SHOULD THE UK HAVE BREXITED THE EUROPEAN UNION?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of Brexit, and asked the question, "Should the UK have Brexited the European Union?" We use the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to model the decision based on Benefit-Opportunities-Costs and Risks (BOCR). The AHP structure considers various factors that may be taken into consideration from the perspective of the UK (Saaty, 1980). Questionnaires were used to obtain pairwise comparison judgments from experts and used to derive priorities for the factors and final decision to Brexit. The BOCR model results are combined in two ways. Both results show that the UK should remain a member of the EU. The referendum used showed the opposite result. The approach followed here can be used to educate people when voting on similar decisions.

Keywords: Brexit; AHP; decision-making, Benefits, Opportunities, Cost, Risks, decision analysis, European Union, Eurozone

1. Introduction

We believe that short of some kind of disaster and annihilation, the human race and its cultures are gradually drawing together from the agrarian age to villages, towns, cities, megacities and nations. This is despite much conflict and strife and great wars that have killed tens of millions of people. The European Union is a great and inspired step towards economic unity and in particular financial, social, and political unity.

The world owes much to the English people for this increasing unity not only for the world wide language that draws humanity to communicate together, but also in regards to law and geographic dominance ranging from the United States,

Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and of course the United Kingdom itself to a unified India, despite the break up into Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Is it beneficial to the UK and to the world at large in the long run that the UK has broken off from the European Union in its Brexit with dissent coming from Londoners, the Scottish and the Northern Irish people (Irwin, 2015; Moller & Oliver, 2014)? That is the question we wish to comprehensively and logically address in this paper. Of course, we need to consider the UK's economic and political advantages and influence today in the hope that it will be a good decision for the future (Dagnis Jensen & Snaith, 2016). On June 23, 2016, the eligible voters in the UK voted on the EU referendum, "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" The result of the vote was that the UK should leave the European Union; the breakdown of the votes by region is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.
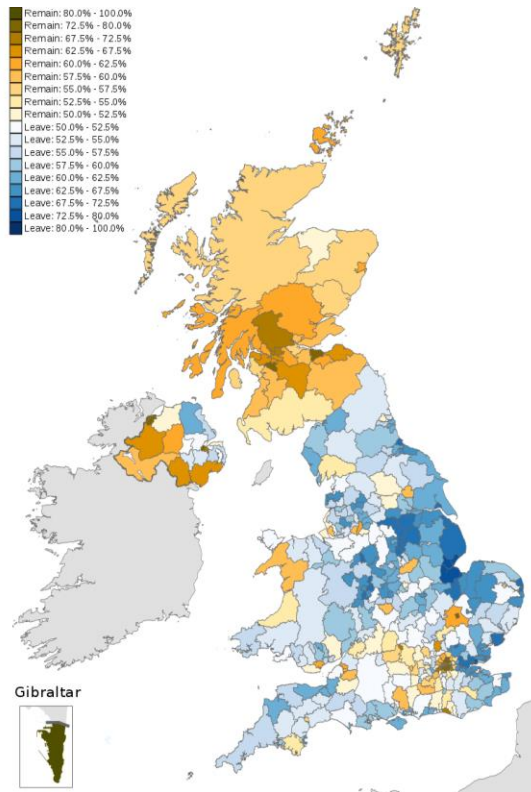
Table 1
Vote results of Brexit (23 June 2016)

Results	Votes	%
Leave	**17,410,742**	**51.89%**
Remain	16,141,241	48.11%
Valid votes	33,551,983	99.92%
Invalid or blank votes	25,359	0.08%
Total votes	**33,577,342**	**100.00%**
Registered voters/turnout	46,501,241	72.21%

*Source: Wikipedia of "United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, 2016"

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Table 2
Results by voting areas in the United Kingdom

