Europe’s Crossroads: Brexit and a Resurgent Russia

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The European Commission affirms its commitment to promoting integration among member states in spite of the United Kingdom’s recent popular referendum to withdraw from the European Union. The Commission asserts its unwavering fidelity to the protection of territorial sovereignty and calls on Russia to honor its international obligations and cease its destabilizing activities across Europe. To address such policy matters, the following stipulations are proposed for collective consideration:

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS the European Union (EU) has consistently sought to deepen integration among member states and generate consensus to contend with urgent economic and security challenges, the following should be taken into account:

i. That the EU is an economic and political partnership involving 28 nations, enabling the free movement of goods and persons through the establishment of a single market.

ii. That closer integration among member states produces a net benefit for Europe and enhances the economic, political, and social welfare across states.

iii. That the EU is a broad and diverse community of peoples historically divided by conflict and misgiving for centuries, now dedicated to collectively overcoming difficult strategic challenges.

iv. That any member state’s withdrawal from the EU will inevitably alter the European balance of power and the character of relations both within the Union and between Europe and the rest of the world, harming intergovernmental cooperation and global economic security.

I. BREXIT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

A. Earlier negotiations

WHEREAS this Union diligently sought to assuage British concerns concerning the function and application of EU programs.

WHEREAS the President of the European Council and the UK Prime Minister conducted negotiations in good faith, culminating in a February 2016 agreement that granted Britain an explicit exemption from the EU’s founding goal of forming an “ever closer union.” Negotiations awarded the UK concessions on the welfare rights of migrant workers, including an “emergency brake” on migrants’ in-work benefits for four years during “exceptional” levels of migration. The UK also gained the ability to enact “an emergency safeguard” against Eurozone financial
rules, to stop UK firms from being forced to relocate to Europe, and to ensure British businesses did not face undue discrimination for operating outside of the Eurozone.

WHEREAS the UK has enjoyed a multitude of Treaty-based exceptions intended to ameliorate British vexations with European integration. Some of these exceptions allow the UK: to not adopt the Euro; to not participate in the Schengen acquis; to exercise border controls on persons and therefore not participate in the Schengen area pertaining to internal and external borders; to choose specific measures in the area of freedom, security, and justice; and to choose to cease to apply a large majority of Union acts and provisions in police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

WHEREAS in spite of consistent energy devoted to allaying the United Kingdom’s concerns, UK representatives are consistently underrepresented across EU institutions. In 2015, only 4.2 percent of Commissions officials (permanent and temporary) were British, compared with the UK’s 12.3 percent share of the EU’s total population. Further, only 1.5 percent and 2.4 percent UK representation existed in the Council Secretariat and European Parliament respectively. In 2016, only two of the Commission’s 33 Director Generals in charge of policy-related departments and only one of the 28 chefs de cabinet were British.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU accepts the will of the British people in choosing to no longer remain a member of the Union. While this Commission regrets the outcome of the UK referendum, this body resolves to maintain a meaningful and enduring partnership with Great Britain. The UK will persist as one of the EU’s most valued partners in the future.

B. Article 50 conditions and expectations

WHEREAS any member state may decide to withdraw from the European Union in accordance with its constitutional requirements.

WHEREAS a member state that decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention, and the Union, in accordance with established guidelines, shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that state, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of its future relationship with the Union.

WHEREAS the Treaties shall cease to apply to the state in question from an agreed-upon final withdrawal date, or failing that, two years after the notification of intent to withdraw, unless the European Council, in agreement with the member state concerned, unanimously decides to extend the period. The member of the European Council or of the Council representing the withdrawing member state shall not participate in discussions of the European Council or in decisions concerning it. During the negotiating period, the UK shall continue to supply its previously agreed upon financial contribution to the EU budget, equating to about £13 billion per year.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that this Union calls on the British government to expeditiously invoke Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, thereby officially notifying the European Council of
its intent to initiate withdrawal negotiations from the EU. This withdrawal must be carried out
through a negotiated agreement rather than an unilateral act, and bound to adhere to all
relevant procedures outlined in Article 50.

i. Domestic political considerations cannot dictate the withdrawal timeline, nor can it be
affected by unwarranted delays. The European Commission urges the British Prime
Minister to commence negotiations immediately. Delays in proceeding with this process
will unnecessarily prolong financial and political uncertainty in Europe, casting a cloud
over economic markets as well as EU policy-making institutions.

ii. The EU still seeks to maintain a close relationship with the UK in the coming years, but
withdrawal negotiations must be based on a balance of rights and obligations. Europe
will not allow any country--UK included--to enjoy the benefits of European integration
without being a part of this Union’s structure and institutions. There must be a
noticeable difference between those nations that choose to be part of the EU and those
that do not.

