BRITAIN'S POLICIES TOWARDS THE EU: INTEGRATION OR FOREIGN POLICY THEORIES?

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Abstract: Together with Brexit has come not only the official spliting of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) but also the question whether scholars and diplomatic officials should approach the relationship between the two partners of the UK and the EU from Integration Theory or Theory of Foreign Policy? This article investigates the effects of both the viewpoints on the practice of certain diplomatic jobs by the UK's goverments towards the EU from 1972 to 2016 and the research works by scholars in the world on this relationship.

Keywords: the UK, the EU, Integration Theory, Theory of Foreign Policy, Brexit

On the 21st, June, 2016, the UK's people gathered together in one of the most important referendums of the history of international relations to vote for or against the exit from the EU, in which the country has been a member since 1972. The referendum results announced later officially marked the victory of the Brexit movement, taking Britain out of the EU, despite all the efforts of the former Prime Minister David Cameron, creating shocks to all the international circles of scholars and diplomatic officials.

1. The process of the UK's joining and integrating into the EU

After the Second World War, nearly all the European countries were severely destroyed and damaged. At first, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was set up by the six countries of France, Germany, Italia, Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands "to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace"[1]. In 1957 the European Economic Community (EEC), or "Common Market", was established. Later, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) combined all the three communities of ECSC, European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and EEC (or EC since 1993) into one institution named European Union (EU) (Tran Thi Vinh, 2011). "The EU did not set out to become a world power….. But as the Union expanded and took on more responsibilities, it had to define its relationships with the rest of the world."[2] With its 28 members, the EU now has been a world player. "In terms of the total value of all goods and services produced

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[1] https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en, retrieved 3:10pm dated 27/7/2018

[2] A world player -The European Union's external relations (2004). http://library.umac.mo/ebooks/b12914940.pdf retrieved 3:46pm dated 27/7/2018

(GDP), it is bigger than the US economy. EU GDP in 2017 with €15.3 trillion."[3]

Being one of the most powerful countries for many centuries, the UK was surprisingly rejected the membership into the EEC (later EC and the EU) in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1961, "Prime Minister Macmillan announced Britain's application for EEC membership" (Pilkington, 2001, p. 14). worrying that the French leadership to the EEC would be affected by the British and that the British, together with the American, were conspiring to paralyse the EU from within, the French President De Gaulle at the time decided to use his veto to stop the British's coming into the EEC. Britain's second application in 1964 met the same reactions from De Gaulle. Despite being rejected the admission into the EEC many times, Britain was persistently determined with the application. This policy aimed at two targets: (1) integrating into and exploiting the purchase power of this potential market in order to strengthen the UK's economy; (2) sweeping the way for NATO (with the USA and the UK being two dominants partners inside) to control this global economic and political institution, making it ready for their confronting policies towards the USSR and its rallies at the time. The UK had to wait until the French President's resignation to be admitted into the Union in 1973 (Pilkington, 2001, p. 14-17).

Until 2016, during 43 years Britain's being in the EU, the relationship between the two partners of the UK and the EU has undergone numerous ups and downs. Just after the signing of the Treaty of Accession in 1972 by Edward Heath's government to fulfill the requirements for the application into the EU, the opposite Labour Party won the 1974 elections "with a manifesto commitment to withdraw from the EC" (Pilkington, 2001, p. 18). The results of the referendum supported Britain's staying with the EU. However, until 2016, Britain had taken part in many important institutions of the EU, including The Single Market, The Court of Justice (of the European Union), the European Council and the European Parliament, ect. but had not taken part in the Schengen (which allows smooth movements within countries in the group) and the Eurozone. These are the reasons why the British are considered to be "an awkward partner" in the Union (George, 1998) In almost all the discussions and negotiations at the EU summit meetings, Britain has been criticized for refusing a closer cooperation with the other members to solve the Union's problems which relate to economic crisis, monetary matters and saving or security to immigrants. In short, before Brexit 2016, Britain in fact has commited a considerable number of exits from the EU.