Region	Turnout	Remain votes	Leave votes	Remain %	Leave %
England (with Gibraltar)	73.0%	13,266,996	15,188,406	46.62%	53.38%
East Midlands	74.2%	1,033,036	1,475,479	41.18%	58.82%
East of England	75.7%	1,448,616	1,880,367	43.52%	56.48%
London	69.7%	2,263,519	1,513,232	59.93%	40.07%
North East England	69.3%	562,595	778,103	41.96%	58.04%
North West England	70%	1,699,020	1,966,925	46.35%	53.65%
South East England	76.8%	2,391,718	2,567,965	48.22%	51.78%
South West England & Gibraltar	76.7%	1,503,019	1,669,711	47.37%	52.63%
West Midlands	72%	1,207,175	1,755,687	40.74%	59.26%
Yorkshire and the Humber	70.7%	1,158,298	1,580,937	42.29%	57.71%
Northern Ireland	62.7%	440,707	349,442	55.78%	44.22%
Scotland	67.2%	1,661,191	1,018,322	62.00%	38.00%
Wales	71.7%	772,347	854,572	47.47%	52.53%

*Source: Wikipedia of "United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, 2016"

The overall result of the June 2016 vote was a narrow majority of 51.89% to 48.11% in favor of leaving the EU. We note that only London, Northern Ireland and Scotland are below the majority of 50%.

2. BOCR model

In a complete analysis of a decision problem we usually consider the benefits (B), opportunities (O), costs (C) and risks (R) involved. For each control criterion of these B, O, C, and R, one derives priorities for the alternatives of a decision with respect to all the significant influences that cause some alternatives to have higher priority than others. One then combines the weights of the alternatives according to the weights of the control criteria of each of the B, O, C and R assessed in terms of strategic criteria (Wind & Saaty, 1980). Strategic criteria are very basic criteria used by individuals and groups to assess whether they should make any of the many decisions they face in their daily operations. Strategic criteria do not depend on any particular decision for their priorities but are assessed in terms of the goals and values of the individual or organization. Finally, one rates (not compares) the top ranked alternative for each B, O, C and R and uses the resulting weights to combine the values of each alternatives for the four merits and obtain the final answer in the form of priorities whose relative values are important for choosing the best alternative.

The synthesized results of the alternatives for each of the four control B, O, C and R merits are combined, along traditional benefit to cost ratio analysis used in economics, to obtain a ratio outcome by taking the quotient of the benefits times the opportunities to the costs times the risks for each alternative (BO/CR), then normalizing the results over all the alternatives to determine the best outcome. This formula is only useful when one is certain that the relative measurements are commensurate, that is of the same order of magnitude. In other words it is meaningless to divide thousands of dollars for benefits, by pennies for costs; this is tantamount to dividing by numbers close to zero. There is another more reliable way to combine the B, O, C, and R that gives the total outcome. The top ranked alternative is rated (not compared) for each of the B, O, C and R with respect to strategic criteria that are needed to determine the merits of any decision. From this rating one then obtains normalized respective weights, b, o, c and r and computes the total outcome $bB + oB - cC - rR$ for each alternative. In evaluating the benefits (opportunities), one responds to the question of dominance: which alternative contributes the most benefits (opportunities), whereas for costs (risks) one responds to the question which alternative costs (is subject to greater risks) more, which is opposite in sense of the benefits and opportunities and must be subtracted from them. It is known that the ranks obtained from ratio and total syntheses need not coincide.

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3. Benefits, opportunities, costs and risks of Brexit– the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

Four hierarchies (Figures 1-4) were developed: one for Benefits, Opportunities, Costs, and Risks (BOCR) to the UK of exiting from the European Union (EU). Each hierarchy results in priorities that sum to 1.000 for Leave or Not Leave.

The priorities are derived from a group decision process. We administered an online survey to collect responses. The AHP questionnaire we used is shown in the Appendix. For each judgment in the questionnaire the respondent selected the dominant factor first, then decided how strongly more dominant the factor was using the 1-9 fundamental scale (Saaty, 1977, 1986). The questionnaire was sent to 90 experts who attended the ISAHP2016 in London and came from the UK. They are all AHP decision making experts; however, not all of them are familiar with the Brexit. Therefore, in our study we used the judgments of four knowledgeable experts who completed the questionnaire. The consistency of judgments was examined for each expert and found to be adequate. Next, we calculated the geometric mean of each judgment from these experts and entered the combined judgment into the Super Decisions model.

