

SOFT VS. HARD BORDERS: WHAT LED TO BREXIT?

Adrian Nae*

Keywords: BREXIT, Eurobarometers, borders, EU, United Kingdom

Cuvinte-cheie: BREXIT, eurobarometre, frontiere, Uniunea Europeană, Regatul Unit

Preliminary observations: thesis and research questions

This article aims to explore whether BREXIT – one of the most recent and important cases of border politics – could have been in any way anticipated through an analysis of the way Britons' attitudes towards the EU changed in the last two years prior to the 2016 referendum. The stake is to draw a conclusion on whether pan-European sociological polls, such as Eurobarometer, were showing any signs of London's decision to leave the Union.

Media covered every aspect of BREXIT. There were news outlets saying that London's decision to leave the EU was an ill-informed choice of the citizens (influenced either by the internal propaganda of populist forces inside or by external narratives seeking to foment a European crisis). There are also voices claiming that the history of London's relationship with the European project was full of examples showing that the United Kingdom (UK) was never satisfied with its role within the EU. In this logic, BREXIT appears as a natural, although harsh, decision to make.

The premise of the article is that BREXIT is a case of border politics. It was a sovereign decision of the British people to leave the EU and regain total control over the external and internal affairs (*y compris* borders). In fact, regaining national border management was one of the most frequently invoked arguments of the leave camp during the campaign back in 2016.

It is also important to state that BREXIT is a case of both hard and soft border politics. Hard – because, the borders with the rest of the countries are as real as they can be, and London cannot be forced anymore to obey Brussels' directives. Soft – because BREXIT is already felt as a social separation between Britons and Europeans. The most instructive example is that of EU nationals

* Universitatea București, Facultatea de Istorie, b-dul. Regina Elisabeta, nr. 4–12, sector 1, București, e-mail: ada10adi@yahoo.com

residing UK, who have no clear idea about their legal status once the full separation between London and Brussels comes into force.

This analysis does not focus on the evaluation of the arguments of the *leave* and/or *stay* camps. The main aim is to see if the arguments of the *leave* camp (false or not) have fallen on “fertile land.” Had the British voters lost their confidence in the EU before the referendum in June 2016? The Eurobarometers were showing any signs of such a loss of confidence?

There is also a secondary another rationale for choosing a subject related soft vs. hard borders in the EU. Inside the Union there are several layers of borders and some of the most intriguing ones are those of perception (e.g.: how citizens of one state perceive others, attitudes towards Brussels, the degree of confidence in the future of the EU, etc.

As a concrete example of academic interest regarding borders of perception inside the EU it is worth mentioning a study conducted by Oorschot, Reeskens and Meuleman on how the Europeans perceive the consequences of welfare state. According to their findings, the vast majority of European countries have a positive perception on the welfare state. Still, in three countries – UK, Slovakia and Hungary – the welfare state negatively perceived.¹

The final part of the article will aim to conclude whether BREXIT is more a soft border case study or a hard border one. The answer is not at all obvious, despite the fact that London’s ultimate goal is to reinstate real/hard borders. In fact, the true problem lies in what led to BREXIT: a sense of identitarian disenfranchisement (between the British people and all the other Europeans) vs. insecurity caused by the European regulations in the field of border management.

Defining the concepts: paradigmatic narratives and limitations

Border, frontier or boundary – each of these terms designates a form of separation, both a practical and theoretical line of demarcation between something/someone that remains inside and the external milieu.

Borders represent a volatile and dynamic concept “that involve people and their everyday life.”² Beyond the confines of state borders, a frontier “feeds” herself generally from cleavages: ins and outs, generational gaps, ethnicity and culture as biases that separate or unite individuals.³

¹ Wim van Oorschot, Tim Reeskens, Bart Meuleman, “Popular perceptions of welfare state consequences: A multilevel, cross-national analysis of 25 European countries,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 22/ 2 (2012): 193.

² Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics. The Limits of Sovereign Power* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2009), 1.

