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So Close and Yet So Far

The UK since the Brexit Referendum

Hans-Hartwig Blomeier

The UK's decision to leave the EU based on the so-called Brexit referendum shocked Europe. How did it come to this? What internal rifts and contradictions are the root causes of the referendum result? What expectations, concerns, and fears does the impending separation entail? And what are the prospects for a future relationship?

1. Introduction

Since the referendum of 23 June 2016, in which a narrow majority (52 per cent) of the British voted in favour of leaving the EU, the debate has been dominated by some key questions relating to the future European order and the future development of the EU, but also the UK's self-image,¹ its role and responsibility in Europe and the world, and ultimately its relations with the EU and the other European nations. Even after the EU Commission and the UK have reached a first breakthrough in negotiations and the EU Council agreed to begin with the second phase of negotiations on 15 December 2017, it is still completely open what outcome the recently begun process of extricating the UK from the EU – the so-called “divorce negotiations” – will have and what future relations between the UK and the EU, which are also still to be negotiated, will look like. The referendum, the discussion process it entails and the negotiating positions that have been made public to date have illustrated how distant “the continent” obviously is to many of the British people on the one hand. While showing how close the relationship has come to be over 40 years of EU membership on the other – at least in the hearts and minds of many, mostly young, British people.

The purpose of this article is to analyse how this (seemingly unpreventable) separation could come about, what internal rifts and contradictions in the UK have been revealed along the way, what expectations, concerns, and fears, both in the UK and the EU, are linked to this formal separation, and what prospects there can be for a future relationship.

2. From the Bloomberg Speech to This Day – How Could It Come to This?

Considering the serious implications of the decision of 23 June 2016, a question that is increasingly being asked is whether things had to come this far at all, that is, whether this referendum was a necessary step towards achieving clarity or whether, in fact, it merely reflected an internal power struggle within the Conservative Party. To answer this question, we will need to take a look at the political parties and their positions towards the EU, as well as the social trends and positions in the UK.

The opinion of the British population on EU membership has been and still is split. This was the case before the referendum, and little has changed since then. Surveys² indicate that it is merely the number of those who are undecided about the referendum that has fallen significantly, which means that a certain process of opinion-forming has taken place. But there is still a stalemate, with opinions fairly entrenched on both sides.

Before the referendum, the issue of EU membership did not arouse a heated socio-political debate among the general public (although it did within the Conservative Party), nor did it awake passions nearly as much as the debate about migration (which then became a key issue in the referendum campaign), for instance. Consequently, doubts about whether this referendum was a necessary course of action are justified. In any case, there had been no currents in civil society and no campaign in favour of a referendum before it was announced. Instead, what is interesting and relevant here is the correlation

between identity and EU membership. A 2015 study on this issue³ showed that a separate identity clearly was and remains a dominant interest of the British (some 65 per cent – compared to only 25 per cent in Germany) and that, compared to the citizens of other European countries, only a small number of British (just 15 per cent on average between 1996 and today) identify themselves as European. The stance on this question of identity strongly correlates with people's position on the merit of EU membership.

EU membership has never been close to the heart of the majority of British people.

This appears to indicate that EU membership was never close to the heart of most British people. The decision to join what was then the European Community (EC) in 1972 was made for economic reasons, and the majority of the British still judge that membership on “What’s in it for us?” The ratification in the UK in 1975 via a referendum was essentially based on this rationale, particularly as the economic situation in the country was weak at the time and people hoped (not without reason) that joining the EC and the developing Single Market would stimulate the UK economy.

While things have changed significantly for the younger generation thanks to Interrail and Erasmus, there is still no majority support for the EU. The older generation has not lived through the unifying continental European wartime and post-war experiences, which provided significant impetus and acted as a bonding agent for European unity, nor did they forget the initial twofold vetoing of the UK’s EC membership by the French,⁴ which no doubt deepened the rift. These days, while many in the UK have forgotten that it was, in fact, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who advanced key EU efforts, such as eastward expansion and the enhancement of the Single Market, they remember her legendary slogans in connection

with the “UK rebate” (“I want my money back”). There is a grandiose episode of the TV series “Yes, Minister” that, succinctly and with typical British humour, summarises the domestic political view about the foundation of the UK membership in the EU.⁵

To answer the above question, it is necessary to consider the political actors involved. Both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party are divided on the question of EU membership, and the issue still evokes disputes within both parties. Only the Liberal Democrats have been consistently pro-EU in recent years, but it has not led to electoral success, as became very clear in 2015 (before the referendum) and in 2017 (after it).

