

# **Brexit And The Imperatives Of National Interest In The Foreign Policy Of A State**

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## **Abstract**

In the new age of globalization, regional integration has become necessary for nation states to achieve their collective cum individual objectives in their relationship with one another. The formation of European Union as a regional organization came at a time Europe was a theatre of conflict and wars. The ravaging effect of the Second World War spurred the proponents of European Union to seek closer integration of neighbouring economies. This initiative was to support economic growth strategies, greater social equality, better trade relations and democratization. To substantiate this proposition, this study examined European Union, its structure, composition, cardinal objectives, British involvement and exit from the Union and the imperatives of her national Interest as a nation state. The data for the study were gathered from secondary source of data, these include textbooks, journals, newspapers, periodicals and other relevant publications. The study discovered that Britain has been an awkward member of the EU since she joined the union which has put her national interest in jeopardy and as such has led to unhealthy relationship within it. Eventually, “Brexit” became imperative for United Kingdom in the primary interest of the nation and solemn pursuit of her foreign policy objectives in global politics.

## **Introduction**

Regional integration got a boost at the end of the Second World War principally because of the devastating consequences of the war on mankind. Regional integration has been defined as the process through which national states voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with their neighbors so as not to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflicts among themselves (Ernest, 1971). In the words of Lombaerde and Van (2007); it as a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increases the interactions between their components and creates new forms of organization, co-existing with traditional forms of state-led organisation at the national level.

In a nutshell, regional integration is the joining of individual states within a region into a larger whole. The degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty (Claar and Noelke 2010).

Various governments have often opined that closer integration of neighbouring economies is a first step in creating a larger regional market for trade and investment. This is claimed to spur greater efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, not just by lowering border barriers, but by reducing other costs and risks of trade and investment. Bilateral and sub-regional trading arrangements have been advocated by governments as economic development tools, as they had been designed to promote economic deregulation. Such agreements have also aimed to reduce the risk of reversion towards protectionism, locking in reforms already made and encouraging further structural adjustment.

However, it has been argued that integration is not an end in itself, but a process to support economic growth strategies, greater social equality and democratisation(Thongkholal 2012).Though, regional integration strategies as pursued by economic and national interests, particularly in the last 30 years, have also been highly contested across civil society.

The modern-day European Union is a regional organization founded by European States to prevent future violent conflicts in Europe after World War II. The original aim was to tie countries together by forging closer industrial and economic cooperation. Since then, the European Union's responsibilities have grown in response to new challenges and many more

countries have joined. The European Union (EU) was created by the Maastricht Treaty on November 1st 1993. It is a political and economic union among European countries which makes its own policies concerning the members' economies, societies, laws and to some extent security. To some, the EU is an overblown bureaucratic institution which drains money and compromises the power of sovereign states. For others, the EU is the best way to meet challenges smaller nations might struggle with; such as economic growth or negotiations with larger nations. Despite many years of integration, opposition remains strong, but states have acted pragmatically, at times, to create the union (Robert 2016).

Nonetheless, European Union started out as a free trade zone and built considerable political integration over a period of several decades. But the EU is far from a unified state and far from a satisfactory Europe-wide democratic order.

However, Britain initially refused to join the European Economic Community when it was founded in 1957. This is alleged to be as a result of Britain's political disposition in international relations after the second World War as a major power bloc in Europe and her political alliances with the US, Commonwealth of Nations and Soviet Union which seems to be contrary to foreign policy objectives of other European countries such as Germany and France. It eventually became a member in 1973, only to have a crisis of confidence that led to an exit referendum two years later. (The pro-Europe campaign won that round with 67 percent of the vote.)

A strain of populist opposition to Europe remained in the decades that followed. Britain has never joined other countries of EU in using the euro as currency, for example, or participated in the Union's Schengen Area open-borders agreement and many policies in the area of justice and home affairs. These differences created national stories, which entrenched those distinctions in what might be called the national mindset (Daniel 2016).