2. *The Integration Theory* and *The Theory of Foreign Policy*

In Joshua S.Goldstein's opinion, "International integration refers to the process by which supranational institutions come to replace national ones – the gradual shifting upward of sovereignty from the state to regional or global structures" (Goldstein, 1999, p. 427). Let's take the integration within the EU as an example. In order to be accepted into this institution, the British had to sign the Treaty of Accession in 1972[4], which mandated that the laws by the EU be more superior and be prioritized in any member country. In short, part of the country's sovereignty in making laws has been transferred to the EU. The more the country integrates into

[3] https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/economy_en, retrieved 3:55pm dated 27/7/2018

[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/68

the EU, the more of the sovereignty will be handed to the Union. Also, the more the EU itself connects its members into the expanded integration in economy, policies, security, society and culture, the more centralization it creates. Therefore, Joshua S.Goldstein later pointed out: "Integration can mean greater centralization at a time when individuals, local groups, and national populations are demanding more say over their own affairs. The centralization of political authority, information, and culture as a result of integration can threaten both individual and group freedom. Ethnic groups want to safeguard their own cultures, languages, and institutions against the bland homogeneity that a global or regional melting pot would create." (Goldstein, 1999, p. 430)

While the integration theorists look at the Britain-EU relationship from the view point considering that Britain is just part of the Union, and should follow the rules by the EU at any cost, scholars following The theory of Foreign Policy claims that the relationship between the two partners have never been so one-sided; and that we should consider the relationship under the light of state interests – one of the most vital components in foreign policy analysis. The claims are based on the fact that the decision of participating in any regional institution of a country asks for a great deal of calculations and analysis on its national interest beforehand. To the calculating British, national interests have consistently been the utmost important aspects in any policy to appoach close relationship to any partner. Henry John Temple Palmerson[5], one of the greatest British Prime Ministers in the 19th century, ever said: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." In one survey by Chatham House in 2012, "47 per cent of those surveyed felt that British foreign policy should support the national interest at all times, even if it meant doing things that might be regarded as unethical." (Edmunds, Gaskarth, & Porter, 2014, p. 29). However, here arises a vital question: "What is a national interest?". Edmunds, Gaskarth, & Porter (2014) state that "national interest is implicitly also one of national identity" (p. 12). The authors then point out that there are six ideal roles that the UK might adopt in world politics to lighten its identity, namely: "isolate, influential (rule of law state), regional partner, thought leader, opportunist-interventionist power and great power" (p. 14). The problem is if the British really keep in minds the roles as mentioned above in the integration into the EU, the conflicts between the two partners are unavoidable.

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/henry-john-temple-3rd-viscount-palmerston

3. Effects of *The Intergration Theory* and *The Theory of Foreign Policy* on the relationship between the UK and the EU

As discussed in the previous parts of this article, the EU and the UK have approached the integration from different perspectives. The EU, influenced substantially by the liberalism and neo-functionalism, aims at building a concrete "supranational" institution which promotes economic development and healthy competition, equal rights and security to all-EU citizens, free movements of goods, services and labours within the Union. Meanwhile, the British aim at the six model roles, two of which are related to opportunist power and great power. At the same time, the utmost target of the UK in any international relationship is for its national interests. In other words, Britain attaches itself closely to the principles of Realism, which supports the protection and enhancement of national interests through power (Booth, 2011).

Here arises a question: if the two partners follow different thinking patterns, why did the British apply for the membership in the EEC in 1972? The answer is at the beginning of the foundation, the EU (former EEC or EC) could be considered a regional organization of economic cooperation. After the Second World War, "from being the world's greatest creditor nation in 1939, Britain had become the world's greatest debtor. Moreover, as a result of the war Britain had lost most of its overseas markets and was expected to run a balance of trade deficit of some 2 billion pounds a year when American Lend-Lease (effectively a form of aid) came to an end, as it did abruptly, in August 1945." (May, 1999, p. 7). However, the next three decades just witnessed the British trials in vain to make the economy as strong as before the War (McDowall, 2002). On the contrary, the next-door countries in the EEC had obtained great success in economy, creating purchasing potentials for goods, services and labours. The decision to ask for membership in this community seemed to have been irreversible, though it was based on merely economic purposes.