While the Labour Party maintained a pro-EU course backed by the majority of the party (but never all of it) under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, this position has changed markedly under the new party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. In the past, his approach towards the EU has oscillated between reticent and negative, and he kept very quiet on the matter during the referendum campaign. A few Labour MPs, including the German-born Gisela Stuart, were prominently involved in the Leave campaign, but most of them tend to be pro-EU. The party base is also split on the matter, with positions being characterised by regional and sociological differences.

In the Conservative Party, on the other hand, the issue of EU membership has always caused considerable tension and controversy. A radically Euro-sceptic wing including MPs such as William Cash, John Redwood, and Jacob Rees-Mogg, and Daniel Hannan (MEP) made consistent efforts for years (and decades) towards extricating the UK from the EU, speaking out vociferously about the issue within the party.

This group represents a hard core of around 30 per cent of MPs, thereby giving it the power to significantly affect the outcome of party leader elections and parliamentary votes (particularly when there is a narrow majority).





Leave: Due to a lack of success of his Remain campaign, David Cameron had to resign even before the actual Brexit.
Source: © Stefan Wermuth, Reuters.

The Tory MPs who can be considered as more EU-friendly, belonging to organisations such as the Conservative Group for Europe and the Tory Reform Group, are somewhat fewer in number (some 20 per cent of the parliamentary group) and have always been more conciliatory in tone and action and ultimately more loyal to the party. Consequently, they had less political clout. Now, this has changed significantly. Under the direction of Dominic Grieve and Tory veteran Ken Clarke, the group that has been reviled as the “mutineers” by the Daily Telegraph has brought the Prime Minister her first touchy electoral defeat by refusing their allegiance to her in a vote about the parliament’s participation in Brexit on 13 December 2017, with only eleven dissenters of their own fraction. The following death threats to

some of these delegates show how magnified and aggressive the political climate has become. But the majority of Tories can be regarded as neutral on the question of EU membership and willing to toe the party line and follow the party leader or prime minister.

Things look a little different for the party base. The majority of Tory members are considered EU-sceptic or anti-EU, which matters to MPs in their constituencies, particularly for internal party candidate selection.

But the juncture in the Conservative Party that triggered the Brexit decision came before the referendum. In his efforts to become leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron promised his Euro-sceptic colleagues that he would

lead the Conservatives out of the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament and create a new, separate group. He defeated David Davis (the present Brexit minister in the May government) in the party leadership contest and went through with the departure from the EPP group after the EU parliamentary elections in 2009, founding the new European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) in collaboration with Czech and Polish parties. This step, which he would probably have taken before 2009 had he not encountered strong resistance in the EPP and

from some of his own MEPs, meant not only weakening the EPP, which lost its majority in the European Parliament, but also giving in to pressure from the Euro-sceptic wing of his party; a position he would have reason to regret in the referendum issue.

The concrete step that led to the referendum was Cameron's so-called Bloomberg Speech,⁶ which he delivered in his capacity as Prime Minister on 23 January 2013 in the form of a keynote address on European policy. It contained a



Erasmus generation: Of all people, having to bear the brunt of Brexit in years to come, it is the young generation who voted with a clear majority to remain in the EU. Source: © Dylan Martinez, Reuters.

number of policy definitions regarding the UK's role in and ideas for Europe and the EU and was therefore in retrospect a useful and necessary speech. However, it also included a promise to let the British people vote on EU membership which was ultimately a concession to the Euro-sceptic wing of his party in the hopes of obtaining its approval for his EU strategy or at least temporary relief from pressure.