Consequently, it is alleged that the internal politics of the Conservative party that have driven Britain to this point, a rising Euroscepticism within the party, coupled with the rise of a strong party, UKIP, and developments within the EU that have pushed Britain into adopting a series of defensive positions, combined to pressure former UK prime minister David Cameron into his strategy of 'renegotiate and referendum (Daniel 2016).

Therefore, this paper intends to explore and juxtapose British activities and eventual exit from EU and the imperatives of her foreign policy objectives.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of National Interest**

National Interest is a vague and ambiguous term that carries a meaning according to the context in which it is used. Statesmen and policy-makers have always used it in ways suitable to them and to their objective of justifying the actions of their states. Hitler justified expansionist policies in the name of “German national interests.”

The US presidents have always justified their decisions to go in for the development of more and more destructive weapons in the interest of “US national interest.” To build up a strong nuclear base at Diego Garcia was justified by the USA in the name of meeting the challenge posed by erstwhile USSR as well as for protecting the US interests in the Indian Ocean. During 1979-89, former USSR justified its intervention in Afghanistan in the name of “Soviet national interests” (Dinesh 2015).

However, the concept of national interest has lots of theoretical explanations by various schools of thought namely, the Realists, Behaviouralists, Marxists and a host of others.

Realist school of thought opines that international politics revolves around power. It further stated that interaction among nation states is measured and assessed by the level of power such states wield. According to the realist school, the state is the unit of analysis in defining national interest. Put differently, national interest connotes the interest a state projects in her global political pursuit. The major proponent of this school of thought is Hans J Morgenthau. He is regarded as one of the most significant pioneers of the modern form of the classical realism.

For Morgenthau, there is no escape from power which is everywhere in every aspect of life, therefore, he is of the view that the concept of national interest is defined in terms of power. Morgenthau argues that “interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed” because the “objective of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the

national interest” (Morgenthau 1985). Although he recognized that at any particular point in time the interest of a nation should be informed by the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated. So to him, defining interest in terms of power would largely overcome the problem of prejudice (Morgenthau 1985).

The relative power of nation-states can be assessed and measured, and is therefore an important objective reality. The national interest is normally defined in terms of strategic and economic capability because international politics is seen primarily as a struggle for power between states. However, Morgenthau admits that the definition of power will change over time: on some occasions economic power will be crucial, at other times military or cultural power will be decisive.

At the end, Morgenthau maintains that though morality cannot be the basis of forming national interests, He refers to the “moral dignity of the national interest”, implying that at the very least the term is morally defensible guide to foreign policy formulation (Morgenthau 1951). Then again, he made so much emphasis on detachment of the national interest from political and ethical perspectives. Morgenthau concluded that national interest of great powers and the methods by which it is to be secured are rigid to ideological and institutional changes (Morgenthau 1962).

Nevertheless, the behaviouralists have a divergent perspective of the role of national interest in the foreign policy formulation of states, opposed to realist notion of state as the unit of analysis in national interest determination; the behaviouralists maintain that the individual is the unit of analysis in discussing national interest of a state. The theorists posit that state is made of individual actors who influence what becomes the national interest at their whims and caprices.

According to Nazli (1991), individuals in their local and institutional environment actually shape behavioural orientations, actions and interactions of states in international politics. He acknowledges the role of individuals in influence of state decisions in global politics. He further stated that, the aggregate of national priorities and interest is determined by influential actors of government of a state.

Marxists on the other hand, analyze national and global politics with regard to the notion of class interest rather than national interest. For Marxists, the society is divided into two classes; the Bourgeoisie (dominant class) and the proletariat (working class). According to Marx and Engels (1980), the government is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the dominant class who secure control of the state and acquire a vantage position to design laws, policies and decisions to advance, protect and perpetuate their class interest. Class interest from Marxist perspective is therefore, the values and preferences of the ruling elites.

