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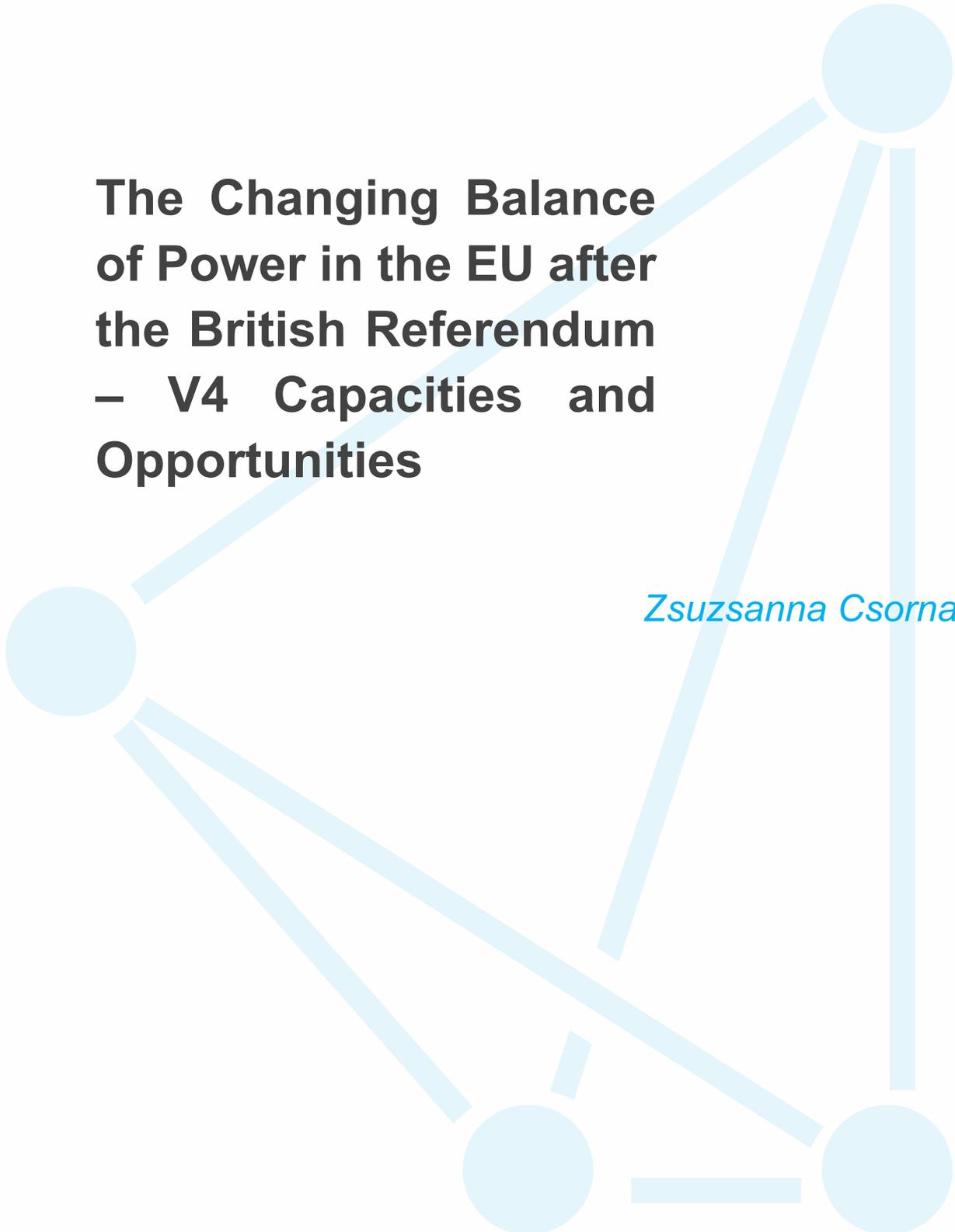
POLICY BRIEF

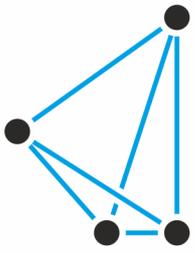
2017/March

Think Visegrad in Brussels

The Changing Balance of Power in the EU after the British Referendum – V4 Capacities and Opportunities

Zsuzsanna Csornai





Main Research Question

The main aim of this study is to analyze the balance of power within the European Union among Member States both in terms of capacities from the realist point of view¹ and in terms of bargaining power in EU institutions.² This study intends to explore whether any member state or coalition could replace the UK within the EU and carry its liberal, market-oriented agenda, and examines if a certain political agenda could be favoured with the planned exit of the UK.

