

Abstract

The thesis deals with the phenomenon of the crisis of European integration and disintegration, a topic that has re-emerged in the academic arena, especially due to the British referendum on remaining in the European Union. This text focuses on the concept of disintegration and disintegration theories that attempt to explain and predict integration crises such as this one. Specifically, the thesis focuses on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, which occurred on 31 January 2020, thus Brexit plays the role of a case that is analysed in detail. The thesis is framed as a case study that aims to see whether any existing integration or disintegration theoretical approach can, on the basis of its given theses and definitions, explain the crises of European integration and identify their causes. The most relevant theories to test, which currently have something to say about disintegration, were chosen – postfunctionalism, social constructivism and the intergovernmental liberal approach. Each of these theories contains a completely different view and perspective on the development of European integration and potential crises. The main objective of the thesis is achieved through the method of congruence, where the three selected theories are successively tested and applied to the case of Brexit. The secondary objectives of the thesis are then to determine whether any selected theoretical concept was able to predict Brexit and whether it was able to assume the consequences of this unforeseen event. The project works with three hypotheses, reflecting the main tenets of the aforementioned integration theories and their perspectives on the causes of Brexit. The main finding is that social constructivists are best able to explain the causes of Brexit, as the contradiction between national and European identity, along with the lack of Europeanisation of the UK, played the biggest role. It is very important to look back at the historical context, Brexit is not the result of the events of recent years. At the same time, the results show that postfunctionalist proposals are also partly present in the Brexit case, but the politicisation of the issue and the role of public opinion is rather only one of the conditions that should be achieved for the integration crisis to actually happen. While postfunctionalists cannot explain Brexit as a crisis of European integration, they do come up with possible conditions and a timeframe. At the same time, the analysis presented here refutes the claims of proponents of the liberal intergovernmentalist approach, since, as the thesis argues, Brexit was certainly not caused by governmental negotiation, nor did it reflect the interests and economic preferences of the most influential domestic players and groups.