³ Ibid.

Vaughan-Williams argues that in the field of International Relations the concept of border remains one of utter importance for research. Borders individualize countries and thus become a point of reference when talking about relations between state actors.⁴

Consequently, a borderless world would deprive the researchers of International Relations of a centerpiece object of study: states as individual actors that have a territorial dimension. For instance, from an idealistic perspective of a border-free world, the study of frozen conflicts would become obsolete since all of these conflicts have a clear and often militarized demarcation line, meant to separate different political interests.

Also in the logic of International Relations theory, borders are the lines that frame the limits of the state and the area of exclusive sovereignty.⁵ Through the lenses of frontiers a researcher can draw a clear distinction between national and international law.⁶

Furthermore, borders can be defined in terms of space or spatial metaphors.⁷ Löw and Weidenhaus argue that the Internet is a virtual space where the rules of the physical space are irrelevant.⁸ In itself, the Internet is a space, but not one confined to territorial rules. The Internet is a world of its own where the problem of borders is still something that requires further analysis: what should or should not be available on the Internet, censorship as a form of bordering the Internet, the privacy vs. security dilemma etc.

A demarcation line, regardless of its position is not just a gate that does not allow free passage, but also as “membrane allowing permeation”.⁹ In this logic, “borders are to be understood as relations between spaces”.¹⁰ One of the most traits of borders is the opposition that lies within: it makes a clear-cut differentiation (at least from a juridical point of view) between two territorial units.

In the same time, the border might act as a mediation tool between spaces: even though it is a demarcation line, it can still be crossed and it fuels a process of interaction and exchanges.

From a juridical point of view a border is a boundary, which in itself stands for an “imaginary line on the surface of the earth which separates the land

⁴ Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics*, 44–45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 49–51.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Martina Löw, Gunter Weidenhaus, “Borders that relate: Conceptualizing boundaries in relational space,” *Current Sociology Monograph* 65/ 4 (2017): 556.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 560.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 561.

territory or maritime zones of one State from that of another”.¹¹ This approach is very much state-focused since it is easy to grasp the fact that one of the most important characteristics of a border is to indicate the limits of a state’s sovereignty.

At least in theory, “the fact that borders formally delineate state sovereignty makes it more difficult for governments to violate the sovereignty of other countries”.¹² In the same logic, a frontier can be defined in relation to a boundary, but “it perhaps has a less exact significance, connoting a zone with width or depth as well as length”.¹³

Highly relevant for the meaning of both hard and soft borders is the definition of the bordering process: “bordering as a process is a form of sorting through the imposition of status-functions on people and things, which alters the perception of that thing by setting it within a web of normative claims, teleologies and assumptions. Bordering is, therefore, a practical activity, enacted by ordinary people as well as (nation) states”.¹⁴

Since boundary seems to be the common denominator of both border and frontier, it is important to underline the technical and practical understanding of this term. Thus, boundary is a process – the making of a boundary – “which consists of the delimitation and demarcation”.¹⁵ On the one side, “delimitation refers to the definition of a boundary in a treaty, map, or other formal document”¹⁶, while on the other hand “demarcation refers to the physical marking of the boundary on the ground with signs, posts, or fences”.¹⁷

Hard vs. Soft Borders: Traits and Particularities

The analysis of border(s) is not solely a descriptive approach. In itself, the concept of border tends to be a linear one in the sense of a demarcation line, of something that separates different kind of actors.¹⁸

Still, a border is as important as the attachment that it bears in itself – it may or may not be an important demarcation line depending on how is seen by

¹¹ John P. Grant, J. Craig Barker, *Parry and Grant Encyclopedic Dictionary of International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

¹² Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Leonardo Morlino, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (SAGE Publications, 2011), 268.

¹³ Grant, Barker, *Parry and Grant*, 229.

¹⁴ Anthony Cooper, Chris Perkins, “Borders and status-functions: An institutional approach to the study of borders,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 15/ 1 (2012): 57.