The speech did not, however, give a timeframe for such a referendum and thus remained sufficiently vague to avoid immediate pressure to act. His opponents within the party subsequently upped the pressure, prompting him to include a referendum promise in the 2015 election manifesto, this time with a concrete deadline (December 2017). If David Cameron banked on using coalition negotiations with the Liberal Democrats (in the assumption that he would fail to achieve an absolute majority once again and be forced to form a new coalition) as an occasion to go back on this referendum promise or postpone its fulfilment indefinitely, he became a victim of his own electoral success: the Conservatives won a narrow absolute majority in May 2015, preventing him from renegeing on his promise to hold the referendum. His expectation that the time until the referendum could be used for a broad, objective discussion of the pros and cons of EU membership ("So we will have time for a proper, reasoned debate") proved completely illusory.

No such substantive debate ever took place in the UK; even the run-up to the referendum was characterised, on the Leave side, by a highly emotive, grotesquely simplified campaign punctuated by outright untruths, and by an uninspired, rather technocratic, thoroughly negative one by the Remain side.⁷ Prime Minister David Cameron, who headed the Remain campaign, lacked conviction and credibility, mainly because he, like all his predecessors since 1975, had always managed to promote and vigorously defend British interests in Brussels while blaming Brussels for virtually anything amiss or inadequate at home. Conducting a campaign whose theme was "The EU is not really convincing and I personally don't

like it either, but staying is not as bad as leaving" was truly not the way to persuade doubters and sceptics in his own country to vote Remain.

One factor that should be mentioned in this context is the role and impact of the British media, most of which had welcomed UK membership in the EC (even the Daily Mail ran the headline "Europe: here we come!"). Its tone has changed markedly over recent years and decades, some outlets going to grotesque lengths in their opposition. There can be no doubt that negative campaigning (even the most sympathetic observer could not call it anything else) by the so-called Murdoch press, (The Sun and The Times, but also crucially the Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph) contributed significantly to the EU's negative image in the UK and therefore had a major impact on the referendum result.⁸ Whether Brexit can really be blamed on negative reporting⁹ may be up for discussion, however, the Remain side were never able to forcefully oppose this ubiquitous anti-EU mood that spanned several decades. The headline in The Sun (the publication with the widest circulation) on the day of the referendum (23 June 2016) says it all: "Independence Day: You Can Free UK from Clutches of the EU Today".¹⁰ In view of this very one-sided publicity, the lack of empathy with the EU, and a lacklustre Remain campaign, it is almost surprising that 48 per cent of the British voted to remain in the EU, although this assumption about the intent of those voters is just as suspect as the idea that the 52 per cent who voted Leave were exclusively and firmly interested in the UK leaving the EU.

The EU referendum illustrated (once again) how difficult and ultimately misleading the desire to reduce a highly complex matter to a simple question and then present it to the public in a legally binding referendum can be. The fear that voting behaviour will then be influenced by many other factors besides the question posed has been confirmed in the UK, as can be demonstrated by the geographic, demographic and sociological differences in actual voting behaviour. People in cosmopolitan cities such as London, Manchester, and Birmingham, and

young people, who had obviously enjoyed concrete benefits from the EU membership, voted Remain while many older people and those in weaker social groups and in rural areas, who had not yet benefited from globalisation and saw the EU as a distant and bureaucratic foreign institution at best, voted Leave – out of understandable frustration and to punish the government. Scotland linked its own independence debate to the EU membership issue, and the majority of voters there voted to remain (EU membership was certainly not the only issue that determined people’s decisions there).

Consequently, neither the 52 per cent who voted Leave, nor the 48 per cent who voted Remain can be identified as exclusively anti- or pro-EU. But the concrete political decision to leave the EU is based on this vote. The rather vague sentiments in the country (anti-migration, loss of control, anti-establishment, etc.) which had a significant impact on the result, were used to come to a legally binding decision; this produced a situation in which, significantly, a private legal challenge was necessary to ensure that Parliament would have its say and a chance to affect the final deal.¹¹ This is a remarkable state of affairs in the “birthplace of parliamentary democracy”.

The UK’s EU membership is due to end in March 2019 after 47 years.