The policy brief applies the balance of power and integration theories in order to define reference points for research.

The United Kingdom is a decisive and leading power within the European Union: it has the third biggest population, the second largest GDP after Germany and is the largest military spender in absolute terms. With this significant Member State of the EU leaving, Brexit could entail direct changes in the medium term, as the negotiation process with the UK follows its course and the contours of the UK's relationship with the EU are defined.³ This policy brief is based on the current circumstances and assesses probable and possible changes in the balance of power between, the member states, and takes into consideration the advocacy opportunities for the V4.

As a change of the Lisbon Treaty is not on the agenda, this policy brief will analyze the political changes and circumstances rather than legal ones. The policy brief will analyze the voting system and coalition-forming behaviors, with an intent focus on the EMU, Internal Market and CSFP realms. While studying the changing balance of power in the EU as a whole, this policy brief will examine the advocacy role and capacities of Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) in these changing circumstances.

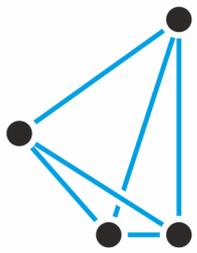
Balance of Power

The balance of power theory is a realist theory, which does not take into account the features of institutionalization in the classical way, but that provides an interesting

¹ According to theory of realism, nation-states enforce their interests by profit maximization in terms of their capacities, such as population, military capabilities and economic growth.

² The study does not analyse the role of the European Parliament and the Commission, only the Council.

³ The negotiation process will last at least two years starting by invoking Article 50.



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framework for examining policy development considering the changing parity among the Member States of the European Union.

The theory of balance of power takes the nation-states as the primary actors of international relations (Romsics, 2009). Regarding the European Union, nation-states are also decision-making actors, but mostly sharing sovereignty. In the Council formulations, countries represent themselves as nation-states and have different weights and opportunities in different voting systems. In the classical balance of power theory, nation-states enforce their interests by profit maximization according to their capacities (Romsics, 2009). The concept of abilities will be examined in further detail in the part on capacities.

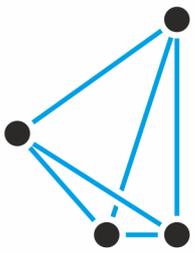
According to the theory of the reassessment of the balance of power, there are two forms of alliances between nation-states. Both of them are based on the preservation of their own security: the first case deals with the possible rise of a hegemon and the formation of a coalition to prevent this rise; the other case plans that alliances could exist without any individual aspiration to become a hegemon, based solely on the preservation of security of nation-states. (Little, 2007)

In the EU decision-making process, coalition-forming plays a crucial role in the advocacy phase, while also preventing the rise of a hegemon that could control the process. The voting system and coalition-forming behaviours will be detailed later on.

In parallel, the integration theories, which enable increasing the nation-states' profit by surrendering certain parts of their sovereignties to a federal-type government, cannot be ignored in the analysis of the European Union's institutional, legal and decision-making system. There are two main types of institutional cooperation within the EU: intergovernmental and federal. According to the intergovernmental approach, national parliaments are the primary players in shaping the integration process, in which they participate despite having waived certain parts of their sovereignty. The federal approach is the opposite: it assumes the primacy of supranational governance, where national parliaments do not maintain a decision-making role. The policy brief will reflect on both approaches concerning different policies (EMU, CSFP).