One of the first firing conflicts between the two partners used to be the amount of money the EU asked for Britain's membership. In order to receive the agreement, the UK had to pay 20% of the total EU's annual budget while the 8 other countries in the community paid the 80% left. Immediately after Margeret Thatcher came to the power as the Britain's Prime Minister in 1979, the question of British contribution to the EU's budget "arose at Mrs Thatcher's first European Council meeting and dominated discussions in the Council for five years…" (Pilkington, 2001, p. 19). In 1984, the matter was somehow arranged on the basis that Britain would receive 66% of the difference between what they gave and what they got back from the EU funding system, but "the insistent demands made by Mrs Thatcher and her domineering and insulting treatment of her supposed partners had at times almost turned Britain into a pariah in European circles." (Pilkington, 2001, p. 22).

The next Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, tried to console his peers in the EU at the beginning of his time in the office by persuading the British to ratify the Treaty of Maastricht which turned the EC into the EU in 1992. However, Britain's exit from the European Rate Mechanism (ERM) on the 16 September 1992 and the Britain beef ban crisis since 1989 which remained unsolvable pushed John Major to fury. His reactions with the continual use of veto and arguments with peers at EU meetings once again lowered the Britain's ranking in the diplomatic circles (Pilkington, 2001, p. 92-94, p. 136-137). Also, he refused to sign the Social Charter, which is one of the three most important documents of the Treaty of Maastricht.

During 1997-2010, the leaders of Labour Party, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, came into office. Britain's economy soon gained surprising growth rates and the harmony between the two partners was maintained during Tony Blair's first presidency. However, his decision to support the USA in the bombing of Iraq in 2001 created fusion among the other EU members, especially Germany and France (Blair, 2013). To Gordon Brown, he was criticized because he did not try to take Britain back into the ERM and the Eurozone, despite the fact that the country's economy had been running better and at the time was abundantly eligible to access into both. (Do Ta Khanh, 2013)

David Cameron (2010-2016) became the British Prime Minister when the world and EU economies had been shattered away with the global economic crisis starting in 2008. With his wisdom and skillful leadership, Britain maintained the highest growth rates in the EU, continuously being around 3% annually from 2013-2016 (Do Ta Khanh, 2013). However, his

economic austerity would not allow him to be more generous towards the other EU members who were suffering badly and were waiting for the support from the UK. David Cameron was also criticized severely for refusing to share the burdens by the immigrants with the others (Chu Thanh Van, 2018). However, it is necessary to emphasize that the job of being British Prime Minister is extremely demanding. On the one hand, the country asks him to protect its citizens' rights first. On the other hand, peers with the integration disciplines in mind force him to distribute the British wealth to all EU citizens, together with the immigrants coming to the continent from poverty of Asia and Africa. Keeping the balance between the two has never been an easy experience to any leader of the UK. Brexit really took place on the 23rd June, 2016, which put an end to the awkward positions to both the UK in the EU and David Cameron.

In short, starting with different thinking patterns and disciplines, the actions by both sooner or later would go into different ways, which is illustrated vividly by the example of Britain - EU relationship as described above. "It was perhaps inevitable that the British should see themselves not only as unique amongst Europeans, but also as separate and different; and that British policy towards the continent should be characterized by 'splendid isolation'" (May, 1999).

4. Effects of *The Intergration Theory* and *The Theory of Foreign Policy* on the approach to research on Britain - EU relationship by scholars

Different perspectives and approaches to Britian - EU relationship not only affect practical jobs by diplomats and politicians but also direct scholars to different routes and theoritical frames of their research works.