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED that no nation should expect to forgo the responsibilities of
being part of the EU whilst still enjoying its privileges. The UK government must not be under
the illusion that Europe will support its continued access to the single market without its
corresponding respect for four basic European freedoms: people, goods, services, and capital.
This reality underscores the need for the UK to exercise Article 50 as soon as possible in order
to forge a path for British extrication from this body.

i. There will no renegotiation of the previously agreed-upon February accord that
protects London's financial markets, curbs immigration, and opts out of closer union.
The earlier pact is void. Furthermore, this Commission retains the utmost confidence in
its newly appointed principal coordinator of negotiations with Great Britain to confer
with all relevant UK representatives.

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission welcomes initial calls to protect the
legal status of UK nationals in Europe and EU nationals in the UK. Until an accord on this matter
is reached, this body wishes to assure the approximately 1.3 million UK nationals currently
working in Europe that their legal and work status is not in doubt in the near-term whilst the UK
remains part of the EU. Any decisions made on this topic will be contingent on the ultimate
withdrawal agreement reached between the UK and EU. Similarly, it is imperative that the UK
government honor the rights of the 3 million EU nationals living and working in the UK in the
short-term in order to assuage EU nationals’ concerns. The UK government has an obligation to
transparently and fairly arbitrate this matter, ensuring that any major changes to legal statuses
should be instituted gradually to minimize severe disruptions to people’s financial and social
well-being.

C. Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Contagion
WHEREAS this Union finds the UK’s decision to withdraw from the European Union regrettable, it respects the will of the British people. The referendum results were remarkably narrow, with popular support for leaving the EU carrying the vote in England and Wales, and remaining in the EU resoundingly prevailing in Scotland and Wales.

WHEREAS the governments of Scotland and Northern Ireland have previously advocated for their position in the UK, whilst concurrently demonstrating their willingness to pool resources and sovereignty to promote the collective European good as EU members.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU urges both Scottish and Northern Irish political leaders to avoid making any precipitous decisions regarding popular sovereignty in the wake of the referendum. National leaders have a responsibility to thoroughly evaluate calls for Scottish independence or Irish reunification with keen diligence in order to assess what is in the people’s best interest.

i. EU membership has been an especially critical component of Northern Ireland’s prevailing peace since the 1990s, after years of sectarian violence. The people of Northern Ireland have benefitted from freedom of commerce and unencumbered travel to the Republic of Ireland while still belonging to the UK, resulting in an unmatched era of prosperity and tranquility in the region.

ii. Scotland and Northern Ireland each have significant historical, cultural, and political ties with Great Britain. Any talk of separation is premature and presently unmerited. The UK should not incite any additional popular discontent during this tumultuous period. It should refrain from implementing additional border controls between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, or enacting any measures that threaten core elements of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement during the upcoming negotiations.

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED that stability in Europe is of the utmost importance for all member states. Multiple global crises threaten regional economic, social, and national security interests. This Union is cognizant that popular discontent with European institutions is substantial—factors that surely contributed to the UK’s vote to leave the EU. Rising dissatisfaction, largely due to an uneven economic recovery, surging immigration and refugee levels, terrorism, and other fears, have raised concerns regarding the utility of advancing European integration.

i. Member states shall therefore renew their commitment to forging new policy consensus in three key areas: security; migration and refugees; and jobs and growth. Meaningful Treaty addendums must be adopted to address critical issues in a timely manner, demonstrating that EU institutions have the maturity and fortitude to resolve crises quickly to mitigate people’s fears and yield effective policy results.

ii. Enhancing institutional accountability, accelerating policy decision-making timeliness, and easing the legitimate democratic concerns of Europeans are critical components in validating the meaning of integration and vindicating the EU’s value to constituents.
II. RESURGENT RUSSIAN ADVENTURISM

A. A Complicated Relationship

WHEREAS Russia is Europe’s largest neighbor and its third biggest trading partner, the EU and Russia have a long record of cooperation on issues of bilateral and international interest, including climate change, organized crime, counterterrorism, and nonproliferation.

WHEREAS the relationship between the European Union and Russia has historically been marked by partnerships on issues of mutual concern, the latter’s illegal annexation of Crimea and continuing willful destabilization of Ukraine has significantly damaged EU-Russia relations.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that this Union supports the renewal of targeted sanctions against Russia in key areas, including access to capital markets, defense, dual-use goods, and sensitive technologies (including those in the energy sector). Russia has failed to live up to its obligations under the Minsk agreements.

i. The EU is committed to honoring the terms of previously agreed upon sanctions. While nearly two years have passed since Russian and Ukrainian parties agreed to ceasefire terms, the EU remains resolute that sanctions persist in place until the Minsk agreements are wholly implemented. Renewed sanctions include both individual and corporate entities subject to asset freezes and travel bans over their responsibility for actions that undermine or threaten Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence.

ii. There has been minimal progress in ending the fighting or realizing an amenable political settlement to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The hostilities have created incalculable human suffering and resulted in nearly 10,000 deaths and many more wounded. Despite such a horrific human toll, Russia maintains troops and heavy weaponry in the eastern Ukraine. The Russian government’s persistently destabilizing activities have exacerbated regional tensions and impeded achieving a lasting cessation of violence.