Capacities

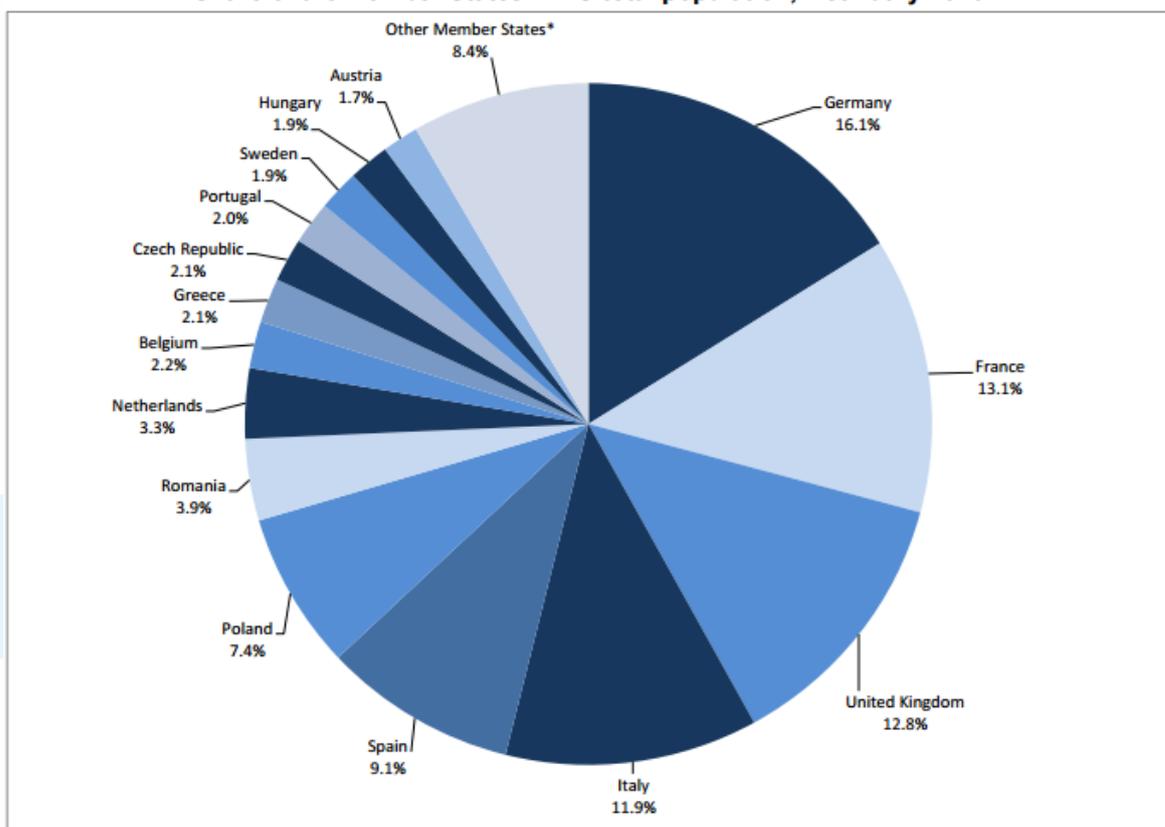
The capacities are the resources the state possesses and which serve as bargaining tools in enforcing its interests in international relations. According to realist theories, a state's advocacy skill can be determined by its capacities and related opportunities. In rating capacities, population and military can be perceived as a hard



power, diplomacy, development aid and values transmission as a soft power, as well as the economy in between the two extremes (Balogh, 2013).

Regarding population, EU member states can be divided in two categories: the large states, namely Germany, France, UK, Italy, Spain and Poland, and the small ones being the other twenty-two.

Share of the Member States in EU total population, 1 January 2016

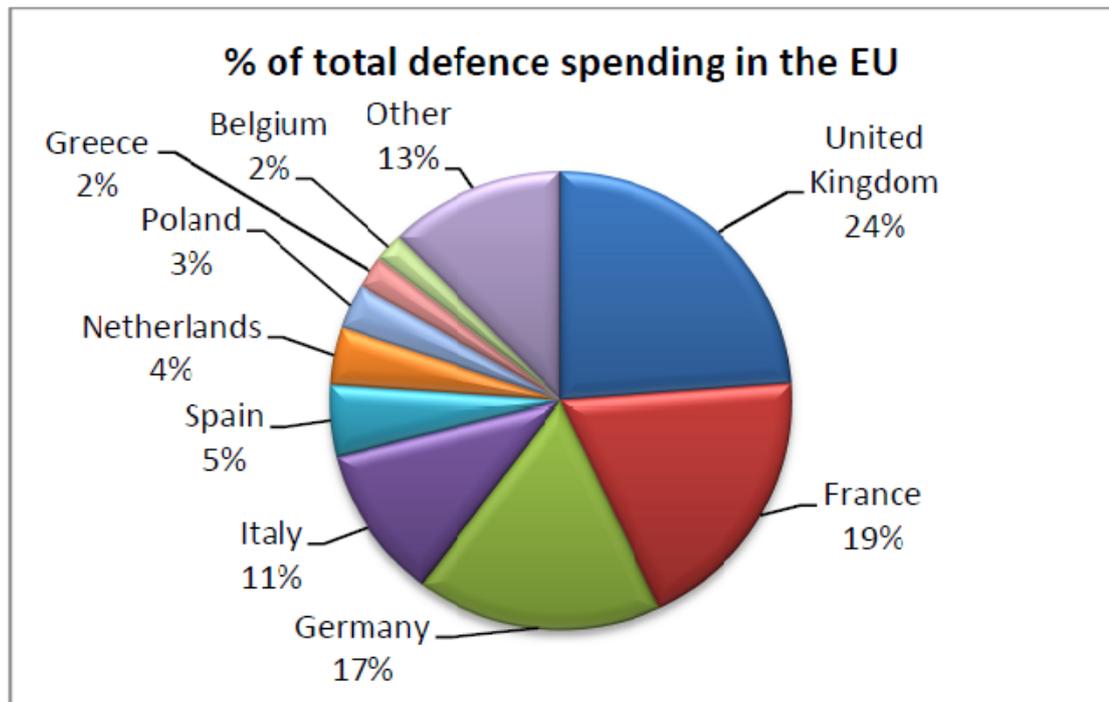
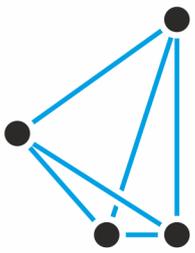


