fall into oblivion under inability to arrive at consensus decisions, but the U.S. may remain strongly involved in Europen affairs through other means; the British conservatives may break ties with Irish unionists, but negotiate the support of other minor parliamentary groups hence saving May's premiership. In the scenarios listed below only arbitrary solutions to critical uncertainties are provided.

As this scenario-building exercise is limited in time (five years from 2017), such "variables" as trade and investment structure between the UK and other EU countries, the treaty-based "constitutional setting" of the EU as an organization, and the general demographic tendencies across Europe will be treated as predetermined elements. All of them, the former especially, can certainly change (or be changed) over time, but five years is arguably too short a period to radically reorient trade and investment, or witness dramatic shifts in demographics. For the medium to long term future, UK is likely to remain an economy based on services, usually accounting for almost 80% of its GDP (HM Treasury 2016: 31), with 44% of its exports (50% of goods and 37% of services) directed to EU countries; 48% of foreign direct investment (FDI) in UK is of EU origin, whereas only 24% come from the U.S. and 5% from EFTA countries (HM Treasury 2016: 47). Even though UK has one of the fastest growing populations in all of the EU and is expected to decisively outrun both Germany and France by 2050 (the estimates are put over 77 mln. for 2050 and as high as 85 mln. for 2080; Eurostat 2015: 164), in

the next few years it will remain a somewhat medium power on the world stage with a population of 66 to 67 million at best. A possibility that Britain may opt-in to the EU policies that it currenty enjoys a legal opt-out from (such as "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice", allowing it not to participate in the quota-based resettlement of asylum seekers) is *a priori* discounted.

4. Scenarios of UK-EU relationship after Brexit

Scenario 1: *United Kingdom as part of a nascent European security and defence union*

As a result of growing security concerns in East Asia and Greater Middle East, accommodation with Russia over Ukraine (*de facto* ceding Crimea in exchange for gradual phasing out of conflict in Donbass), and endless debates over burden-sharing within NATO, the U.S. is slowly shifting its focus towards other regions. The nuclear deterrent is still present in Italy, Germany and the Low Countries, but the U.S. invests less in joint military exercise and is reluctunt to provide support to European/EU-led military missions in Africa and elsewhere. European powers under the leadership of France and Germany finally arrive at principal political decision to create a real European security and defence union with major security concerns addressed at the European level (in parallel with or sometimes even prior to North Atlantic Council) and stable funding provided by the EU rather than nations participating *ad hoc* in the military dimension of CSDP. Debates spur within the EU on the coordination of intelligence units under European External Action Service (EEAS), and possible expansion of tasks listed in Article 43 of TEU (so called "Petersberg tasks") to be assumed by EU Battlegroups. The main rationale for an autonomous European military capability is a proactive EU role in local conflicts and regime change in Africa and the Middle East in order to counter main European security concerns (terrorism and illegal imigration) at their source.

After initially trying to bring the allies on both sides of the Atlantic back together, UK siezes the opportunity to play one of the leading roles in the creation of European defence alliance and is welcomed by France and Germany which themselves have limited capabilities (even though in this scenario all major European powers set to increase their defence spending dramatically). In exchange for British contribution to an autonomous European security and defence muscle, UK is granted a special relationship with the EU which essentially violates the "constitutional consensus" of indivisibility of the four freedoms. This of course means that the EU supranational actors have already failed to secure the constitutional balance unchanged during the negotiations on post-exit settlement and were upstaged by grandiose plans of the big states. The UK is allowed to trade in goods and services on the Single Market virtually without restrictions, but has a certain "veto" on the free movement of persons, most likely in a form of preferential employment regime according to which local residents (UK and pre-Brexit EU citizens alike) take precedence in filling new vacancies on the job market. Even though UK keeps most of the EU legislation in place and automatically transposes any new pieces passed by the EU into their domestic law so as to maintain access to the internal market, formally they remain outside the European Economic Area; thus any trade disputes between UK and the EU are settled within the framework of "bilateral council" and are kept outside the jurisdiction of the ECJ or EFTA Court. UK contributions to EU budget are significantly smaller (akin to those of Switzerland whose net contribution to EU budget is an annual 0,02% of GDP or 12 EUR per capita, while as a member UK currently pays around 0,25% of GDP / 79 EUR per capita) and London secures a narrow say in EU decision-making during informal meeting of the ministers of newly created European security and defence union. Having stood its ground during Brexit negotiations, May government maintains a substantial degree of popularity and despite internal party battles avoids serious domestic challenge.

