



The Conundrum of Sovereignty and Integration: Examining the Implications of Brexit on International Trade Relations

▪ DOI: 10.31703/gsssr.2022(VII-IV).01

▪ URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsssr.2022\(VII-IV\).01](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsssr.2022(VII-IV).01)

▪ Vol. VII, No. IV (Fall 2022)

▪ Pages: 1 - 7

▪ p-ISSN: 2708-2121

▪ e-ISSN: 2708-3616

Hazrat Usman *

Muhammad Junaid Ilyas †

Muhammad Naseem Anwar ‡

Abstract: *The present study explores the conundrum of sovereignty and integration in the aftermath of the Brexit vote and its implications for international trade relations. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the study begins by situating the concept of sovereignty within its historical and philosophical roots. The evolution of integration in Europe and the relationship between sovereignty and integration are also explored. The study then delves into the intricacies of the Brexit process, analyzing its impact on national sovereignty and the European Union. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the impact of Brexit on international trade relations, specifically the relationship between sovereignty and integration in this realm. The implications of Brexit for the United Kingdom and the European Union's international trade relations are also analyzed, followed by an examination of the impact on global trade relations. The study concludes with a summary of findings, implications for policy and practice, and limitations and future research directions.*

Key Words: Brexit, International Trade Relations, European Union, National Sovereignty

Introduction

The global political landscape has undergone significant shifts in recent years, particularly in the realm of national sovereignty and international integration. The United Kingdom's (UK) decision to withdraw from the European Union (EU) in 2016, commonly referred to as Brexit, has highlighted the ongoing debate surrounding the relationship between sovereignty and integration in the context of international trade relations (Commission, 2021). The goal of this study is to examine the repercussions of Brexit on the balance between national sovereignty and integration in the international trade arena. The objective of this research is to analyze the impact of Brexit on the interplay between national sovereignty and integration in international trade relations. This study will examine the changes in trade policies,

regulations, and agreements that have resulted from the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the implications of these changes on the balance between sovereignty and integration (Government, 2022). The scope of the research is limited to the analysis of Brexit and its effects on international trade relations, specifically between the UK and the EU, as well as its implications for global trade relations. The research questions below will serve as a guide for this study: (1) What are the implications of Brexit on national sovereignty in the context of international trade relations? (2) How has Brexit impacted the balance between integration and sovereignty in international trade relations between the UK and the EU? (3) What are the implications of Brexit on international trade relations globally? This research aims to demonstrate that Brexit has challenged the balance between national sovereignty and integration in international

* Advocate High Court, Punjab Bar Council, Rawalpindi Courts, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: hazratusmanadvocate@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

† Lecturer, Department of Law, University of Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan.

‡ Lecturer, Department of Computer Arts, Hamdard University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

trade relations, and that the implications of this challenge have far-reaching influences on the UK, the EU, and the global trade arena.

The Concept of Sovereignty and Integration

Sovereignty has a long and complex history, with roots in both philosophy and political thought. Political philosophers like Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes developed the foundations for the modern notion of sovereignty during the 16th and 17th centuries. Bodin argued that sovereignty must be indivisible and absolute, residing in the hands of a single authority, while Hobbes emphasized the importance of sovereignty as a means of maintaining social order and avoiding the chaos of the state of nature (Hobbes, [1651](#)).

The concept of integration has its roots in the post-World War II era, when the European nations sought to promote peace and stability through increased economic and political cooperation (Spruyt, [1996](#)). This process of integration has evolved over time, leading to the formation of the EU and the formation of a single market and a common currency (the Euro) (Vahl & Grolimund, [2006](#)). The pursuit of economic collaboration and the reduction of trade impediments have propelled the integration process, all the while upholding national sovereignty and independence.

There has been a great deal of debate and discussion regarding the correlation between sovereignty and integration, with some arguing that integration is incompatible with national sovereignty (O'Neill, [2002](#)). Sovereignty can coexist with integration if it is supervised and regulated by the respective nation-states. The EU's situation presents a complicated dynamic between sovereignty and integration, with conflicts emerging regarding the allocation of authority between the EU and its members and the effects of integration on national independence. (Mann, [1993](#)). In the context of the EU, the relationship between sovereignty and integration has been particularly complex, with tensions arising over issues such as the dissemination of powers between the EU and its member countries and the implications of integration for national autonomy (Elgström, Bjurulf, Johansson, & Sannerstedt, [2001](#)).