In spite of these theoretical perceptions and variations by scholars on what actually constitute the interest of a state, the notion of national interest has continued to be a recurrent decimal in global politics. The concept has remained the values, objectives and preferences states pursue in their interaction with one another in national and international politics.

However, these theoretical explanations has put British exit from European Union as largely necessitated by her values and preferences in global politics in proper perspective. Britain's adhesion to the European Union certainly weakened her sense of national interest because it often cuts her longstanding alliances. Britain being a power bloc in Europe was not comfortable with European Union policies to whittle the sovereign powers of member states especially in trade and economic relations with other nations outside EU. Britain's national interest could also be demonstrated in her quest to maintain her long-lasting alliance with United States of America and other commonwealth of nations which her membership of EU is threatening. Britain's withdrawal became necessary because of her unhealthy relationship with the union since inception which does not protect her interest most times. All these factors are in an attempt to maintain self reliance, international coalition and stability in her international politics as a nation which is the major objective of her foreign policy.

All these makes it essential for every nation to formulate its foreign policy and to conduct its relations with other nations on the basis of national interests, as interpreted and defined in harmony with the common interests of mankind. The aim of foreign policy is to secure the defined goals of national interest by the use of national power (Dinesh 2015).

## **The European Union**

In the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century the European continent was the home of conflicts, which brought millions of deaths and lots of destruction. For all of the centuries, Europe had a lot of bloody wars, only France and Germany fought three times between 1870 and 1945. European leaders came to the conclusion that only economic and political integration can secure the peace between their countries. The vision of a new Europe, which would overcome antagonistic nationalism, finally emerged from the resistance movements, which had resisted totalitarianism during the Second World War.

In 1950 the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed integrating the coal and steel industries of Western Europe, which led to the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 the predecessor of today's European Union. In 1991 a new treaty known as Maastricht Treaty that led to the collapse of the Berlin wall was struck, the major contents of the treaty were: to form monetary union by 1999, new common policies, European citizenship, a common foreign and security policy and internal security.

EU policies and administration is geared towards balancing of national and common interests, respect for the diversity of national traditions and the forging of a separate identity. This is confirmed by the fact that there is a single market with free circulation for goods, services, capital and persons, there is a common space without visa and border controls (with some exceptions) within the EU. There is also a common currency for the EU (with some exceptions), the Euro and there has been an increase in the number of member states from 6 to 25 with more candidate countries working for accession.

Politically European Union operates according to the principles of conferral (which says that it should act only within the limits of the competences conferred on it by the treaties) and of subsidiary (which says that it should act only where an objective cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states acting alone). Laws made by the EU institutions are passed in a variety of forms. Generally speaking, they can be classified into two groups: those which come into force without the necessity for national implementation measures or regulations and those which specifically require national implementation measures (wikipedia, 2016).

The European Union has seven institutions, namely:

- The European Council; this is a conglomeration of heads of states or government of member states, the president of the council and the president of the commission. The body provides the Union with the necessary impetus and defines political direction and priorities of the Union.
- The Council of the European Union; this body is saddled with the responsibility of passing of EU laws, approving of EU budgets and development and coordination of EU economic and defense policies.
- The European Parliament; this body passes European laws with the council, and serves as a check on other institutions to ensure they work democratically and adopt EU budgets with the council.
- The European Commission; this is the executive arm of the EU, it provides the general political and administrative principles of the Union.
- The Court of Justice of the European Union has the responsibility of applying laws and directives that come from the commission.
- The European Central Bank is the apex financial institution of EU with the responsibility of administering monetary policies of the Union.
- The European Court of Auditors; this body ensures that EU funds are collected and used judiciously. It also helps improve EU financial management

The classification of the EU in terms of international or constitutional law has been much debated. It began as an international organisation and gradually developed into a confederation of states. However, since the mid-1960s it has also added several of the key attributes of a federation, such as the direct effect of the law of the general level of government upon the individual and majority voting in the decision-making process of the general level of government, without becoming a federation. Scholars thus today see it as an intermediate form lying between a confederation and a federation, being an instance of neither political structure (Burgess 2000).