¹⁵ George Thomas Kurian, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Political Science* (CQ Press, 2011), 147.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cooper, Perkins, “Borders and status-functions,” 58.

those affected by it. A frontier can emulate a sense of belonging or one of separation depending on what was designed to be or on what it has come to mean. In time, the importance of a border may fade away or may become stronger depending on subjective perceptions or objective realities.¹⁹

A border represents not only a hard evidence (in the sense that trespassing is a felony) but also it is also a narrative boundary based on historical conditions.²⁰ Thus, borders can be divided into two main categories: a) hard borders, institutionalized ones that are encoded in treaties and b) soft borders – enshrined in a sort of social DNA and embedded in the image that we have about ourselves and about others.²¹

These soft borders indicate a “pre-institutional social theory” that legitimize and strengthen the hard frontiers.²² The case of Europe is illustrative in this respect because there are common values that define the Europeans (values that can be envisaged as soft borders) and there are also frontiers that delimitate Europe as a continent and territorial actor (hard borders).²³

The soft borders upon which rest the hard ones are the product of shared and common stories that bring people together and define a sense of unity.²⁴ These stories can rely on various types of messages, ideas, perceptions and common beliefs dependent on the community (e.g.: at its core, Europe defines itself as an international actor embracing diversity that nonetheless has a shared backbone of common cultural, identitarian and political values).²⁵

All of the practical and concrete definitions of borders are of paramount importance even if the nowadays’ society is a strongly globalized one, with a high degree of interconnectedness from an economic and/or political standpoint. Such an interlinked society is not evolving towards a borderless world, but – as the current worldwide events show us – in somehow quite the opposite direction – a global society where state sovereignty finds its way to the center stage of world politics.

Étienne Balibar interestingly explains globalization, the phenomenon that should have ended borders all around the world. He argues that the process of globalization has appeared only in some political conjunctures, and one of the pillars of this phenomenon is the surge of transnational corporations. Having

¹⁹ Ibid., 59.

²⁰ Klaus Eder, “Europe’s Borders. The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9/ 2 (2006): 255–256.

²¹ Ibid., 255–256.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 260.

²⁵ Ibid.

economic power, transnational corporations extend beyond the limits of one state and thus gain the ability to influence the development of countries where they reside in. They are able to shift their activities to different corners of the world in search for cheaper or more educated labor force.²⁶

Moreover, in recent years, the academic community has seen a surge in borders studies, one that transcends disciplines and classical areas of studies. Such an increase in the interest for studying borders could seem counter-intuitive since we live in a globalized world where borders were said to be obsolete and condemned to slowly fade away.²⁷

One explanation resides on the fact that borders are not just what the eyes can see, but also what the minds and souls can feel. They create cleavages between ins and outs and enforce the existence of multiple societies and practices of communication.²⁸

There are at least three events evocative for this trend of state actors that build their strong restatement of sovereignty on the question of borders and frontiers.

A highly controversial theme during president's Trump electoral campaign was his idea to build a wall between US and Mexico. The aim was to restrict the flow of so-called illegal immigrants that were pouring on American soil.

The intention has not materialized yet, but even after Donald Trump became president, the idea of reinforcing border control at the frontier with Mexico remains a topic on the US presidential agenda. One of the most recent examples in this respect is the decision of the states of Texas and Arizona to send the National Guard to patrol the border with Mexico.²⁹

Reinforcing the state control over the US-Mexico frontier is a proof of how a border represents a clear statement of separation between the *INS* and the *OUTS*. In this case, the border stands for a means of protection of the *INS* against the *OUTS*. This dispute over border control in the US has been portrayed in many ways – part of the measures meant to make America great again (presidential camp) vs. a form of violent and unlawful autarchy, disrespect for the globalized world and diversity (anti-presidential camp).

Irrespective of these interpretations, what really stands out from this

²⁶ Étienne Balibar, *We, the people of Europe. Reflections on transnational citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 167.