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED that the EU will not waver in its fidelity to uphold international obligations and serve as a vanguard of human rights. Some member states have recently publicly questioned the current EU position vis-a-vis Russia. This body avows that the proliferation of such sentiments, made under the auspices of individual member states, merely serve to undermine the Union’s collective position in future multilateral gatherings.

i. The Russian government has consistently sought to undermine European capitals and EU policies. The adopted sanctions are a tool that must be leveraged in order to ensure that the EU sustains credibility against Russian interference in sovereign state affairs and counters Russia’s non-compliance with international obligations. This Commission urges all member states to maintain unity in exerting pressure on Russia to fulfill the terms of
the Minsk agreements. Failure to maintain a unified European commitment will only encourage continued Russian defiance in light of any EU dissension.

ii. The EU further advises the Russian government to release its remaining 13 Ukrainian political prisoners, including four Crimean Tartars. This goodwill gesture would publicly demonstrate Russia’s resolve to uphold human rights, de-escalate tensions, and generate greater cooperative feelings on both sides. The EU condemns both Russia and Ukraine’s unjust detention of any individual and calls on both governments to engage in more constructive dialogue in order to restore peace to the region.

B. Russian hostility toward its neighbors

WHEREAS Russia violates sovereign borders, conducts large-scale military exercises near European territory, including in the Baltic and Black Sea areas as well as the Eastern Mediterranean, issues bombastic and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, and persists in repeatedly violating EU and NATO airspace.

WHEREAS the EU is dedicated to condemning Russia’s provocative behavior as contrary to the spirit of international cooperation and its caustic rhetoric as a strikingly unhelpful discourse.

WHEREAS NATO confirmed its intention to rotate groups of troops through Central and Eastern Europe to promote military readiness and ensure regional stability.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU supports NATO’s decision to permanently station weapons supplies, combined with a robust forward troop presence, in Poland and the Baltic states to strengthen European security and NATO forces’ capacity to deploy quickly during crisis events.

The decision to transport four battalions to northeastern Europe on a rotating basis not only strengthens collective military readiness, but also powerfully demonstrates both Europe and North America’s commitment to defend member states’ sovereignty against any external aggression.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU and NATO will bolster their partnership in a spirit of transparency and in accordance with their respective organizations’ decision-making procedures amid Russia’s repeated interference in European affairs. The Euro-Atlantic community faces unprecedented global security pressures, demanding that the two entities leverage collective expertise and resources to address these challenges.

i. The EU and NATO’s robust cooperation, established more than 15 years ago, contributes to maintaining both Euro-Atlantic and global security. New security threats, including many from resurgent worldwide Russian aggression, including in Syria, present an opportunity for EU member states and NATO allies to tackle transborder and transnational challenges alike. The Commission calls on EU member states to generously contribute to NATO’s expanding presence in Europe and provide upwards of $10 billion over the next five years to support this expanding collective defense mission.
ii. In order to enhance security and promote a sustainable peace, there is an urgent need for the EU and NATO to cement its operational relationship, especially regarding the threat from an often openly hostile Russia, by taking the following actions:

a. Boosting EU-NATO counter-hybrid threat capacity, including by enhancing resilience, timely information sharing, and early detection and prevention efforts.

b. Expanding cyber security and defense coordination; developing coherent and interoperable defense capabilities of EU member states and NATO allies; and building the defense and security capacity of those states that require the necessary resources and training to meet present-day security requirements.

c. Accelerating operational cooperation across military domains, especially at sea, by amplifying maritime situational awareness and improving coordination and mutual reinforcement of activities in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

d. Augmenting use of the Secure Information Exchange Network Application system to ensure rapid and secure information exchange among Europol, member states, and third parties to address critical law enforcement and intelligence requirements.

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED that the EU seeks a positive and more cooperative relationship with Russia, one that is more predictable and that fosters constructive engagement on an array of critical issues of mutual concern. Russia is a partner that Europe believes can play a pivotal role in global economic and security matters, furthering efforts to improve prosperity across the world. However, the Russian government must comply with all of its international commitments and cease its aggression and interference in member states affairs, as well as in Ukraine. Such productive engagement will restore some of the credibility that the Russian government squandered in recent years and may serve as the motivation for restarting meaningful policy cooperation efforts.

i. Engaging Russia on key strategic issues and cooperating when interests overlap is a key and strategic EU imperative. Forging mutually supportive positions on select topics, including terrorism, maritime security, education, research, and cross-border cooperation, are important policy initiatives. Such interactions will support the establishment of closer social and cultural ties for students, civil society, and businesses, ultimately improving geopolitical understandings and relations between states.