Conventionally scholars who look at the Britain - EU relationship from the Integration Theory would normally try to measure Britain's integration into the Union in different areas (security, economy, social culture, etc.). Or else, they may analyse the contributions by Britain to the EU's three main "pillars" of integration, as assigned in the Treaty of Maastricht[6]. Among them, the first pillar – The European Communities – handled economic, social and environmental policies within member countries; the second pillar of The Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP) concerned about foreign policies (usually to the countries outside the Union) and military matters in the region or in the world; and the third pillar named Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PJCCM) saw to cooperation in the fight against crime both in and outside to protect people and institutions within the EU. Numerous works by foreign and domestic scholars have proved to follow this discipline, such as *Europeanization and Multilevel Governance - Cohesion Policy in the European Union and Britain* by Bache (2008), *International Politics on the World Stage* by Rourke (2008), *The Reluctant European* by the Economist (2015), *In Defence of Europe: Defence Integration as a Response to Europe's Strategic Moment* by The European Commission (2015), and *Adjustments in development policies of dominant countries in Europe in the periods of economic crisis and global recession* by Nguyen An Ha (2013)[7]. In conclusion, there are still a great number of scholars who consider the EU a supranational institution, with Britain being a "unit" inside and the relationship being analysed from the top-down discipline. In this view, Britain can not hold its independent position of a country with full sovereignty to make and implement its

[6] Treaty of Maastricht (1992). https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf

[7] This book is printed in Vietnamese, named *"Điều chỉnh chính sách phát triển của một số quốc gia chủ chốt châu Âu giai đoạn khủng hoảng tài chính và suy thoái kinh tế toàn cầu"*.

own policies any more. Not only the EU scholars but also the EU officials and politicians keep this kind of viewpoint to the Britain's position in the EU. But practice has proved that Britain has not been an easy follower.

On the contrary, scholars approaching the Britain - EU relationship with Theory of Foreign Policy in mind regularly focus on the benefits and costs of the relationship. They tend to look into a single policy by the British in the cooperation with other members in the EU. They care enough to bear in their minds that Britain and the EU are two independent partners. The research works of this discipline have a tendency of moving from theories of power, national interest, subjects of international relations as individual states, etc. to the cooperation between various actors in the world arena. The authors of these works are also in favour of Realism Theories in international relations. A great numbers of books, government reports and research works have been published under the light of this discipline. The most noticeable and influential ones include *Introduction: Interpreting British Foreign Policy* by Bevir, Daddow, & Hall (2012), *What's in a phrase? - The United Kingdom and Ever Closer Union* by Brown (2015), *New Labour and the European Union - Blair and Brown's logic of history* by Daddow (2011), *Collective Security in Space: Search for a Comprehensive Strategy for Utilisation of Space for National Interests* by Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (2014), *Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Annual Report and Accounts 2011-2012* by Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2012), *Policy Making in the Real World* by Hallsworth, Parker, & Rutter (2011), *Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union Foreign Policy* by HM Government (2013), and *Britain in the European Union today* by Pilkington (2001).

In summary, the process of Britain's integration into the EU has undergone a number of fluctuations. It has not been so smooth and concrete as the other members' experiences. The reasons partly come from the fact that the British have approached the EU with the perspective of Realism and theory of Foreign Policy while the EU see the process under the light of Liberalism which promotes free trade, human rights, and democracy. Not only British and European politicians are affected by such a difference in thoughts, but the scholars and researchers on international relations are also under influence. The products of these actors' working therefore come in different shapes and sizes.

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CHÍNH SÁCH CỦA ANH ĐỐI VỚI EU: TIẾP CẬN TỪ LÝ THUYẾT HỘI NHẬP HAY LÝ THUYẾT CHÍNH SÁCH ĐỐI NGOẠI?

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Tóm tắt: Sự kiện Brexit không chỉ đánh dấu sự tách ra khỏi EU của nước Anh mà còn làm nổi lên câu hỏi liệu các học giả và chính trị gia nên tiếp cận mối quan hệ giữa hai đối tác này từ hệ lý thuyết nào: Lý thuyết về Hội nhập hay Lý thuyết về Chính sách đối ngoại? Bài báo này xem xét ảnh hưởng của hai hệ lý thuyết trên đối với Anh và EU trong một số động thái chính trị của nước Anh với EU trong giai đoạn 1972-2016 và ảnh hưởng của các lý thuyết này đối với các công trình nghiên cứu của học giả trên thế giới.

Từ khóa: nước Anh, EU, Lý thuyết Hội nhập, Lý thuyết Chính sách Đối ngoại, Brexit