²⁷ David Newman, "Borders and Bordering. Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9/ 2 (2006): 172.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ According to the article "Trump immigration: Texas sends National Guard to Mexico border," available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43678961>, last accessed: 9th of April 2018.

conundrum is that even though we live in a world that seemingly has evolved towards a border-free status, the concept of border – as a line of territorial and identitarian demarcation – tends to reassert itself more and more prominently.³⁰

Another recent example of border politics took place once the EU had to deal with the wave of migrants caused by the war in Syria. The migrants' bid to access EU countries has brought to the general attention the importance of borders and also the fact that the Union is seen as a safe haven of economic prosperity by the less fortunate asylum seekers who come from conflict areas.

If a border exists then it is safe to presume that there will be people who would want to cross it. This is true for the hard borders (where crossing is strictly regulated) and for the soft borders/boundaries (where there can be a "passage" from a certain social group to another).³¹ Sometimes, it can be more difficult to cross a boundary, then to cross a state border since the demarcation lines between boundaries are strictly related to identity thus making it more difficult for people to abandon their predetermined spaces of belonging.³²

There are also cases where a person has to pass both a material border and an invisible one (e.g.: the migrants – both the job seekers and those who have fled their native countries in order to escape war).³³

Often, it can prove to be extremely difficult to cross both of these frontiers. One might get lucky enough to find residence in the country of his dreams, but might not adapt to the new social and cultural milieu. On the other hand, in times of conflict and great turmoil (like the contemporary conflict in the Middle East), one has to risk his life in order to find a breach allowing him the passage to a "war-free-area."

In the wake of the refugee crisis, the EU faced a severe influx of migrants – a situation that proved that borders were not (yet) an obsolete concept. The crisis challenged both the European national law enforcement bodies but also indicated a weak point of the EU, one pointed out by Charles Watters more than 10 years before the current crisis unfolded: the institutional mechanisms meant to select those who deserve to enter Europe.³⁴

This example is relevant to this research since the sense of insecurity associated with refugees – narratives like "migrants might conduct terrorist attacks on British soil" – were heavily exploited by the leave camp³⁵ during the BREXIT

³⁰ Cooper, Perkins, "Borders and status-functions," 56.

³¹ Newman, "Borders and Bordering," 178.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 179.

³⁴ Charles Watters, *Refugees at Europe's Borders: The Moral Economy of Care* (Transcultural Psychiatry, September, 2007), 397.

³⁵ According to the article "Safer in or out of EU? Why security is key to Brexit vote," available

referendum. This offers a glimpse on the fact that BREXIT was about hard borders (the desire to strictly control who enters the Kingdom) as it was about soft borders (since a part of the British people felt uncomfortable with the policies influenced by other European leaders, such as German chancellor Angela Merkel, who often spoke in favor of migrants).

Could BREXIT Have Been Predicted? Relevant Eurobarometer Data

This part of the article seeks to identify topics/questions from Standard Eurobarometer studies, conducted between 2013 and 2016, that could be linked to London's decision to leave the EU.

The Eurobarometers, series of sociological surveys under the auspices of the European Commission, aim to evaluate the public opinion in the EU. The questions are organized around major topics (e.g. economic situation in the EU, main concerns for Europeans, attachment to the idea of Europe etc.). Usually, there are two standard Eurobarometers per year (in Spring and in Autumn). Occasionally, the Commission publishes special Eurobarometers on specific topics (e.g. Future of Europe, Media pluralism, Digital Single Market etc.).

The main analytical endeavor of this research paper is to identify the questions that offer clues about Britons' feelings towards the EU in the above mentioned period of time. Identifying these questions is essential since they are the ones that can offer (or not) a clear picture about the slowly appearance of soft borders between the Brits and the rest of the Europeans.