3. *Quo Vadis, Britannia?* – Expectations, Illusions, and Concerns regarding Brexit

Since the referendum of 23 June 2016, and especially since the formal beginning of the exit process triggered by the relevant letter of 29 March 2017 from the British Prime Minister Theresa May to European Council President Donald Tusk, the “Brexit clock” seems to be ticking inexorably: after 47 years, the UK’s EU membership is due to end in March 2019. This development is lauded by some as “freedom from the

bonds of Brussels” and “a return to national sovereignty”, but regarded by others with increasing concern due to the looming uncertainties, loss of importance, and international isolation and to the likely economic downturn.

After David Cameron’s resignation following the EU referendum, Theresa May, who was Home Secretary at the time, took over as Prime Minister after a remarkable internal party elimination process.¹² She did so with the mandate to implement the referendum result, but also in the knowledge that she would have only a narrow parliamentary majority (17 seats) and a party that was traditionally split on the issue to do it with. Her surprising decision to hold new elections on 8 June was meant as a bid for liberation that was to increase her slender parliamentary majority and thus obtain greater legitimacy in the areas of domestic and foreign policy and to extend her personal mandate beyond Brexit to 2022. At the time, this was a perfectly plausible calculation. The lead over the Labour Party in the polls, some 20 per cent, seemed sufficient for the gambit. The elections of 8 June proved the decision to be a catastrophic miscalculation that lost May her absolute majority and meant that she could only remain in power at all by entering into a (politically complex) alliance with the Northern Irish DUP; she had lost valuable time and, more importantly, a great deal of political credibility. The situation was greatly exacerbated by her disastrous appearance at the Conservative Party conference in Manchester at the beginning of October 2017¹³ and the internal party skirmishes, particularly those involving Foreign Secretary Johnson, that preceded it. Since then, she has been viewed not just as wounded, but on borrowed time. This has enormous consequences for the political options and balance of power affecting the possible and necessary compromises in the Brexit negotiations. Theresa May can certainly count as a success that she managed to effectively handle the first phase of negotiations, as well as the EU now being ready to start the second phase after substantial concessions of the British government regarding payments, EU citizens, and the

Ireland issue. However, the initial refusal of the DUP to follow her, as well as the previously mentioned electoral defeat in parliament show how fragile her position continues to be.

In socio-political terms, nothing has fundamentally changed since the referendum and the 8 June election. The Remainers and Leavers are still ensconced in their camps, and there is still no genuine national dialogue about a coherent strategy for the future. There are a number of reasons for this.

For one, the referendum and the election exposed the depth of the many rifts in the country: demographically between old and young; sociologically between globalisation losers and winners and between urban and rural populations; London's extremely centralising special role; the question of independence raised by the Scottish referendum of 2014; and the ever-more-acute uncertainty as to whether and how the Brexit process might jeopardise the fragile peace in Northern Ireland.

What form might a social and international reorientation of the UK take?

Although the UK's unity is not being questioned at the moment, what might take the place of the unifying influence of Queen Elizabeth II. is. A return to Empire is the stuff of romantic illusion and no real option. The Commonwealth has never been a truly workable alternative, and is therefore probably not a realistic answer to the central question of what the UK sees as its future role and place. A former world power, the UK has never been entirely happy with its new role as an EU member state, even an important one. The idea of being able to play a special role in the international arena as a junior partner of the USA ("special relationship") briefly appeared feasible after a few overblown announcements by Donald Trump, but has since given way to the sober realisation that,

given the current US administration, such a role would be neither desirable nor sustainable.

While the Brexit process was not the cause of all these questions, it did highlight them. Having said that, the discussion process to date gives little cause for optimism. The fractious political situation, a weak government (without a ruling majority and with a prime minister on borrowed time) and an equally weak opposition (with the leader Jeremy Corbyn much strengthened after the election, but a deeply divided Labour Party), so far shows no sign that the broad discussion David Cameron called for in his Bloomberg Speech¹⁴, might be used for a socio-political reorientation and debate of the future.

Big Ben being turned off after the midday chimes on 22 August (to undergo repair work estimated to take four years) has a certain symbolism: the Brexit clock is ticking, but in London time seems to have been made to stand still as if one could simply stop or defer the seemingly unavoidable multiple, complex negative consequences of leaving the EU.

As already mentioned, the negotiations between the EU and the UK have overcome the first round of negotiations. But the differences on the shape of future economic and trade relations and cooperation in areas such as foreign and security policy, science and research, etc. are so great that even inveterate optimists cannot see how a constructive conclusion can be reached in the period leading up to Brexit.