Scenario 2: *United Kingdom on the way back to the European Union*

In this scenario European security "architecture" does not change significantly with the U.S. and NATO remaining the main hard security guarantors for the continent. The momentum of European integration is substantially slowed down as Germany (mostly because of increasing anti-European opposition in Busdestag) is reluctant to bear the cost of either military or banking union (for example, an overall ceiling on paid-in capital of European Stability Mechanism is proposed); severe quarrels arise among EU members over sharing asylum

seekers from third countries as Germany and several other member states that had previously pursued an open door policy adopt national limits on asylums granted per annum. The task of promoting European integration and initiating new grandiose projects – from trade deals with major world economies (first of all, the U.S., Japan and Mercosur) to tax harmonization within the Single Market – is almost entirely assumed by the European Commission. Within the mandate bestowed upon it by the Council on 22 May, 2017, the Commission also succeeds in defending "common European interest" and the constitutional basis of the Union vis-à-vis Britain. Having battled to stay in the Single Market by all costs, the UK is now stuck in a quasi-permanent (up to 5 years + possible prolongation) "transitional stage" of unlimited access to the European market for goods and services, as well as capital, but also unlimited immigration of people from EU member states (EU citizens and residents alike). UK is still subject to ECJ rulings and applies common European external customs tariff, yet as of April 2019 does not formally take part in EU decision-making in any form (neither in the Council, nor in the European Parliament).

While the British and the Commission negotiators are working on "post-transitional" agreement (with no end in sight) Theresa May's popularity crumbles with Labour and libdems slowly growing political capital by criticizing the whole "Brexit scam", initiated and executed under conservative leadership of the country, which in this scenario actually leaves Britain worse off. The Labour party especially calls for another referendum to re-enter the EU, possibly under similar conditions that were negotiated by Cameron goverment back in 2015-2016 (i.e., exempting UK from "ever closer" political union). At the same time, the Commission and President of the European Council are sending encouraging signals about the possibility of speedy reentrance on the grounds that UK has not yet fully left the Union. Leaders of the big member states (Germany, France, Italy) are more reserved about such course of events and rather passively appeal to the authority of the ECJ on this matter. Having broken ties with Irish unionists and facing growing opposition within its own party, May calls for another "snap" election in UK with less than five years passed after the official notification of withdrawal.

Scenario 3*: United Kingdom as an independent power and proponent of "anglobal" world*

Leaving the EU actually pushes UK towards strenghtening its ties with the U.S. and other English-speaking countries (notably Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India). The idea of "Anglosphere" (see Wellings & Baxendale 2015) is revived and under British diplomatic activism is acquiring a clear economic dimension. In parallel to withdrawal settlement with the EU, London unofficially "negotiates" a free trade deal with the U.S. which potentially consists of several agreements to be put in place and implemented incrementally over a decade or so. The first modest agreements between the UK and U.S. on trade in services and public procurement, reduced customs procedures, etc., are signed within a year or so after the official termination of British EU membership. In the long term, institutions (such as joint U.S.-UK committee on deregulation and standard-setting) are to be established and tariffs discarded altogether. By the end of this scenario span, UK has also started negotiations on analogous free trade deals with Canada and Australia, discussing the possibility of free trade agreements with several other former colonies. Although "Anglosphere" is not formalized in any treaty-based organization (at least not in the foreseeable future), the British government lures countries like Australia, India and even the U.S. into political declarations of common stance on international matters, such as fight against terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, and free trade. New cultural and academic exchange channels are suggested by the ruling elites in English-speaking countries. At the same time, UK is strenghtening its relations with pro-Atlantic NATO members in the EU, CEE nations in particular, so as to maintain American presence on the old continent as strong as possible and counter any alternative European security architecture proposals circled around by the Franco-German core in the EU.