The alternatives of the decision are as follows: leave the EU or remain a member of the EU. We constructed the model using the Super Decisions software and inputting the judgments of diverse experts to compute the priorities.
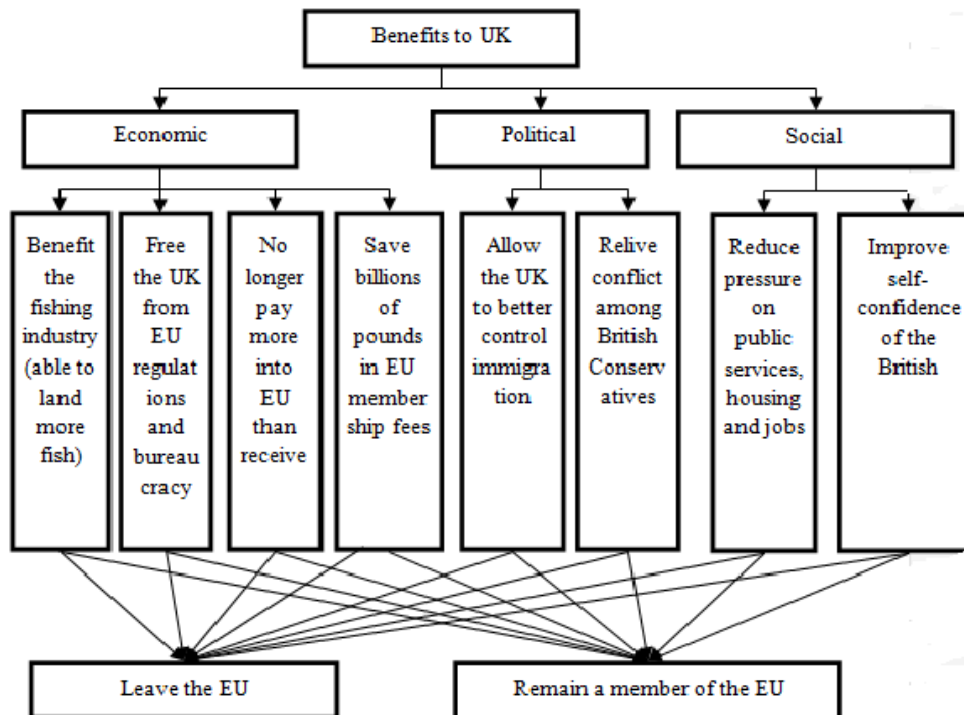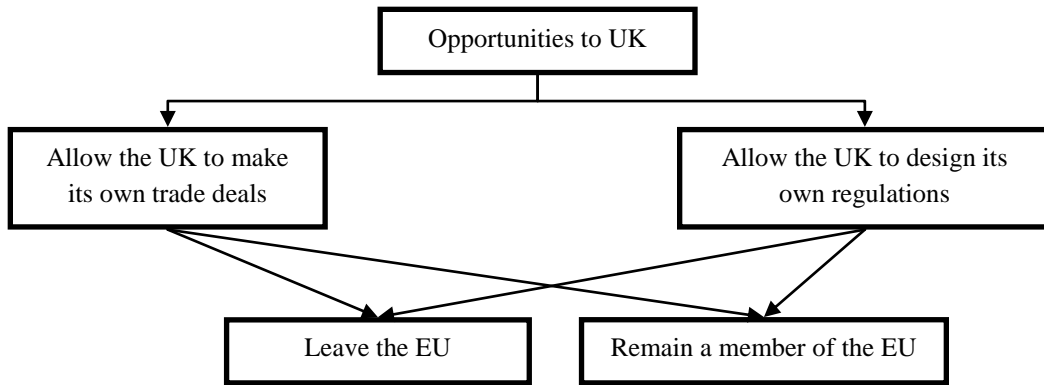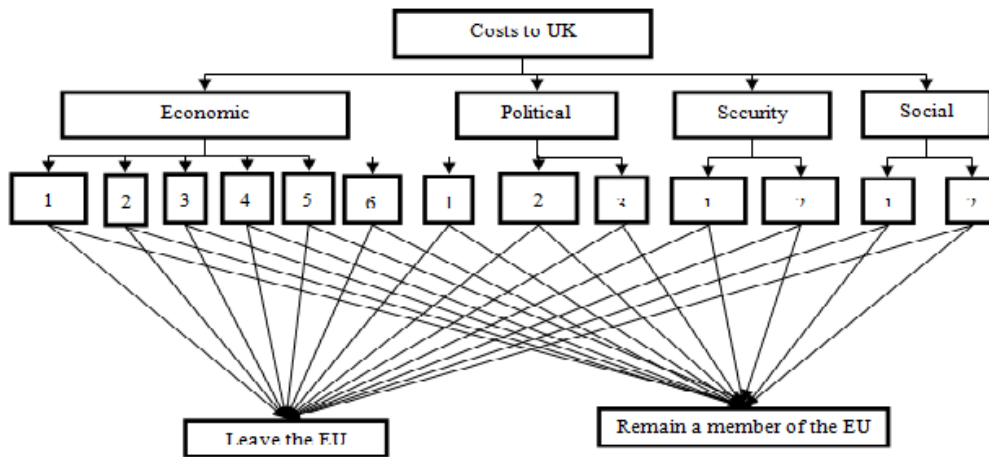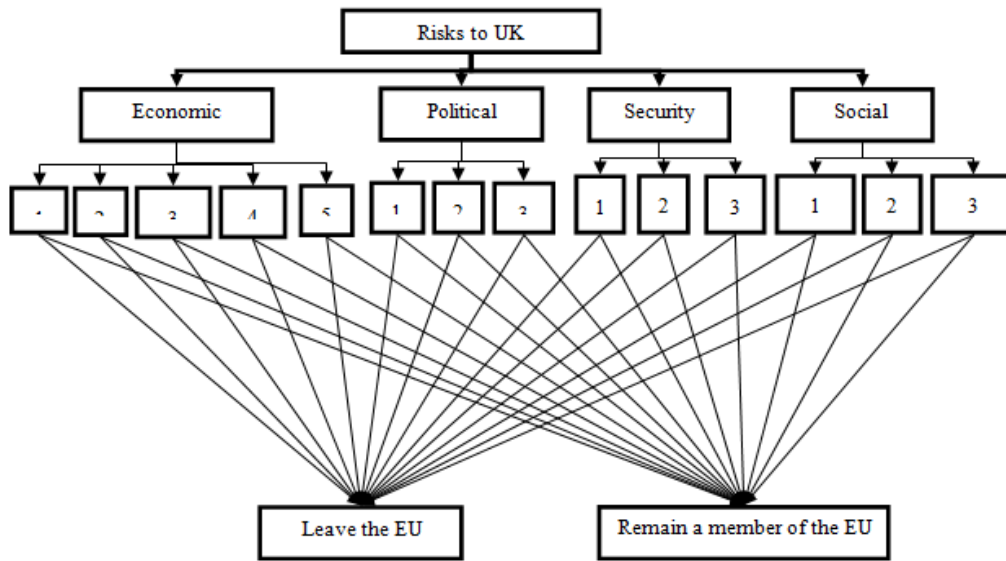