### Britain in the European Union

Shortly after the Second World War, Western Europe was relegated and United States of America and Soviet Union became the new power blocs. To fill this gap and get Europe rejuvenated, France decided, in the early 1950s, to make a bold move. Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed a new institution; the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which would place the coal and steel industries of Germany, France and several other European countries under international control.

The aim was to take what were then considered industries essential to warfare and place them beyond the control of any one country. The underpinning idea was to make it less likely that any major European country could ever wage war against another.

Consequently, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg were content to join the ECSC, but Britain did not and a combination of factors came together to determine that outcome (Kennedy 2016). In elite circles, there was a strong belief that Britain remained, after World War II, a global power of the first rank, a status that would be compromised by joining new European institutions.

This occurred because of the belief that Britain's task was to serve as a bridge between Europe and the US, and Europe and the Commonwealth, a role that it could only play if it stood aside from European integration. In addition, given that the ECSC did not permit the nationalization of its members' coal and steel industries, and that the post-war Labour Government was committed to such nationalization, it would have been politically difficult for Britain to join.

The six European countries took the first step towards integration while Britain stood aside. A few years later, between 1955-1957, those same six countries decided to establish the European Economic Community (EEC), which was a commitment to create a single market in which goods, services, people, and capital moved freely. The same understanding of British role in the world which did not allow it get on closely with its regional neighbours made it stand aside in 1957. In 1960, the economy of the six EEC countries were already getting revived while that of Britain was down that it attempted to join but the then French President Charles De Gaulle frustrated such effort in an attempt to further his geopolitical aim of French leadership of a larger

European bloc in global politics. He thwarted British membership in 1961 and 1967 (Kennedy 2016).

Eventually, De Gaulle left office and Britain's quest to join EEC paid off. European balance of power shift clearly and decisively in favour of West Germany made the French President Georges Pompidou lift his country's opposition to British membership. Britain joined EEC on January 1, 1973 under the Conservative government of Edward Heath. But Heath lost power the following year and in 1975, shortly after joining, Britain held its first Europe referendum to decide whether or not it should stay in the EEC. The result revealed deep splits in the Labour party then in government under Harold Wilson but, with the leadership of all main political parties (even Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives), and all national newspapers backing membership, 67 per cent voted in favour. The vote looked decisive, but in the event did nothing to settle 'the Europe Question' in British politics.

In 1980, Margaret Thatcher the then prime minister opted for rebate on the huge contributions made to EEC by Britain for agricultural subsidy to compensate for low benefit. There were lots of party bickering among Labour Party, Conservative Party and EEC from 1980 to around 1992 when the Maastricht Treaty was signed. With the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the EU was born. Although Britain secured opt-outs from the single currency (the euro) and on some social policy legislation, the EU moved forward towards political union (Kennedy 2016).

Nevertheless, the years of Labour government under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown saw a very different tone. Both were far more sympathetic to the EU than their Conservative predecessors. Blair signed Britain up for the social policies from which would have won an opt-out and, along with French President Jacques Chirac, launched the European Security and Defence Policy. Blair was even happy to consider membership of the euro, but Gordon Brown remained opposed. These were, generally speaking, years of friendlier UK-EU relations, with the UK championing the enlargement of the EU to the former Soviet states.

According to Kennedy (2016), in order to win favour amongst the euroskeptic members of Conservative Party, David Cameron moved to withdraw his party's membership of European Parliament from mainstream political grouping in Brussels in 2005. Consequently, he faced

favour from three sources viz: his party, electorates and unfavourable developments from EU. This eventually pushed him to a referendum.

### **British Exit from the Union**

Britain's EU exit is the product of long and short term historical factors. The UK has never been a comfortable member of the EU. Britain stood aside during the early years of European integration, driven by a fundamentally different history to its continental partners, a different experience during World War II and a different idea of its role in the world.