* Less than 1.5% each: Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Slovakia, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta.

Source: Eurostat

Regarding economic performance, measured in terms of nominal GDP, the ranking is similar: the most significant member states are Germany, the UK, France and Italy, followed by Spain and the Netherlands, with others being less significant in comparison. (Appendix 1: List of European countries by GDP)

In terms of military expenditures, member states with larger populations top the list but in reversed order: the largest military contributor is the UK, followed by France, Germany and Italy. Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden and Poland can be characterized as middle-size contributors. The contribution of the top four countries is disproportionately higher than in the other measured metrics.



Source: Openeuropeblog:

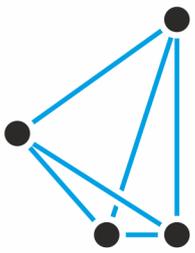
<http://openeuropeblog.blogspot.hu/2013/04/britian-would-integral-part-of.html>

Considering the V4 countries, Poland stands out from the others both in terms of population and military expenditure. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia do not possess significant amount of resources comparing to largest Member States. Therefore, the V4 as a coalition-group cannot translate its capacities into advocacy within the EU. Poland's capacities indeed serve V4 advocacy, but there are a number of issues on which V4 countries do not see eye to eye and therefore cannot use Polish capacities.

Voting System and Coalition-forming

The primary forum in which nation states articulate their interests is the Council in its different formations. There are three different types of voting systems in the Council: the simple majority (commonly used for procedural decisions), qualified majority voting (QMV) and unanimity voting. As simple majority voting concerns non-political issues, we will focus on the QMV and the unanimity voting systems. The Lisbon Treaty expanded the list of areas where decisions are made by QMV, but there are still some where unanimity prevails, such as CFSP.

Considering the V4 countries, Poland stands out from the others both in terms of population and military expenditure. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia do not



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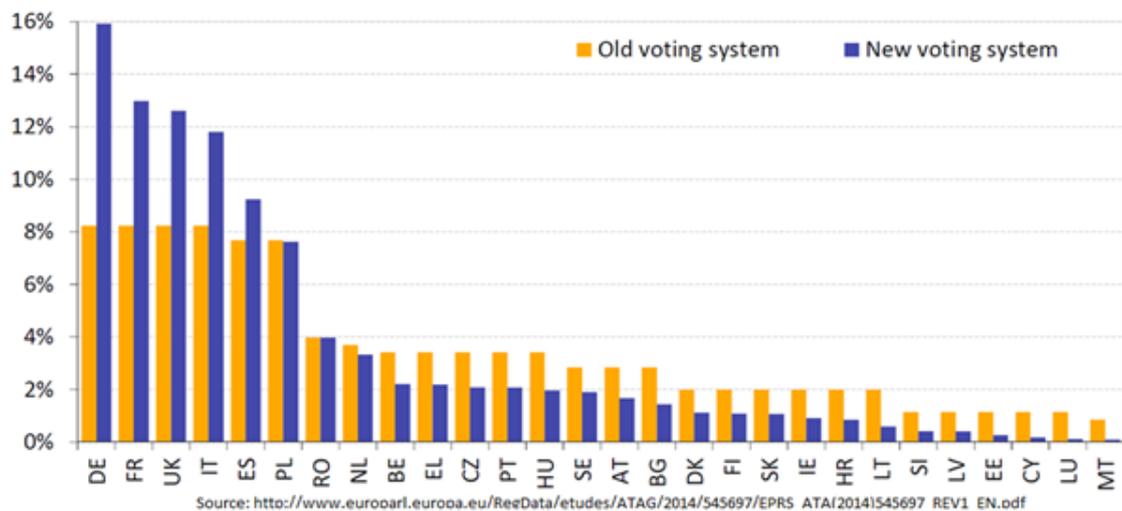
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possess significant amount of resources comparing to largest Member States. Therefore, the V4 as a coalition-group cannot translate its capacities into advocacy within the EU. Poland's capacities indeed serve V4 advocacy, but there are a number of issues on which V4 countries do not see eye to eye and therefore cannot use Polish capacities.