Figure 1. Benefits hierarchy

Figure 2. Opportunities hierarchy

ECONOMIC	POLITICAL
1) Result in trade barriers between UK and EU	1) Reduce UK influence on EU
2) Loss of British stocks	2) Harder to keep close foreign-policy links with EU
3) Loss of investments	3) Loss of tax revenue from leaving
4) Recession in economy	
5) Sterling fall	
6) Loss of the biggest trading partner	
SECURITY	SOCIAL
1) Loss of access to EU assets database and surveillance records	1) Can no longer travel freely
2) Increase the difficulty of tracing the international criminal	2) Loss of technological collaboration with EU

Figure 3. Costs hierarchy

ECONOMIC	POLITICAL
1) Decline of financial services industry 2) Decline of law firms industry 3) London may no longer be finance center of Europe 4) Risks of diminishing investment from EU 5) US and UK ties may weaken	1) Diminish UK influence in world affairs 2) Harder to keep close foreign-policy links with EU 3) Risk of losing the UK's prosperity 4) Risk of Scotland leaving the UK
SECURITY	SOCIAL
1) Cause much possible collateral damage to UK's security 2) Potential risk for conflict with EU 3) Weaken border control through EU police cooperation	1) Negative for health service 2) Loss of EU food protection 3) Unemployment rate may rise

Figure 4. Risks hierarchy

The results for the four hierarchies are summarized in Table 3. The idealized results in the final column to the right are obtained from each relative priority by dividing each by the largest value. For the Benefits we have relative values that sum to 1 of Leave (0.82) and Remain (0.18). Dividing each by 0.82 we obtain the ideal values of Leave (1.00) and Remain (0.22).