Brexit is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU). It has been the goal of various individuals, advocacy groups, and political parties since the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the EU, in 1973. Continued membership of the EEC was approved in a 1975 referendum by 67% of voters. In the June 2016 referendum on EU membership, 52% voted to leave, resulting in the complex process of withdrawal being initiated and political and economic changes in the UK and other countries.

Withdrawal from the European Union is a right under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union of EU member states which came into effect in 2007 (BBC News July, 2016).

In 2012, Prime Minister David Cameron rejected calls for a referendum on the UK's EU membership, but suggested the possibility of a future referendum to gauge public support. According to the BBC report, "The prime minister acknowledged the need to ensure the UK's position within the European Union had the full-hearted support of the British people but they needed to show tactical and strategic patience(Nicholas 2012).

Under pressure from many of his party members, and from the rise of UKIP, in January 2013, Cameron announced that a Conservative government would hold an in-out referendum on EU membership before the end of 2017, on a renegotiated package, if elected in 2015 (Sparrow, 2012). Shortly after winning election in 2015, David Cameron set the roadmap for British referendum on EU membership and allowed his ministers to campaign openly for that. In a speech to the House of Commons on 22 February 2016, British Prime Minister, Cameron

announced a referendum date of 23 June 2016 and set out the legal framework for withdrawal from the European Union citing Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty (Hughes et al 2016).

Nonetheless, there are major factors amongst other things that necessitated British exit from European Union.

- The conservative Party which was the ruling Party became more Euroskeptic (loss of interest in European Union) and committed to see the powers of European Union whittled down and the Brussels' based institution dramatically reformed.
- The emergence of a strong opposition from UKIP Party led by Nigel Farage, gaining electoral success with their Euroskeptic messages
- The global economic recession of 2008 that resulted in bailout of Euro zone countries of European Union and other unfavourable policies of the regional body.
- Jeopardy of disappearing borders and sovereignty of member countries of the EU.
- Britain's unhealthy relationship with the union since inception which is a threat to her national interest.

Eventually, the result of the referendum was announced on the morning of 24 June, 2016; those who voted to leave were 17,410,742 representing 51.89%, vote to remain were 16,141,241 representing 48.11%, total vote cast was 33,577,342 while registered voters turnout was 46,500,001, representing 72% (Wikipedia, 2016).

### **Implications of British exit from European Union**

The consequence of British exit from European Union is enormous even within and outside United Kingdom. Politically, within the country, it amounted to serious political shake up. The political scene in the UK went through substantial change and shock after the referendum. After the result was declared, Cameron announced his resignation by October, 2016 (Helm 2016). In the event, he stood down on 13 July, with Theresa May becoming Prime Minister. George Osborne was replaced as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Philip Hammond, Boris Johnson was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and David Davis became

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn lost a vote of confidence among his parliamentary party and a leadership challenge was launched, while on 4 July, Nigel Farage announced his resignation as head of UKIP (Hughes and Laura 2016).

On the relationship between remaining EU members following a report by Tim Oliver of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Wikipedia 2016), Brexit has the potential to change the European Union and European Integration. It could also tip EU towards protectionism, exacerbate existing divisions, or unleash centrifugal forces leading to EU loosening. Alternatively, EU could free itself of its most discomforted member to become more effective.

Economically, Prior to British exit, the UK treasury estimated that being in the EU has a strong positive effect on trade and as a result the UK's trade would be worse off if it left the EU. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts reduced world economic growth by 0.1% following the referendum, and greater reductions in UK economic growth (Redwood 2016).

The final report of Centre for European Reform on the economic consequence of leaving the UK stated that the EU's critics claim that its rules do little to enhance British trade with the continent, that they hold back Britain's economy and that they limit its trade with fast-growing economies outside Europe. Yet this report shows that trade, investment and financial flows between Britain and the continent are much larger than would be the case if the single market did not exist. It finds that EU rules do little damage to Britain's economy and that they do not account for its lacklustre trade with emerging economies. According to the report, as Britain voted to leave the EU, it would face an invidious choice in the subsequent negotiations: full access to the European single market, with little influence on the rules that govern it; or freedom from those rules, with less access to the market (John et al 2014).