Two elements could, however, dramatically speed up proceedings and lead to a fundamental change in positions, particularly in the UK. On the one hand, political momentum could gain the upper hand. If both sides realise that the technical negotiations are leading nowhere and that political solutions must be sought and found, the negotiations could be turned over to the heads of government. Compromises, even unconventional ones, may allow seemingly irreconcilable differences to be overcome. But this approach would probably fail due to the weakness of the

British Prime Minister, who has lost a great deal of authority, not only in her own party, due to the poor election result and the events before and after the party conference, but also in Parliament, where she could be defeated at any time by the opposition of just ten to 15 MPs of her own party on the pro or anti-EU side – just as in the vote on 13 December – should they not approve of these political compromises.

The other option would be a drastic change in popular mood, but, as has been mentioned, there is currently no sign of that. A dramatic change of economic variables, for instance triggered by the Central Bank increasing the base rate in response to rising inflation with dramatic effects on the population, highly indebted by consumption and mortgages, could provoke such a shift that would drive politicians, particularly the MPs in Parliament, to make a similarly drastic change in their position on the Brexit issue. But time is a limiting factor here. There is currently no indication that such a massive change will happen before the Brexit deadline, and even if it did, stopping the Brexit process would require a cross-party consensus in Westminster (since the hardliners among the Tory Brexiters have already indicated publicly that they would stick to their stance even in the face of massive economic losses). Cross-party consensus has therefore remained a foreign concept in the Commons to date.

4. Europe and the UK – Prospects for a Complex Relationship

The current discussion focuses primarily on the outlook for the different versions of Brexit. But the opinions on this vary greatly both within government and within the opposition, which makes it very difficult for the EU negotiators to know what the official and valid British negotiating position is. The position papers presented so far were immediately subjected to criticism from the Conservative Party's own ranks and then rejected in Brussels as being too insubstantial. No genuine progress has been observed in the negotiations to date.¹⁵

The almost romantic idea of leaving the EU, while still retaining as many of the existing benefits as possible through a plethora of agreements is, understandably, not well received in the EU. Half-hearted concessions such as claiming to reject merely the “direct jurisdiction” of the European Court of Justice have been viewed as insufficient by the EU on the one hand, and considered a “betrayal” of the Brexit mandate by Tory hardliners on the other.

The unwillingness to allow a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which both sides repeat like a mantra, is simply incompatible with leaving the EU, the Single Market, and the Customs Union in order to regain control over the movement of people and goods. A hard external border between Ireland and Northern Ireland is the logical, rational consequence of this decision. Questions arising from the Good Friday Agreement, such as the right to EU citizenship for Northern Irish citizens, pose further complications for which there are currently no solutions.

Where do we go from here? All that is certain is that the status quo cannot continue, and while a reversal remains a theoretical possibility, it is almost certainly not politically feasible before the deadline. A well-balanced solution (probably most closely resembling a soft Brexit) would require considerably more time than is currently available. It is unclear whether an extension of the deadline can be negotiated, since the two sides insist on totally different rules for such matters. The EU would probably agree to a delay during which the current rules – freedom of movement for workers and ECJ jurisdiction – remain in place. Yet, that is precisely what the UK does not want, hoping instead for a longer implementation phase for the new conditions – conditions which have yet to be negotiated. So there seems to be an impasse.

A second scenario would be an abrupt end to the negotiations; a breakdown in relations and the ensuing legal, economic, and political chaos on both sides. This is without doubt the worst-case scenario, but it figures ever more prominently



Discordant: Although the previous negotiation rounds have been able to achieve first advances, the complex questions on future relations are still completely open. Source: © Hannah McKay, Reuters.

in the current debate. UK government circles, the British economy, and economic actors elsewhere in Europe¹⁶ are increasingly bracing themselves for this scenario. All players still profess to be aghast at the idea, but “whistling in the dark” will not prevent it from happening. Pressure applied from the business world on both sides is the primary factor that could and should drive the political players to reach a negotiated settlement that would prevent this scenario.