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Table 3
Priorities derived from the four hierarchies

		Factors		Priorities Relative (Ideal)
Benefits	Economic 0.250	Benefit the fishing industry (able to land more fish)	0.119	Leave the EU 0.82 (1) Remain a member of the EU 0.18 (0.22)
		Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy	0.555	
		No longer pay more into EU than receive	0.064	
		Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees	0.262	
	Political 0.655	Allow the UK to better control immigration	0.833	
		Relive conflict among British Conservatives	0.167	
	Social 0.095	Reduce pressure on public services, housing and jobs	0.200	
		Improve self-confidence of the British	0.800	
Opportunities		Allow the UK to design its own regulations	0.800	Leave the EU 0.83 (1) Remain a member of the EU 0.17 (0.20)
		Allow the UK to make its own trade deals	0.200	
Costs	Economic 0.103	Result in trade barriers between UK and EU	0.184	Leave the EU 0.86 (1) Remain a member of the EU 0.14 (0.16)
		Loss of British stocks	0.190	
		Loss of investments	0.154	
		Recession in economy	0.150	
		Sterling falls	0.083	
		Loss of the biggest trading partner	0.239	
	Political 0.231	Reduce UK influence on EU	0.117	
		Harder to keep close foreign-policy links with EU	0.614	
		Loss of tax revenue from leaving EU enterprises	0.268	
	Security 0.624	Loss of access to EU assets database and surveillance records	0.833	
		Increase the difficulty of tracing the international criminal	0.167	
	Social 0.042	Can no longer travel freely	0.250	
		Loss of technological collaboration with EU	0.750	
Risks	Economic 0.153	Decline of financial services industry	0.207	Leave the EU 0.87 (1) Remain a member of the EU 0.13 (0.15)
		Decline of law firms industry	0.208	
		London may no longer be finance center of Europe	0.288	
		Risks of diminishing investment from EU	0.179	
		US and UK ties may weaken	0.119	
	Political 0.307	Diminish UK influence in world affairs	0.737	
		Risk of losing the UK's prosperity	0.085	

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	Risk of Scotland leaving the UK	0.177
Social 0.219	Negative for health service	0.752
	Loss of EU food protection	0.197
	Unemployment rate may rise	0.051
Security 0.322	Cause much possible collateral damage to UK's security	0.189
	Potential risk for conflict with EU	0.054
	Weaken border control through EU police cooperation	0.757

A summary of the idealized priorities shown in Table 3 are given in Table 4.

Table 4
Idealized priority vectors for Leave the EU or Remain in the EU

	Benefits (B)	Opportunities (O)	Costs (C)	Risks (R)
Leave the EU	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Remain in the EU	0.23	0.20	0.16	0.15

We structured the hierarchy of strategic criteria shown in Figure 5 from the media coverage of voter concerns and prioritized the factors through the usual pairwise comparison process. The priorities of the strategic criteria thus derived are shown in Table 5.
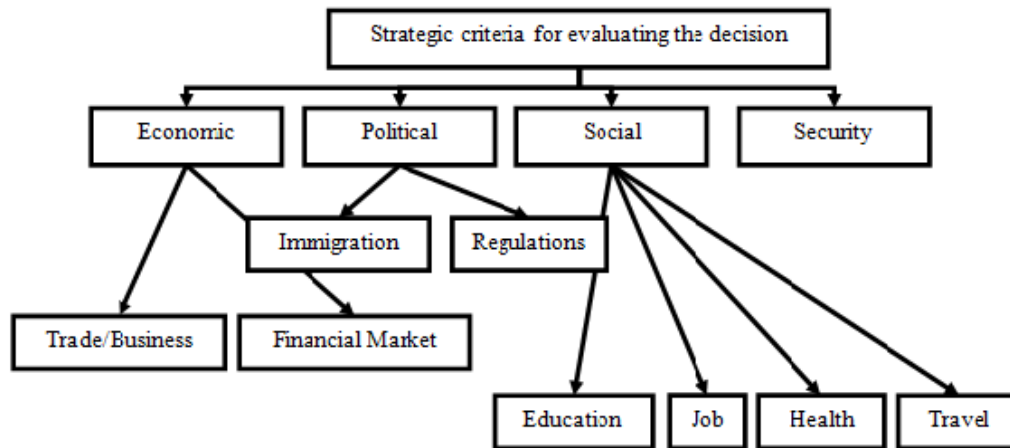