Supporters of withdrawal from the EU have argued that the cessation of net contributions to the EU would allow for some cuts to taxes and/or increases in government spending. However, Britain would still be required to make contributions to the EU budget if it opted to remain in the European Free Trade Area. The Institute for Fiscal Studies notes that the majority of forecasts of

the impact of Brexit on the UK economy indicate that the government would be left with less money to spend even if it no longer had to pay into the EU (Nick 2016).

The official Leave campaign, 'Vote Leave,' on June 15, 2016, presented its roadmap to lay out what would happen if Britain left the EU. The blueprint suggested that Parliament would pass laws: Finance Bill to scrap VAT on tampons and household energy bills; Asylum and Immigration Control Bill to end the automatic right of EU citizens to enter Britain; National Health Service (Funding Target) Bill to get an extra 100 million pounds a week; European Union Law (Emergency Provisions) Bill; Free Trade Bill to start to negotiate its own deals with non-EU countries; and European Communities Act 1972 (Repeal) Bill to end the European Court of Justice's jurisdiction over Britain and stop making contribution to the EU budget.

On 15 July 2016, Reuters reported that the value of UK funds' assets under management has dropped by more than \$40 billion or 8.2 percent "in the three weeks since Britain's vote to leave the EU", primarily due to the devaluation of the pound according to the EPFR (Emerging Portfolio Fund Research). While the stock market had rebounded, analysts at Société Générale Bank in France were not bullish: The conditions and consequences of Brexit remain unclear and spoke of a "strong negative bias on the UK domestic economy". In its summary, one month after Brexit, the Guardian noted that the initial effects had been less severe than predicted and there had been some sort of recovery but that initially \$2tn had been wiped off world stock markets. The Guardian of 29th July, 2016 also reported that consumer confidence and confidence of manufacturers had both fallen sharply since the Brexit referendum in the UK.

In Africa, Brexit came at a time many African countries are facing serious external and internal pressures which are constraining their economic activities. While Brexit will have negative implications for some African economies on many fronts, it may also bring opportunities. In the medium to longer term, Brexit could weaken trade between both the UK and EU on the one hand, and Africa on the other. The possible loss of the UK's access to the EU's single market may force it to negotiate new trade agreements with African countries and regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The renegotiations could take several years, and could significantly reduce trade between the UK and Africa in the interim. Africa's exports to the UK

represent about 5% of Africa's total exports, and therefore the continental effects may not be very large. However, some individual countries (e.g. South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya) with very strong trade ties with the UK could suffer in the short to medium term if the UK economy slumps, as expected.

Brexit may also affect Africa's trade with the EU, although the actual trade agreements are not expected to change. Most trade agreements are through regional trading blocs such the SADC, COMESA and ECOWAS. Just recently (June 2016), the SADC and the EU signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which allows free trade with Europe and introduces more flexible "rules of origin," with the aim of promoting the development of regional valuechains.

In West Africa, ECOWAS is the EU's biggest trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana accounting for 80 percent of West Africa's exports to the EU. With Brexit, the EPAs with the EU might not extend easier access to the UK market. Meanwhile, the East African Community (EAC) is due to sign an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU in October 2016. As such, the Brexit move may cause a delay in the signing of this agreement. Some trade renegotiations between the UK and EU may also have negative effects on trade in Africa, for example they may diminish preferential trade agreements, which could negatively affect Africa countries. There are additional concerns about fears of euro-skepticism in other EU countries which could strain Africa's trade with the EU if the bloc's economy weakens further (Seedwell and Jeremy 2016).