This leaves the third scenario, one that remains both realistic and sensible: the “clean cut”. It would require swift, pragmatic decisions on both sides. With the meanwhile achieved readiness of the British to meet their payment obligations, as well as a realistic clarification of the rights of the EU citizens living in Great Britain, the question

of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland has to be debated first within this scenario, which still remains difficult in spite of all declarations of intent. Additionally, a key point will be to agree upon an ideally comprehensive trade agreement (under discussion are models that mainly follow the Canadian model), the difficulty going to be the sector of the (financial) services. Other aspects of future collaborations in the foreign and security policy areas, as well as science and research are also to be agreed upon. It is illusory to accomplish this until March 2019, the deadline extension thus being an imperative. But for this scenario to play out successfully, both sides will need to realise that the lose-lose situation that Brexit inevitably entails, will only be bearable if the resulting damage is minimised; in turn, who loses less and who loses more is only of minor significance.

The political and economic consequences for the UK have already been alluded to. But it must also be clear to the EU that the UK's departure will entail more than "just" the loss of part of the Single Market or other purely economic consequences. However fractious the UK may have been as an EU member, the EU was and still is stronger as an economic and trading power, and especially as a security and defence power, with the UK than without it.

The concern that the exit of the UK might inspire imitators in the EU, still detectable in the Brexit debate on the EU side a year ago, has subsided; in other words the suspicion voiced in the UK that the EU wants to "punish" the British to deter others, is not justified. But Brexit will substantially weaken the EU, both internally and in terms of external perception. Internally, it will affect the EU budget (the UK was a net contributor despite the "UK rebate"), the flow of goods and services, and the Single Market (after Germany, the UK is the EU's second-largest trading player), as well as the architecture of the financial markets (as a major international finance centre, London is the most important financial service provider within the EU).

Not least, the departure of the conservatively governed UK will shift the regulative balance within the EU. Germany in particular will miss having a partner so strongly in favour of the market economy, despite the differences the two countries have had, including in the business sector.

To the outside world, the relative importance of the EU will decline when the UK leaves with its some 60 million inhabitants and considerable economic clout, and the EU will no doubt be less attractive as a business and trading partner.

Even though the UK will remain a member of NATO, and the British have traditionally been cautious about moves towards joint European security and defence policy and even tried to slow them, the UK has, in fact, lent the EU

greater weight in this area too as a significant security and defence power. That will change with Brexit as well.

Brexit is only one of numerous challenges the EU is currently facing.

The EU itself is facing complex and unsolved problems. The gravest of these include the tense relationship with Poland and Hungary; the euro crisis, which has still not been fully overcome and still affects the Italian banks in particular, but also Deutsche Bank; the refugee crisis that has been inadequately controlled through the agreement with Turkey; the strained relationship with Russia; and the complete recalibration of relations with the USA after the power change in Washington and the ensuing consequences for the security architecture in Europe. It is doubtful that these issues will be easier to resolve without the British at the EU table.

The EU will and must keep evolving. This will require answering some fundamental strategic questions. Will this evolution entail stronger isolationism and/or greater internal integration? Will the EU increasingly close itself off from neighbouring European non-EU countries (including the UK after 2019) or will it develop a new neighbourhood concept with relations of varying intensity or different levels of integration? Would this potentially open the way for readjusting the relations between the UK and the EU – it is safe to say not in the immediate future, but in five to ten years' time?

Despite the bafflement and justified irritation about the Brexit decision, the EU must remain interested in a constructive relationship with the UK. But the British must first determine and set out their priorities. The country is at a crossroads: the choice seems to be between "Great Britain" or merely "Little England", according to some acerbic remarks. One hopes that the UK as a nation and its society will find a path

towards its European identity after all – albeit outside the EU for the foreseeable future.

If this were to happen – and there are indications, especially among the younger generation, that it will – it would be in the EU’s fundamental interest to help the UK along that path and explore constructive partnership models to shape a new European order in which the UK would be an important, even essential partner.

Hans-Hartwig Blomeier is Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s office in Great Britain.