The old voting system of the Council means that each Member State received a precise number of votes, proportional to their size of their population. On the contrary, in the new voting system - which will be valid from March 2017, QMV decisions will need to respect the double-majority principle: any vote will have to be supported by representatives of 65% of the total EU population, on top of 55% of the Member States (Consilium: Voting System, 2016). Since this mechanism favors the Member States with larger populations, the possibility of blocking minorities was introduced in order to represent the interests of smaller states as well (at least four Member States representing at least the 35% of the total EU population), creating a de facto veto.

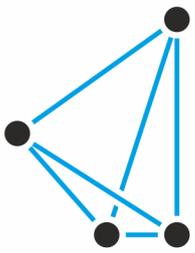
In the case of the formation of coalitions, the blocking minority could be a useful tool; however, the 35% of population requirement does not allow for advocacy by solely small states, who need at least one larger state in order to enforce their interests, which

Comparison of voting weights prior to and after 1 November 2014



is especially true for the V4 (V4 population representing at the moment around 12.5%, 14.34% after the UK leaves the EU).⁴

⁴ Even a coalition between V4 and Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands) could reach only 21% of total population, which is still insufficient.



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The United Kingdom's future exit, with the third largest population in the EU (65 million as of 1 January 2016) means a significant loss in advocacy capacities for like-minded countries - especially the smaller ones - who shared interests with the UK.

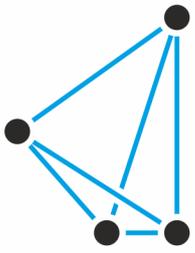
Both the literature and personal interviews in Brussels at Permanent Representations underlined that the coalition-forming procedures start long before Council meetings, with informal meetings, and that decisions are thus often made and coordinated at the COREPER level or in Working Groups.

Coalition-forming takes place through matching interests and political bargaining. According to Vaughn Miller's categorization, there are four types of coalition-forming within the Council: the silent majority; the vocal minority; the UK, who represents a separate standpoint most of the time; and Germany and Austria, who do not belong to any constant coalition. According to Miller, Germany and Austria do not participate in permanent coalitions, such as regarding the liberal market-oriented economy: their decisions are rather pragmatic and follow their own interests. Member States who belong to the silent majority vote in a certain direction in order to avoid being outvoted on the specific issue; this is especially the case of France and Spain who represent the most frequent coalition in the silent majority (Miller, 2013). The vocal minority is composed of member states who vote in favour of their standpoint, even if outvoting is probable.

Based on surveys, Member States who joined the EU after 2004 tend to vote more frequently with the Northern countries than the Southern ones, and Nordic countries vote more in favour of the UK's decisions based on a market-oriented and pro-competitiveness economic policy, staying away from French, Spanish or Italian economic approaches and coalition-forming.

Another categorization points towards ad-hoc and institutionalized coalitions. Ad-hoc coalitions consist of like-minded countries that base their agreement on common preferences on a particular issue. Institutional coalitions come into existence based on cultural affinities or geographical proximity. Good examples of this type of coalitions are the Nordic countries, the Benelux states, V4 countries and even sometimes the Germany-France axis.

The UK's separate standpoint appears mostly in the case of the Economic and Monetary Policy of the EU, as the Eurogroup outvoted the UK most of the times. Nordic countries often voted with the UK as an economic liberal alliance on the internal market. Eastern member states vote with UK mostly on smarter regulation, including the digital single market. Finally, the UK was a traditional ally for Germany in terms of financial services against France, representing a traditionally more permissive policy.



Based on the voting-system within the Council and considering the V4's size, it is recommended, if not obligatory, to seek allies in certain issues in order to enforce their interests. Without the UK, achieving a high position for liberal market economy on the political agenda could prove to be a challenge. As the Member States that joined the EU in 2004 tend to vote more frequently with the Northern countries on a market-oriented approach, the interests of V4 countries could be enforced by supporting another large-size Member State instead of UK. This Member State could most probably be Germany, based on the argument that it does not typically vote within a set coalition, contrary to other large Member States such as Italy or France. Nordic countries could not be effective allies for V4 without the UK, because their combined population is not sufficient to achieve even a blocking minority. Thus, in order to maintain or increase the V4's bargaining power, Germany's preferences and interests need to be taken into consideration, especially on economic issues.