After a close examination of all the recurrent questions in the Eurobarometers and their relevance to the idea of soft border (as defined above), the following ones stand out as relevant for the purpose of this research:

1. *Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?* The question is relevant since it shows the degree of attachment to the idea of the EU as a political project. Since no one wants to be part of a (perceived) failing political project, a high ratio of pessimists is an indicator for the "appearance" of an "unseen border";

2. *You feel you are a citizen of the EU?* Like in the case of the previous question, the answers for this one speak about the degree of attachment to the EU. One is prone to leave a certain community if he or she no longer feels to be a part of it. It is the same with BREXIT: the "surprise" of leaving the EU is not such a big surprise, if during a certain period of time the idea of being part of the European family starts to fade away in people's perception.

There are two main reasons for choosing 2013 as a benchmark year:

at <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/21/europe/brexit-security-debate-robertson/index.html>, last accessed: 15th of April 2018.

– first of all, since 2013 both of the above mentioned questions are part of the Eurobarometer. Continuity is important in order to see how the perceptions towards the EU have evolved over time;

– second of all, 2013 marks an important moment in the recent history of the EU. Europe was confronted with a severe economic crisis that tested the solidarity of EU's member states and their ability to come up with viable solutions needed to save Greece from bankruptcy – a scenario that threatened to endanger the whole European bloc.

After a first bailout in May 2010 – of 110 billion euros, provided by the International Monetary Fund and the EU – a second one, worth 130 billion euros, was approved on February 21st 2012.³⁶ Therefore, 2013 was a year of testing the solution of the new bailout, a year of socio-political uncertainties that were felt not only in Greece or Brussels but also in London.

After stating the purposes for choosing certain questions from the Eurobarometers and the reason for the analytical period, it is important to look at some specific results drawn from the public opinion surveys.

Concerning the way that the citizens of UK perceived the Future of the EU, some conclusions are noteworthy. As presented in *Figure 1 – The Future of the EU*³⁷ the peak of optimism was in Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015 with 49% of the respondents being optimistic towards what lied ahead for the Union. The main question that arises is *What caused this wave of optimism?*, since, only a few months before, in Spring 2014, optimism was at 44%.

This surge of optimism can be explained through a close look at what happened on London's political stage. Quite important from a domestic point of view, UK had just escaped the perspective of dissolution since the Scottish independence referendum had not passed on September the 18th. The Eurobarometer Autumn 2014 survey was conducted in November 2014 so it is natural that a certain sense of unity and optimism towards the future (in general) was predominant in the British society.

Still, what is striking is that from a European point of view, Britain's optimism is not that extraordinary. In the same period, the European average of optimism towards the future of the EU was 56%. In addition, other European super-powers like France and Germany had a ratio of optimism of 50%, respectively 59%.

³⁶ According to the article "Greece's Debt. 1974–2017," available at <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/greeces-debt-crisis-timeline>, last accessed 30th of April 2018.

³⁷ Based on the results identified in EU standard Eurobarometers 79 (Spring 2013) to 85 (Spring 2016), available at <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD&yearFrom=1974&yearTo=2016>, last accessed: 1st of May 2018.