- 1 For the purposes of simplicity and consistency, the designation “UK” is being used throughout the text to represent the full country name of “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”.
- 2 Cumulated survey results 1977–2017. Cf. NatCen Social Research 2017: How would you vote in a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the EU?, in: <http://bit.ly/2zTHDqj> [20 Oct 2017].
- 3 Cf. full study: Ormston, Rachel 2015: Do we feel European and does it matter?, London, in: <http://bit.ly/2zkYFOI> [20 Oct 2017].
- 4 The UK first applied for membership of what was then the EC as early as 1961 and then again in 1967. In both cases, Charles de Gaulle vetoed the move. His reasoning for the first rejection became the stuff of legend: “The Treaty of Rome was concluded between six continental States, States which are, economically speaking, one may say, of the same nature. [...] England in effect is insular, she is maritime, she is linked through her exchanges, her markets, her supply lines to the most diverse and often the most distant countries; she pursues essentially industrial and commercial activities, and only slight agricultural ones. She has in all her doings very marked and very original habits and traditions. In short, the nature, the structure, the economy that are England’s differ profoundly from those of the continentals.” Charles de Gaulle, 14 Jan 1963, quoted in ETH Zurich, International Relations and Security Network (ISN): French President Charles DeGaulle’s Veto on British Membership of the EEC, in: <http://bit.ly/2zQP8LN> [24 Oct 2017].
- 5 Cf. scene in BBC 1981: The Devil You Know (series 2, episode 5), in: Yes Minister, <https://youtu.be/rvYuoWyk8iU> [20 Oct 2017].
- 6 For the full text of the speech, see Cameron, David 2013: EU Speech at Bloomberg, in: <http://bit.ly/2AhaCF1> [20 Oct 2017].
- 7 Cf. detailed analyses about the referendum: Blomeier, Hans-Hartwig/Wientzek, Olaf 2016: Good Bye Britain?, KAS-Sonderbericht, 12 May 2016, in: http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_45165-1522-1-30.pdf [20 Oct 2017]; Blomeier, Hans-Hartwig 2016: Ein schwarzer Tag für Großbritannien und die EU, KAS-Länderbericht, 24 Jun 2016, in: <http://kas.de/grossbritannien/de/publications/45682> [20 Oct 2017].
- 8 For a more in-depth analysis of this statement cf. Bennhold, Katrin 2017: To Understand ‘Brexit,’ Look to Britain’s Tabloids, The New York Times, 2 May 2017, in: <https://nyti.ms/2prA0l3> [20 Oct 2017].
- 9 Zastiral, Sascha 2016: Der Brexit wurde herbeigeschrieben, Zeit Online, 5 Jul 2016, in: <http://bit.ly/2iArfBi> [20 Oct 2017].
- 10 The Sun 2016: Independence Day: Britain’s Resurgence – You can free UK from clutches of the EU today, 23 Jun 2016.

- 11 In a legal challenge brought at the end of 2016/ beginning of 2017 that went all the way to the Supreme Court, the entrepreneur Gina Miller succeeded in forcing the government to involve the British Parliament in the Brexit process and seek its mandate to trigger Article 50. In connection with her actions, Miller found herself the target of verbal abuse and threats, including death threats, and the judges at both levels of jurisdiction were described as “traitors against the will of the people” and subjected to verbal abuse in the above-mentioned news media.
- 12 For details cf. Blomeier, Hans Hartwig 2016: Weg frei für die neue Premierministerin, KAS-Länderbericht, 12 Jul 2016, in: http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_45836-1522-1-30.pdf [20 Oct 2017].
- 13 On this subject, cf. a more detailed report in Blomeier, Hans-Hartwig 2017: Premierministerin May angezählt, KAS-Länderbericht, Oct 2017, in: http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_50282-1522-1-30.pdf [20 Oct 2017].
- 14 Cf. Cameron 2013, n. 6.
- 15 Cf. Department for Exiting the European Union 2017: Article 50 and negotiations with the EU, in: <http://bit.ly/2zTM30N> [20 Oct 2017].
- 16 The Federation of German Industries (BDI) spelt it out particularly clearly, advising its members in early October to prepare for this scenario. For a detailed explanation cf. BDI 2017: Deutsche Industrie schaut mit Sorge auf Fortgang der Brexit-Verhandlungen, press release, 5 Oct 2017, in: <http://bit.ly/2AWUdSD> [20 Oct 2017].