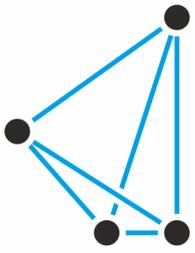
Policies

Regarding the Economic and Monetary Union, the V4 will lose in the UK a significant ally in enforcing the interests of non-Eurozone countries. With the QMV being the voting system on EMU matters, and the 19-strong Eurozone satisfying the conditions of a successful vote, Brexit could actually speed up the process of Eurozone accession in order for non-members to influence decision-making.

Nonetheless, the current, non-Eurozone, V4 governments do not intend to introduce the euro anytime soon,⁵ aided by lack of popular support due to the recent financial crisis. Considering the increasing pressure of joining the monetary union for non-eurozone countries due to the UK's departure, V4 countries have an even clearer interest in introducing the Euro.

Regarding the common monetary policy, German and French approaches greatly differ, as France promotes a permissive fiscal and monetary policy and Germany a more restrictive one. Thus, with Brexit, the North-South division line could be further strengthened. France, with its larger population, can conceivably take advantage of the vacuum that will be created by Brexit and increase its economic and political weight within the EU. Germany's interest would be to strengthen the policies of the Nordic countries in opposition to the French and Mediterranean economic approach, one that could be beneficial for the V4 as well.

⁵ Except Slovakia, which is already part of the Eurozone.



In the case of the Internal Market, the UK pushed strongly to complete the service market, a view the V4 shares especially considering the digital service market. Germany, on the other hand, wants to hinder the completion of the service market while France is against the free flow of capitals.

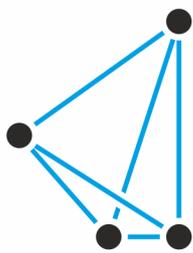
Thus, Brexit could undermine the deepening of the internal market and the V4 lose a significant ally for the completion of the service market. The V4's advocacy role in completion of internal service market will be decreased, with their only reliable allies being the Nordic countries whose size does not allow for the formation of a majority coalition. Thus, the V4 will likely have to compromise with larger Member States on certain issues related to the service market.

The Common Foreign and Security Policy is one of the few policies where the required decision-making process is unanimity. Thus, coalition-forming plays a less important role than in the QMV-voting system; informal meetings however also remain important regarding defense policy. Although the Lisbon Treaty introduced some developments in terms of institutionalization, such as introducing the position of High Representative and the European External Action Service, foreign policy remains largely intergovernmental.

Since the UK was always the main opponent of an integrated defense policy, a clear window of opportunity has opened for deeper integration in which France could increase its leverage given their status as the second largest contributor of military expenditure following the UK. Due to the UK's departure, Germany and France have much more leverage in implementing the deepening defense policy, which has been underlined by the common statements of these two states on strengthening the cohesion of European Defense Policy. The V4 countries are also interested in a strong common foreign policy, and could in this case benefit from Brexit.

Besides strengthening common foreign and security policy, Brexit could provide a good opportunity for the V4 countries: especially for Poland in terms of transatlantic relations. Due to losing UK's special relationship with the USA, Poland could increase its advocacy role in transatlantic relations.

Regarding other V4 countries, due to leaving UK's harshest promoter of imposing sanctions against Russia within the EU, Hungary's and Slovakia's Russian policy could achieve leverage.



Conclusion

At this point, it is unlikely that any of the Member States could directly replace the role of the United Kingdom. Smaller coalitions are probable in certain cases: most especially, the German-French axis could play a more significant role in leadership than before, depending on the results of next year's elections. While the decision-making process could become more efficient in the Council, the role and influence of the V4's role could become less significant.

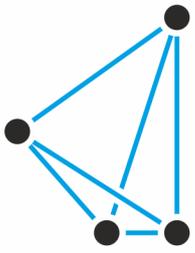
On the one hand, Brexit could lead to a strengthened and deeper integration on certain policies, such as the EMU and CFSP, but on the other, could reorganize the balance of power within the EU among the Member States due to the loss of a significant advocate of a liberal, market-oriented economic approach and be followed by difficulties in completing the service market. This could contribute to reorganizing the balance of power within the EU among Member States and increasing France's leadership. Personal interviews with practicing diplomats in Brussels at V4 Permanent Representations and literature underline the possible emerging role of France, which could take advantage of the effects of Brexit in the realm of CFSP as well and increase its role, based on its significant levels of military spending in comparison with other Member States.