The Evolution of Brexit

The UK relationship with the EU has been a contentious issue for many years. The UK entered the EU in 1973 (UK In A Changing Europe, [2020](#)), but concerns about the loss of national sovereignty and control over immigration have been present since the country's membership. In 2016, a Brexit referendum was held, in which a bulk of UK citizens voted to leave the EU.

The Brexit referendum held on June 23, 2016, resulted in a majority vote in favor of leaving the EU (51.9% to 48.1%) (Electoral Commission, [2016](#)). This decision sent shockwaves through the EU and sparked a long and complex negotiation process between the UK and the EU to determine the terms of Brexit. The aftermath of the referendum resulted in a period of uncertainty and political upheaval, with the UK government finding it difficult to chart a definite course of action.

The negotiations for Brexit were long and complex, lasting over three years. The primary concerns that had to be tackled were commerce, migration, and the frontier separating Northern Ireland (a constituent of the UK) from the Republic of Ireland (a member of the EU). The Withdrawal Agreement, the ultimate pact, was inked on December 31, 2020, and became operational on January 1, 2021. The consequences of Brexit are substantial for both the UK and the EU. Brexit has resulted in the UK's exit from the EU's single market and customs union, affecting trade and economic ties between the two. Furthermore, it has sparked debates about the future of EU integration and the balance between national sovereignty and integration.

The Implications of Brexit on Sovereignty

Brexit has had a significant influence on the notion of national sovereignty in the UK. The country's departure from the EU has resulted in a transfer of powers from the EU to the UK, allowing the country to make its own laws and regulations independent of the EU. However, this newfound independence has come at a cost, as the UK must now deal with new trade agreements with the EU and other countries to maintain its economic relationship. This process has resulted in the UK being subject to

international rules and regulations that it previously had no control over, raising questions about the extent of its national sovereignty (Cairney, Heikkila, & Wood, [2019](#)).

Brexit has also had implications for the EU, particularly in the area of integration. The EU has been built on the principles of integration and cooperation, but the UK's departure has raised questions about the future of EU integration and the link between national sovereignty and integration. The EU must now balance its desire for a unified Europe with the reality of a member state leaving and potentially others following suit (Majone, [2009](#)).

The relationship between sovereignty and integration has become increasingly complex in the aftermath of Brexit. On one hand, the UK's exit from the EU has given the country more control over its own affairs and the ability to make its own laws and regulations. On the other hand, the UK must now negotiate new trade agreements and comply with international rules and regulations, which limits its national sovereignty. This raises questions about the extent to which integration and cooperation can be reconciled with national sovereignty, creating a conundrum that will continue to be relevant in the years to come (Schimmelfennig, [2018](#)).

The Impact of Brexit on International Trade Relations

Brexit has led to significant changes in the UK's trade policies and regulations, as the country has been forced to re-establish its trade relationships outside of the EU. The UK's departure from the EU has resulted in the need for the country to renegotiate its trade agreements with the EU and other countries, leading to the creation of new trade policies and regulations that are independent of the EU. This has resulted in increased uncertainty and instability in the UK's trade relations, as the country navigates the complexities of establishing new trade agreements (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, [2019](#)).

Brexit has also had a significant impact on trade agreements and treaties. The UK's exodus from the EU has resulted in the need for the nation to renegotiate its trade agreements with the EU, leading to the formation of a novel trade

contract between the UK and the EU. The UK has also been forced to renegotiate its trade agreements with other nations, leading to the creation of new trade agreements that are independent of the EU. This has created increased uncertainty and instability in the UK's trade relations, as the country navigates the complexities of establishing new trade agreements (Mathieu, [2020](#)).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has played an important role in the aftermath of Brexit, particularly in the area of international trade relations. The WTO has been instrumental in ensuring that the UK's departure from the EU does not lead to a disruption in international trade. The WTO has also been responsible for providing guidance and support to the UK as it navigates the complexities of establishing new trade agreements and policies (Ghauri & Ott, [2022](#)).

The Relationship between Sovereignty and Integration in International Trade Relations

Sovereignty plays a crucial role in international trade relations, as it determines the extent to which a country has control over its trade policies and regulations. A nation's capability to establish its own trade policies and regulations, without relying on external actors or organizations, is frequently referred to as sovereignty in international trade (Hasenclever, Mayer, & Rittberger, [1997](#)). In the aftermath of Brexit, the UK's sovereignty in international trade relations has been brought into sharp focus, as the country seeks to establish its independence from the EU and establish its own trade policies and regulations.

On the contrary, integration is distinguished by a greater level of partnership and harmony among nations in the realm of global commerce. This can take the form of increased trade and investment flows, as well as the creation of trade agreements and treaties that promote increased cooperation and integration (Hasenclever, Mayer, & Rittberger, [1997](#)). In the context of Brexit, integration has played a role in the negotiations for the UK's parting from the EU, as the country seeks to establish a new trade affiliation with the EU that is based on cooperation and integration.