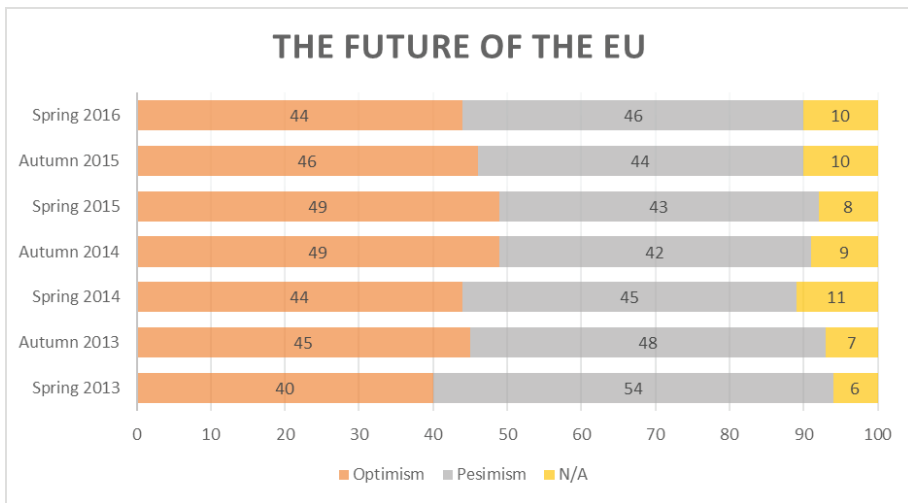


Figure 1

To sum up, seen in perspective, UK's optimism was a one of mere conjuncture (caused mainly by domestic reasons). Moreover, in European perspective, UK's ratio of optimism is one of the lowest, more "un-optimistic" than Britain were Italy, Cyprus and Greece – all of these countries having to deal with severe economic difficulties and no reasons to feel optimistic about the future.

After these peaks from Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015, the optimism has steadily decreased to 44% prior to BREXIT vote. Again, the degree of optimism has to be correlated with domestic and/or regional developments. For instance, the EU countries were confronted with the migrant crisis that unfolded in 2015 and was still ongoing. This can explain the lack of optimism in Germany (40%) and in France (44%), both of them affected by this phenomenon.

It is quite interesting to see that both France and UK have the same percentage of optimists towards the future of the EU even though French authorities were much more affected by the migrant crisis than their British counterparts.

The way that the citizens of UK perceived themselves as citizens of the EU is shown in *Figure 2 – Citizens of the EU*.³⁸

The results to this question/topic need to be understood in correlation with those from the previous one regarding the future of the EU. Moreover, just like in the case of future of the EU, the results have to be interpreted from a domestic (British) point of view and from a European one.

³⁸ Based on the results identified in EU standard Eurobarometers 79 (Spring 2013) to 85 (Spring 2016), available at <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD&yearFrom=1974&yearTo=2016>, last accessed: 1st of May 2018.

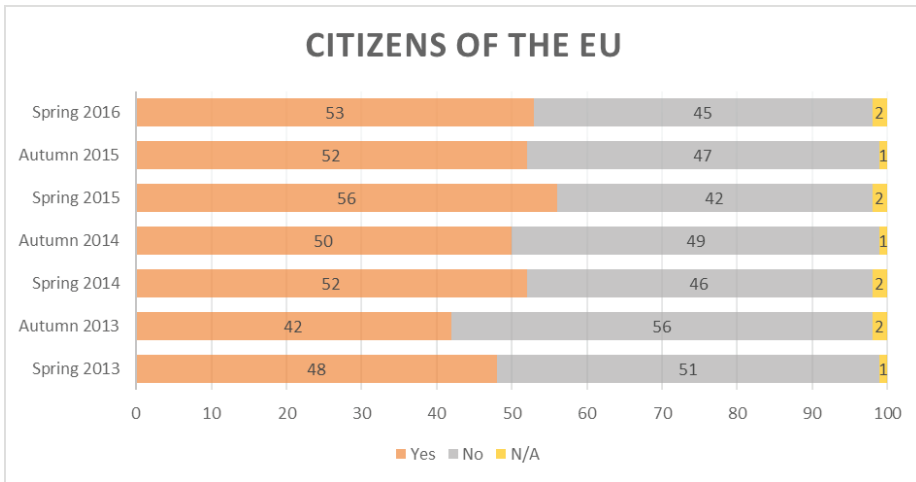


Figure 2

What is striking about the results is that they show no trend and apparently no correlation can be drawn from Britons's perception towards EU citizenship and BREXIT. Not even those who abstained (haven't answered) aren't that many, therefore they couldn't have been the decisive factor for BREXIT.

Even though this graph doesn't show a clear trend, it is important because it confirms previous conclusions drawn from Figure 1.

The Spring and Autumn 2013 indicate the lowest results in terms of British citizens that feel that they are also European citizens (*Figure 2*). Moreover, a close look at the results for Spring 2013 in *Figure 1* shows that the level of optimism is at the lowest point: both results – in Figure 1 & 2 can be explained by the economic hardships of the EU due to the bailout for Greece.