In these changing circumstances, Germany should assume a greater role as well. As the largest economy in the EU, Germany's potential mechanically increases with the loss of another significant economy while at the same providing a natural counterweight to the increasing role of France. Therefore, Germany's central role in maintaining the balance within the EU will become significantly more important.

The decision-making process could be more efficient, the UK's obstructionism on certain dossiers no longer representing an obstacle to moving forward when there is a consensus in the Council. In case of decision by unanimity the efficiency could be realized unequivocal, such as relating CSFP issues. At the same time, QMV-voting will be more efficient as well, because the UK's large population meant it could provide a blocking minority in any voting process, especially with the UK having voted separately from other member states most of the time (except for its alliance with Nordic countries on market-related issues).

There is a real possibility that the V4 will lose its advocacy power, based on at least the three following elements:

- Germany's and France's matching interests in competitiveness and the service market, go against V4 interests



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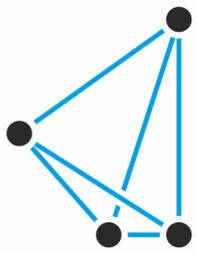
- the strengthening of state-oriented economic policies, including regarding monetary policy,
- overall, the loss of the UK as an ally means a less significant role in the Council for the V4.

The prospect of Brexit means that V4 countries will likely have to look towards Germany to ensure the continued defense of their interest,⁶ meaning that the region should also be ready to make compromises on certain issues if the region wants to continue to paint itself as one of the winners (among the smaller member states) of a post-Brexit EU.

Zsuzsanna Csornai

Zsuzsanna got her BA degree from Pázmány Péter Catholic University and she holds an MA degree in International Studies from Corvinus University of Budapest. She started working as a project coordinator in 2014 at the Hungarian Institute on International Affairs, the predecessor of IFAT. She managed several domestic and International projects and she is in charge of the ongoing MENARA (Middle-East and North Africa Regional Architecture) and EuroMesco (Mapping Migration Challenges in the EU Transit and Destination Countries) projects as well. As an analyst she focuses on the European Union, particularly Brexit and its consequences and perspectives of EU's reform. She is in charge of coordinating the major international projects of IFAT.

⁶ Bandwagon means a popular party, faction, or cause that attracts growing support (Merriam-Webster). In this case, V4 will join more often to Germany's decision in order to enforcing their interests, because Germany has more potential in advocacy and coalition-forming could be more profitable.



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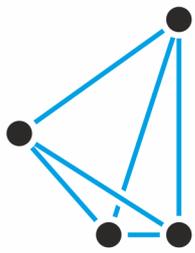
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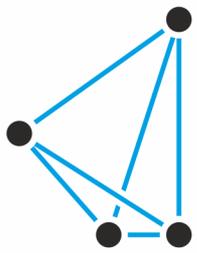
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Personal Interviews with practicing diplomats in Brussels at Permanent Representatives



Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Think Visegrad Fellowship, I received an opportunity to meet with policy practitioners and diplomats in Permanent Representations of certain Member States, providing me with a more comprehensive and complex picture on the bargaining mechanisms in the EU. Besides conducting interviews with competent diplomats, the research is based on the literature on member states' EU policy, on conceptualizing, on differentiating between the political and economic approaches of MSs. To single out some useful material: *The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual perspectives* provided a great help in conceptualizing, *European integration and evolution of economic state capacities in the Southern and Eastern peripheries of Europe* was extremely useful in understanding the division of Southern and Eastern member states' approach and *Factors Producing Coalition in the EU Council Negotiations with Different Heterogeneity of the Member States' Policy Preferences* gave a comprehensive perspective on coalition-forming trends. Furthermore in the case of V4 countries, the *How much do we matter* project of EUROPEUM provided me a great opportunity to become more familiar with the V4's EU policies in detail.