The two concepts of sovereignty and integration in international trade relations often create tension in their relationship. On the one hand, sovereignty is seen as important for allowing countries to maintain control over their trade policies and regulations, while on the other hand, integration is seen as important for promoting increased cooperation and collaboration in international trade relations (Hasenclever, Mayer, & Rittberger, [1997](#)). The tension between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations is particularly relevant in the context of Brexit, as the UK pursues to found a new trade relationship with the EU that balances the principles of sovereignty and integration.

The Implications of Brexit on the UK's International Trade Relations

Brexit has had a noteworthy impact on the trade ties between the UK and the EU, specifically regarding the conditions and agreements governing their trade interactions. Previously, the UK had access to a unified market and customs union with the EU, streamlining the exchange of commodities, services, and individuals between the two entities. Nevertheless, the separation of the UK from the EU has resulted in the introduction of fresh tariffs, customs protocols, and regulatory hindrances to trade, producing disturbances in the movement of goods (Electoral Commission, [2016](#)).

Brexit has also had an influence on the UK's trade relations with countries outside of the EU. With the UK seeking to establish itself as an independent trading nation, the country has sought to establish new trade agreements with countries around the world. However, its departure from the EU has also created uncertainty and unpredictability in its trade relations with other states, as the country seeks to navigate the new trade landscape post-Brexit (Electoral Commission, [2016](#)).

The future of the UK's international trade relations remains uncertain, as the country continues to navigate the implications of Brexit. While the UK has sought to establish itself as an independent trading nation, the country faces significant challenges in terms of establishing new trade relationships with the EU and other

countries. Moreover, the tension between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations will linger to play a responsibility in shaping the UK's future trade relationships, as the country seeks to balance the principles of independence and collaboration (Electoral Commission, [2016](#)).

The Implications of Brexit on the EU's International Trade Relations

The EU's trade relations with the UK were significantly affected by Brexit, and both parties had to adjust to new trade arrangements after the UK left the EU. Before Brexit, trade between the EU and the UK was made easier by the single market and customs union. However, after Brexit, trade has been complicated by new tariffs, customs procedures, and regulatory barriers, which have disrupted trade flows (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, [2019](#)).

Brexit has also had an impact on the EU's trade relations with other countries, as the EU seeks to establish new trade relationships post-Brexit. The EU has been proactive in seeking to establish new trade relationships with countries around the world, but the uncertainty and unpredictability created by Brexit has created challenges for the EU in establishing these relationships (Dhingra, et al., [2017](#)).

The future of the EU's international trade relations remains uncertain, as the EU seeks to navigate the implications of Brexit. While the EU has been proactive in seeking to establish new trade relationships with countries around the world, the challenges posed by Brexit will continue to play a role in shaping the EU's future trade relationships. The stress between sovereignty and integration in international trade affairs will also continue to be an important consideration for the EU as it seeks to balance the principles of independence and collaboration (Collard-Wexler, [2006](#)).

The Implications of Brexit on Global Trade Relations

Brexit has had a significant impact on global trade policies and regulations, as the UK's departure from the EU has led to the creation of new trade arrangements between the two

parties. This has created an uncertain and unpredictable environment for global trade, as other countries seek to navigate the implications of these new arrangements (David, [2022](#)).

Brexit has also had an impact on global trade agreements and treaties, as the UK and EU negotiate new trade arrangements following the UK's departure from the EU. This has created uncertainty and unpredictability in the global trade environment, as other countries seek to navigate the implications of these new arrangements (Arriola, Benz, Mourougane, & van Tongeren, [2020](#)).

The future of global trade relations remains uncertain, as countries navigate the implications of Brexit and other global economic and political developments. The tension between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations will continue to be an important consideration, as countries seek to balance the principles of independence and collaboration in their trade relationships (Adeoye, [2021](#)).

Recommendations and Future Research Directions

Recommendations

The conundrum of sovereignty and integration in international trade relations, as demonstrated by the case of Brexit, highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between these two constructs. The results of this research indicate that a delicate balance between sovereignty and integration is required to maintain stable and mutually beneficial trade relations. Considering these findings, it is recommended that policy makers and practitioners take a more holistic approach to the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements. This approach should consider the potential impacts on both national sovereignty and regional integration and should strive to ensure a harmonious balance between the two. Additionally, it is suggested that further research be conducted in order to more fully understand the complexities of the relationship between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations.

Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on exploring the implications of Brexit on other countries and regions, as well as its impact on the global economy. The role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in mediating the tensions between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations should also be explored in greater depth. Furthermore, the potential for the development of alternative models of trade relations, such as regional trade agreements, should be investigated. In conclusion, the results of this research highlight the need for a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to the interplay between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations. Further research is necessary to fully understand the complexities of this relationship and to develop effective policies and practices for maintaining mutually beneficial trade relations in a globalized world.

Conclusion

The research paper has analyzed the conundrum of sovereignty and integration in the context of Brexit and its implications for international trade relations. The paper has reviewed the historical and philosophical roots of sovereignty, the evolution of integration in Europe, and the relationship between sovereignty and integration. The paper has also analyzed the implications of Brexit on national sovereignty, the EU, international trade relations, and global trade relations.

The findings of this research have several implications for policy and practice. First, policymakers must be aware of the implications of Brexit for national sovereignty, international trade relations, and global trade relations. Second, policymakers must consider the tension between sovereignty and integration in international trade relations and seek to balance the principles of independence and collaboration in their trade relationships. Finally, policymakers must be aware of the limitations of this research and seek to address them in future research and policy initiatives.

This research has several limitations, including the limited scope of the data used, the lack of comparative analysis with other

countries, and the limited focus on Brexit and its implications for international trade relations. Future research should address these limitations by expanding the scope of the

data used, comparing the implications of Brexit with other countries, and exploring other implications of Brexit and other global economic and political developments.

References

- Adeoye, B. W. (2021). The Effect of Brexit and the European Union on Markets in Developing Countries. *Tanzanian Economic Review*, 10(2).
- Arriola, C., Benz, S., Mourougane, A., & Van Tongeren, F. (2020). The trade impact of the UK's exit from the EU Single Market. OECD Library, 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1787/18151973>
- Cairney, P., Heikkilä, T., & Wood, M. (2019). *Making policy in a complex world*. Cambridge University Press: London.
- Collard-Wexler, S. (2006). Integration under anarchy: Neorealism and the European Union. *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(3), 397-432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067349>
- Commission, E. (2021). Trade. <https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/united-kingdom/en>
- David, D. (2022, April 26). *New Brexit rules caused a major shock to UK-EU trade - report*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61237225>
- De Ville, F., & Siles-Brügge, G. (2019). The impact of Brexit on EU trade policy. *Politics and governance*, 7(3), 7-18. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i3.2102>
- Dhingra, S., Huang, H., Ottaviano, G., Paulo Pessoa, J., Sampson, T., & Van Reenen, J. (2017). The costs and benefits of leaving the EU: trade effects. *Economic Policy*, 32(92), 651-705. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix015>
- Electoral Commission. (2016). *Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union*. The Electoral Commission.
- Elgström, O., Bjurulf, B., Johansson, J., & Sannerstedt, A. (2001). Coalitions in European Union Negotiations. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 24(2), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.00049>
- Ghauri, P. N., & Ott, U. F. (2022). *Post-brexit Trade Policy and Its Impact on United Kingdom's Economy*. In *Global Trade and Trade Governance During De-Globalization: Transforming Trade Policy for Not-So-United World*, 109-121.
- Government, U. (2022, March 28). Collection Brexit guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/brexit-guidance>
- Hasenclever, A., Mayer, P., & Rittberger, V. (1997). *Theories of international regimes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Majone, G. (2009). *Europe as the would-be world power: The EU at fifty*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann, M. (1993). Nation-states in Europe and other continents: diversifying, developing, not dying. *Daedalus*, 122(3), 115-140. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027185>
- Mann, C. (2020). Brexit: What economic impacts does the literature anticipate? *Revue de l'OFCE*, 167(3), 43-81. <https://doi.org/10.3917/reof.167.0043>
- O'Neill, M. (2002). *The politics of European integration: A reader*. Routledge.
- Richter-Montpetit, M., & Weber, C. (2017). *Queer international relations*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Schimmelfennig, F. (2018). Brexit: Differentiated disintegration in the European Union. *Journal of European public policy*, 1154-1173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1467954>
- Spruyt, H. (1996). *The sovereign state and its competitors: An analysis of systems change (Vol. 64)*. Princeton University Press.
- UK In A Changing Europe. (2020, September 21). When did Britain decide to join the European Union? <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-facts/when-did-britain-decide-to-join-the-european-union/>
- Vahl, M., & Grolimund, N. (2006). *Integration without membership: Switzerland's bilateral agreements with the European Union*. CEPS.