Figure 5. The strategic criteria

Table 5
Overall priorities of strategic criteria

Economic	0.098		Trade/Business	0.089
			Financial Market	0.012
Political	0.244		Immigration	0.225
			Regulations	0.028
Social	0.036		Education	0.148
			Health	0.019
			Job	0.423
			Travel	0.054
Security	0.622			

We then created Table 6 for rating the benefits, opportunities, costs and risks of this decision. It has one column for every lowest level of strategic criteria. We defined intensities for the scale of very high (0.42), high (0.26), medium (0.16), low (0.1), and very low (0.06). Their priorities were derived by making judgments on pairs of intensities in the usual pairwise comparison matrix, asking how much one intensity was preferred to the other.

We evaluated the impact of the highest valued alternative in each of the four hierarchies on the strategic criteria in the ratings table shown in Table 6. In every one of the four hierarchies the highest priority alternative was to Remain in the EU. We selected the appropriate impact for that alternative each cell in Table 5. As an example, for the top leftmost cell (Benefits, Education), we asked what intensity the beneficial impact of leaving would have on Education and concluded it would have a Medium impact, so Medium was entered in the cell. Because it was the highest value alternative in every hierarchy we rated Remain in the EU across every row. The overall priorities for benefits (b = 0.291), opportunities (o = 0.224), costs (c = 0.243) and risks (r = 0.242), are shown outlined in red in Table 6.

Table 6.
Priorities for b, o, c, r, from the ratings table

	Priorities	Totals	Education 0.148203	Financial Market 0.012731	Health 0.019319	Immigration 0.225018	Job 0.423474	Regulations 0.028127	Trade/Business 0.089118	Travel 0.054009
B	0.290519	0.805631	Medium	High	Medium	Very High	Very High	High	High	Low
O	0.223984	0.621125	High	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Very High	Low
C	0.243031	0.673945	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High	High	Medium	Very Low
R	0.242466	0.672376	Low	High	Medium	High	Very High	High	Medium	Very Low

4. Results

We obtained the overall priorities shown in Table 7 in two ways using the multiplicative formula BO/CR and the additive-negative formula bB+oO-cC-rR. The vectors B, O, C, and R are from Table 4 and the b, o, c, r priorities are from Table 6. We see that "Remain in the EU" is dominant (in bold type) using either formula and is the best alternative.

Table 7

Overall final results

Alternatives	B b=(0.291)	O o=(0.224)	C c=(0.243)	R r=(0.242)	Results BO/CR	bB+oO-cC-rR
Leave the EU	1	1	1	1	1	0.029
Remain in the EU	0.218	0.2	0.158	0.147	**1.892**	**0.034**

*B, O, C and R (the respective columns above)are the priority vectors for the two alternatives; b, o, c and r are the priorities derived by rating against the strategic criteria .

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that Remain in the EU would have been the best outcome, though it flies in the face of the actual vote which was to Leave the EU. In this study we aimed to predict the best outcome. Whether it really was the best outcome will need to be determined a few years hence as the dust settles. Any decision can be viewed in two ways: what is most likely to occur and what is the best outcome. Frequently they are not the same.