Appendix 1: List of European Countries by GDP

		Source		International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook (April-2015)						
		Last Updated		03 Sep 2015						
Country	GDP (Nominal) (billions of \$)			Rank (Nominal)		GDP (PPP) (billions of Int. \$)			Rank (PPP)	
	2013	2014	change	Europe	World	2013	2014	change	Europe	World
Albania	12.916	13.262	0.346	39	125	30.462	31.556	1.094	37	117
Armenia	10.431	10.279	-0.152	42	136	23.139	24.282	1.143	40	130
Austria	428.456	437.123	8.667	14	28	388.486	395.490	7.004	13	45
Azerbaijan	73.537	74.145	0.608	26	68	158.518	165.320	6.802	25	67
Belarus	71.710	76.139	4.429	25	66	166.786	171.952	5.166	24	65
Belgium	524.970	534.672	9.702	12	25	469.659	481.474	11.815	10	38
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17.852	17.977	0.125	36	109	37.219	38.064	0.845	34	108
Bulgaria	54.517	55.837	1.320	29	77	124.658	128.633	3.975	27	75
Croatia	57.849	57.159	-0.690	28	76	87.564	88.485	0.921	29	83
Cyprus	24.065	23.269	-0.796	35	105	27.645	27.415	-0.230	39	125
Czech Republic	208.796	205.658	-3.138	20	52	303.915	314.585	10.670	17	51
Denmark	335.878	340.806	4.928	15	34	243.531	249.527	5.996	20	57
Estonia	24.888	25.953	1.065	34	103	34.393	35.621	1.228	35	110
Finland	268.281	271.165	2.884	16	41	218.111	221.038	2.927	23	61

France	2,807.306	2,846.889	39.583	3	6	2,534.509	2,580.750	46.241	3	9
FYR Macedonia	10.774	11.342	0.568	40	133	26.237	27.622	1.385	38	124
Georgia	16.141	16.535	0.394	38	114	32.194	34.209	2.015	36	113
Germany	3,731.427	3,859.547	128.120	1	4	3,610.061	3,721.551	111.490	1	5
Greece	242.306	238.023	-4.283	18	45	278.018	284.255	6.237	18	52
Hungary	133.424	137.104	3.680	22	59	234.296	246.354	12.058	21	58
Iceland	15.330	16.693	1.363	37	111	13.765	14.210	0.445	43	145
Ireland	232.150	246.438	14.288	17	44	213.309	226.768	13.459	22	60
Italy	2,137.615	2,147.952	10.337	4	8	2,105.962	2,127.743	21.781	5	12
Kosovo	7.075	7.318	0.243	44	145	16.172	16.857	0.685	42	142
Latvia	30.838	31.970	1.132	33	97	46.397	48.185	1.788	33	105
Lithuania	46.426	48.232	1.806	31	83	76.248	79.625	3.377	30	86
Luxembourg	60.150	62.395	2.245	27	73	49.240	51.411	2.171	32	102
Malta	10.056	10.582	0.526	41	135	13.449	14.129	0.680	44	146
Moldova	7.985	7.944	-0.041	43	143	16.692	17.715	1.023	41	141
Montenegro	4.419	4.462	0.043	45	152	9.122	9.360	0.238	45	150
Netherlands	853.806	866.354	12.548	7	17	780.286	798.587	18.301	9	27
Norway	522.349	500.244	-22.105	13	27	332.764	345.160	12.396	16	49
Poland	526.031	546.644	20.613	11	23	910.672	954.454	43.782	8	23
Portugal	224.983	230.012	5.029	19	46	273.859	280.360	6.501	19	54
Romania	191.598	199.950	8.352	21	54	376.219	392.773	16.554	14	46
Russia	2,079.134	1,857.461	-221.673	5	10	3,491.617	3,564.549	72.932	2	6
San Marino	1.802	1.786	-0.016	46	165	1.898	1.907	0.009	46	173
Serbia	45.520	43.866	-1.654	32	87	95.857	95.492	-0.365	28	82
Slovak Republic	97.743	99.971	2.228	24	64	146.902	152.634	5.732	26	71
Slovenia	48.005	49.506	1.501	30	81	58.701	61.127	2.426	31	97
Spain	1,393.476	1,406.855	13.379	6	14	1,522.711	1,566.369	43.658	6	16
Sweden	579.526	570.137	-9.389	10	22	432.566	448.246	15.680	12	41
Switzerland	685.871	712.050	26.179	9	20	456.932	472.830	15.898	11	39
Turkey	821.918	806.108	-15.810	8	18	1,444.566	1,508.102	63.536	7	17
Ukraine	179.572	130.660	-48.912	23	60	392.250	370.786	-21.464	15	48
United Kingdom	2,680.123	2,945.146	265.023	2	5	2,449.727	2,548.889	99.162	4	10
Europe	22,539.025	22,803.620	264.595	-	-	24,757.284	25,436.451	679.167	-	-