Now that UK is leaving, the EU embarks on several important integrationist steps under the leadership of both major member states and supranational bodies. The European Council arrives at principal political decision on incremental tax harmonisation within the Single Market and the Commission is entrusted with preparing a comprehensive plan on how to do this within a decade or less; steps are taken in europeanizing external border control under FRONTEX and developing a more efficient asylum policy. At least a group of member states (a

minimum of nine according to Article 20 of TEU) starts an ambitious process of coordinating social benefits policies towards non-EU citizens. This scenario falls somewhere between scenarios III and V recently put forth by the EU itself (European Commission 2017: 20-22, 24-26).

UK–EU relationship, in the end, turns out to be somewhat similar to EU relationships with a number of associated countries in Northern Africa, Levant and post-soviet Eastern Europe. As with most associated countries, in this scenario UK gains access to EU market for most of the goods (possibly including agricultural products), capital and some of the services (possibly including financial services) on the condition that it retains (or adopts) around 300 pieces of EU legislation (as did Ukraine upon signing DCFTA). It regains imigration control (probably in a form of work permits), but secures full pre-Brexit rights of EU citizens living in the UK upon official withrawal date. The trade between the UK and EU, however, suffers badly compared to pre-Brexit volume of trade because of customs check and "country-of-origin" paperwork. UK does not contribute to the EU budget and is not eligible for funding, and all trade disputes between UK and the EU are settled by bilateral association council with exclusive juristiction of the ECJ in interpeting the EU legislation (not the association agreement itself). The main difference between this scenario and scenario 1, however, is that the concrete items of trade are decided case-by-case at the political level (in the form of an annex to the association agreement) and therefore subject to European Commission and Council attaching political conditions before any update.

Table 1. Combinations of the driving forces in the scenarios of UK-EU relationship after Brexit

		DRIVING FORCES						
		U.S. presence in Europe		German (+French) leadership in the EU		Supranational bodies (Commission and ECJ)		Political situation in UK	
		strong	weakened	strong and active	absent or reluctant	active and autonomous	passive and subordinate	stable	shifting
SCENARIO plot-lines	Scenario 1		×	×			×	×	
	Scenario 2	×			×	×			×
	Scenario 3	×		×		×		×	

Source: designed by author of the article

Conclusions: evaluation of scenarios

Predicting the future is not the ambition of scenario-building methodology; in fact, hardly any scenario plot-lines composed by political scientists ever materialize in full. As Steve Weber points out, "scenarios are effective if they open people's minds to possibilities that they did not previously consider, so that their level of surprise on encoutering the future is reduced" (1996: 287). Scenarios of the possible UK-EU relationships after Brexit listed above (especially scenarios 1 and 3) do involve some extreme courses of events that were most likely not taken into consideration immediatly after the fateful referendum last year. In that sense, the scenarios put forth in this article are already a success in their own right. The theoretical implications of this scenario-building exercise, on the other hand, are limited at best: scenarios neither verify nor disprove any of the theories drawn upon here, but they do show how colossal an effect the various driving forces proposed by these theories have on European integration dynamics, especially in such crisis situations as the one at hand. Thus in theoretical terms, scenario-building can be considered a case for what some political scientists call "theoretical eclecticism" (Katzenstein & Sil 2010).

As the Brexit negotiations have already started and for most part are coducted behind closed doors, one can only project the future UK-EU relationship based on signals and messages that both of the negotiating parties (and external actors for that matter) transmit to the public. If, for example, over the course of year 2018 we see an increasing number of mutual visits and exchange of proposals between the "Anglosphere" countries (UK and U.S. especially) at least parts of scenario 3 are likely to materialize; if, on the contrary, the official Brexit negotiations are parallelled by intensive intergovernmental meetings and declarations of the "big three"

(France, Germany and UK) on security and defence matters, scenario 1 is taking shape (even if plans to create a genuine European defence union eventually fail); yet if by the begining of year 2019 the official Brexit negotiations result in a "transitional settlement", scenario 2 proves to be at least partially accurate. A mix of all three scenarios, however, is also very (if not most) likely to come to pass over the course of the next five years. Whichever form Brexit will eventually take, it will not only set precedent for future withdrawls from the EU (if needed), but also the terms of possible reentrance, so "mental experiments" like this one ought to be instrumental in making decisions and setting negotiating postions to both UK and EU.

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