Although this study cannot be considered definitive, the outcome of this exercise leaves one to seriously wonder about citizens voting Yes or No. This is a habit that we practice inherited from the past with no way to measure the intangibles involved or determine their importance. There is a talk today about France and Austria also thinking of leaving the EU, and among others, the Japanese have complained about the large investment they have made in the UK as part of the EU. They say this Brexit decision amounts to significant losses to them now in a message issued on the eve of the G20 summit in China in September 2016. The document entitled "Japan's Message to the UK and EU" warns of dire consequences for "the interests of the world" if an open Europe cannot be maintained. There has not been very strong advocacy for our approach about how to examine the subject carefully before resorting to a Yes-No kind of vote on the outcome as was done in the United Kingdom (Dhingra et al., 2016). Expert opinion and the strength of the judgments should play an important role in making such decisions that have global consequences and involve multi-criteria kind of thinking. Feelings and intuition may not be adequate to obtain the right result.

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APPENDIX I

Should the UK have Brexited the European Union?

This is a questionnaire of the AHP Benefits-Opportunities-Costs-Risks model to evaluate "Should the UK have Brexited the EU?"

There are five parts to the questions as can be seen below.
Please do the pairwise comparison of all the criteria using the 1-9 dominance scale of absolute numbers:
9 - Extremely
8 Very strongly to extremely
7 - Very strongly
6 - Strongly to very strongly
5 - Strongly
4 - Moderately to strongly
3 - Moderately
2 - Equally to moderately
1- Equally

Click ""NEXT" at bottom of the page to begin.

*Required

Part I: Benefits

Please do the pairwise comparison of all criteria with the 1-9 scale.

Here are the questions we hope you answer first by marking the appropriate circle and then with numbers to indicate how much more the marked item is than the unmarked one.

1-1 Which factor is more dominant: Political or Social with respect to the Benefits to the UK? *

◯ Political

◯ Social

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. How much more dominant? *

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   O O O O O O O O O   Extremely more important

2-1 Which factor is more dominant: Economic or Political with respect to the Benefits to the UK? *

O Economic

O Political

. How much more dominant? *

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   O O O O O O O O O   Extremely more important

3-1 Which factor is more dominant: Economic or Social with respect to the Benefits to the UK?

O Economic

O Social

. How much more dominant? *

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   O O O O O O O O O   Extremely more important

4-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Benefit the fishing industry" or "Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

O Benefit the fishing industry

O Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy

. How much more dominant? *

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   O O O O O O O O O   Extremely more important

5-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Benefits for the fishing industry" or "No longer pay more into EU than receive" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

◯ Benefit the fishing industry

◯ No longer pay more into EU than receive

. How much more dominant? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally important	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely more important

6-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Benefit the fishing industry" or "Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

◯ Benefit the fishing industry

◯ Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees

. How much more dominant? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally important	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely more important

7-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy" or "No longer pay more into EU than receive" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

◯ Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy

◯ No longer pay more into EU than receive

. How much more dominant? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally important	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely more important

8-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy" or "Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

◯ Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy

◯ Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees

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. How much more dominant? *

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○   Extremely more important

9-1 Which factor is more dominant: "No longer pay more into EU than receive" or "Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees" with respect to the Economic Benefits?

○ No longer pay more into EU than receive

○ Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees

. How much more dominant? *

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○   Extremely more important

10-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Allow the UK to better control immigration" or "Relive conflict among British Conservatives" with respect to the Political Benefits?

○ Allow the UK to better control immigration

○ Relive conflict among British Conservatives

. How much more dominant? *

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○   Extremely more important

11-1 Which factor is more dominant: "Improve self-confidence of the British" or "Reduce pressure on public services, housing and jobs" with respect to the Social Benefits?

○ Improve self-confidence of the British

○ Reduce pressure on public services, housing and jobs

. How much more dominant? *

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Equally important   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○   Extremely more important

12-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to "Benefiting the fishing industry"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

13-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to the criterion "Free the UK from EU regulations and bureaucracy"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

14-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to the criterion "No longer pay more into EU than receive"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

15-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to "Save billions of pounds in EU membership fees"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

16-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to the criterion "Allow the UK to better control immigration"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

17-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to "Relive conflict among British Conservatives"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

18-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to "Improving the self-confidence of the British"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

19-1 Which alternative is preferred with respect to "Reducing the pressure on public services, housing and jobs"?

○ Leave the EU

○ Remain a member of the EU

How much more preferred? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Equally	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely more

(You can get the complete questionnaire at https://goo.gl/forms/DGdba9TpRkQ757rK2)