### **Lesson for other Nations**

British exit from EU is a demonstration that national interest supersedes regional interest in most cases as Mark (2016) asserts that, more and more people care intensely about national sovereignty and identity. They want borders. They want to have control over the composition of their population. They're willing to sacrifice economically for such principles. But they believe that greater national control brings prosperity in the long term, rightly or wrongly. Above all, they believe in maintaining a cultural coherence tied to geography. One-person-one-vote offers them the last defense against larger supra-national forces dictating massive changes to them. Call them losers, xenophobic, geriatric ("Leave" voters skewed older) or what you will. It won't help

anything and will further divide the populace. It's time to listen to those grievances which are not merely about income.

He maintains that there's a global movement afoot, country by country, to halt globalization's erosion of the nation-state. In Britain's case, voters identified Brussels as the proximate cause. The EU serves as the immediate enemy, for now. But I think we're seeing part of a mega-trend that has already swept other countries, and unless decent leaders pay heed, populists will take advantage. Hence Putin, Erdogan, Trump et al. And voters will make seemingly self-harming decisions for their one over-riding cause their traditional nation-state.

For the EU, Britain's exit risks reinforcing a cycle of disintegration. Member states like Poland and Hungary, as well as opposition parties like Marine Le Pen's Front National could launch copy-cat moves. Others such as Ireland could be economically destabilized. Internationally, the loss of the EU's second-biggest economy will be a serious blow to the EU's standing and reputation. If other crises, a euro crisis, a Schengen crisis, a Trump presidency – get layered on top of Brexit, there is a real danger of collapse (Mark, 2016).

For Africa, the potential gains from increased regional integration are significant; the 54 economies in Africa make up the most fragmented region in the world. In addition, more than a third of African economies are landlocked. Therefore, integration should not solely focus on economic growth and regulation at a macro level, but should also effectively translate the tangible benefits of integration to citizens at the micro level. These efforts would ultimately shift the sentiments of citizens more favourably towards the regional arrangement. More than ever, technocrats at the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have to constantly gauge and take into account the views of their citizens on adopted policies.

Similarly, integration entails that states find an advantageous balance between their membership in the regional integration scheme and their national interests. Countries become part of a collective arrangement to maximise their national interests; and if these interests are not realised, they may be deterred from implementing regional and continental plans. The creation of Free Trade Areas (FTA) in Africa is limited by the dominance of some states in the trade flows in their regions such as Nigeria in ECOWAS, Kenya in the EAC, and South Africa in SADC. Thus,



the AU and RECs need to clearly outline the gains from regional integration in order for states to realise their national interests; not only economic gains but also the intangible value of group membership in a continental or regional arrangement.

While full integration in Africa is still an aspiration, buy in from African citizens will be a crucial defining factor in the success or failure of the regional agenda for the creation of integrated, developed and peaceful Africa by 2063 (IPSS 2016).

## **Conclusion**

The essence of coming together of nations on regional base is to pursue their collective interest alongside their individual national interests respectively. However it has been difficult for every nation to achieve this feat as regional interest always overrides individual foreign policy objectives of such countries. European Union as a regional organization have put a lot in place for political and economic advancement of Europe, but aside that there are little skirmishes that has bedeviled the union in her relationship with European countries especially the United Kingdom.

Since coming together of that Union in early fifties till when Britain eventually joined in 1973, her conduct in EU has not been cordial. A lot of factors have been attributed to that type of relationship that existed, ranging from the fact that UK was not part of the founding members, UK faced stiff opposition especially from France when she opted to join the union to other factors that affected her interest as a nation, such as the Shengen Treaty, Eurozone Agreement, exclusive trade policies, disappearing Sovereignty, Euroskepticism and a host of other issues that have made Britain an awkward member of EU.

In other to vigorously pursue her national interest and foreign policy objectives as a nation Britain voted to opt out of the EU and damn the consequences. This is to demonstrate that national interest is paramount in the foreign policy objective of any nation irrespective of whose ox is gored.

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