From Autumn 2013 to Spring 2014 there is a massive surge of people from UK who feel European. The 10% rise could seem impressive but in European perspective it is not a game changer. Even with 52% of "Europeans", UK ranks among the last five countries in the Eurobarometer (only Greece, Italy and Bulgaria feel less European than UK). In addition, UK lags way behind the EU average (65%), France (63%) and Germany (79%).

Just like in the case of Figure 1, there is a peak of optimism in the Spring 2015, and the explanation remains the same: UK got through the Scottish independence referendum and people were animated by a sense of unity which reverberated in their attitudes towards the EU. Still, even under these circumstances, with 56% of citizens who feel European, UK is on one of the last places in Europe, 11% behind the EU average, 5% less than France and a staggering 25% difference to Germany.

Once more, after this “false peak”, the feeling of being a European citizen dropped to 53% prior to BREXIT vote.

Conclusions

The present research had two specific goals: to underline the theoretical differences between hard and soft borders (by emphasizing the characteristics of the latter ones) and to try to present an explanatory scheme for the appearance of soft and hard borders right at the heart of the EU (the BREXIT case).

The premise of the research was that BREXIT is a case of both soft and hard borders. From a political and legal point of view, the process of re-establishing hard borders between the UK and the rest of Europe is still underway. The challenging part is to see what led BREXIT and to point out the changes in attitudes that led to the “exit”.

In order to have a clear picture on attitudes and perceptions, the research focused on the Eurobarometers surveys conducted between 2013 and 2016. The answers to two questions in these surveys were analyzed: “Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU? and You feel you are a citizen of the EU?”

By themselves, the data from the Eurobarometers were of no use in order to anticipate BREXIT. They had to be correlated with developments on British and European political arena in order to have a broader perspective of the attitudes of British citizens towards the EU.

Finally, two things must be remembered in order to emphasize the limits of this analysis:

- BREXIT had a trigger. Without the decision of local authorities to hold a referendum, the attitudes shown by Eurobarometers and the correlation with other local/regional developments would have had only a sociological relevance. They became political relevant only when a political process – like the BREXIT referendum – was set in motion;

- UK is one of the few countries of the EU who could/can afford the costs of leaving the EU. Disenfranchisement towards the EU is experienced by other countries who feel neglected by the EU, manifest anxiety towards the future of the Union or don't feel European enough.

Nevertheless, UK had/has much more political and economic clout than the majority of EU's dissatisfied countries. States like Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus or even Italy or Spain cannot afford the economic costs of leaving the Union. Also, from a political perspective, UK has a vast array of international partners on the world stage (the United States of America are their prime and natural partner) being therefore able to partially compensate the 2016 exit.

FRONTIERE SLABE VS. FRONTIERE SOLIDE: CE A CONDUS SPRE BREXIT?

Rezumat

Sunt frontierele și granițele doar linii de demarcație care stabilesc perimetre între cei din interior și cei din exterior? Sau există mai mult decât ceea ce vedem la prima vedere? Literatura despre studiile de frontieră subliniază atât dimensiunile practice (trecerea ilegală a unei frontiere reprezintă o infracțiune și are consecințe juridice), cât și aspectele metafizice care rezidă în acest concept (frontierele sunt sculptate de identitățile noastre și de sentimentul nostru de apartenență). Dincolo de implicațiile teoretice ale frontierelor, acest articol își propune să abordeze un aspect mai practic și contemporan: decizia Regatului Unit de a părăsi Uniunea Europeană. Într-o societate globalizată, caracterizată de interconexiuni politice, economice și sociale, BREXIT-ul reprezintă de facto trasarea unei frontiere într-o lume care se presupunea că devine fără frontiere. Concluzia, deschisă pentru dezbatere ulterioare, este că BREXIT-ul putea fi prevăzut, dar numai prin interpretarea datelor sociologice din Eurobarometre, în contextul mai larg al politicilor britanice și europene.