



Devastating Divorce or Blessing in Disguise? The Impact of Brexit on EU Diplomacy through the EEAS – Focus on the EU's Engagement with the Middle East via the MEPP and the JCPOA

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Abstract

While the British government has often asserted that 'Brexit means Brexit', academic literature has notably failed to cover the subject as succinctly. This is especially the case with regards to the consequences of Brexit – on the European Union (EU), specifically the stranger creatures in its institutional architecture: the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Concretely, the analysis presented in this thesis aims at answering the following research question: What overall impact will Brexit have on EU diplomacy through the European External Action Service (EEAS)?

In a tentative answer to this question, this paper formulates two hypotheses: the first theorises that Brexit will have an overall negative impact on EU diplomacy, weakening the common European diplomatic effort by doing away with the mutual benefits associated with British cooperation within the EU and by increasing destabilising effects tied to greater anarchy in international affairs. The second claims that Brexit will have a more mixed overall impact on EU diplomacy, yielding negative consequences in some areas, and positive consequences in others. In order to 'test' these hypotheses and answer the research question as comprehensively as possible, this thesis' main analysis centres on six concrete indicators: the cost in terms of British financial contributions to EU foreign policy, the cost in terms of British personnel, and in terms of diplomatic clout, para-diplomatic resources, UK foreign-policy entrepreneurship, and post-Brexit intra-EU ideological unity. In the end, the second hypothesis is shown to be closest to reality: Brexit is estimated to imply negative consequences for the EU's CFSP funding and personnel, for its diplomatic clout and some para-diplomatic resources, yet to present significant positive opportunities in terms of foreign-policy entrepreneurship and intra-EU ideological unity on foreign policy. Therefore, it appears that Brexit is a double-edged sword. What remains to be seen is how the EU will wield it.