



# European Council: United Kingdom

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## 1 Introduction and Executive Summary

Representing Theresa May as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom your aim is to preserve an amiable relationship to the remaining EU-27 members, as well as to further British geopolitical objectives. The key points to keep in mind are the following:

- You are leaving the EU and looking forward to reap the benefits of the regulatory burden of the EU being lifted
- The British free market capitalist system can benefit from global instability since the UK can weather it better than continental European countries
- Your long term geopolitical aim is and has always been to prevent the European continent from uniting
- Your short term objective is to use diplomacy and play continental European powers against each other to destabilize the continent, sow disunity, and sabotage any resolution (especially those which promote federalist ideas) from being passed
- In doing so you should align yourself with nationalist and regionalist movements and play into historic enmities between member states. Many countries remember the German occupation during World War II...
- Two times already has Britain managed to defeat a united Europe. Will you be the one to do it a third time?

## 2 Societal and Economic History

The history of Britain is defined by its favorable geography. Situated on an island, the British traditionally relies on a strong fleet to guarantee security from outside threats. This, combined with successful diplomacy, has prevented Britain from falling to an invasion force since 1066 when William the Conqueror first established England as the country we know today. This relative security provided a unique environment of stability and external safety, which is seen as a key factor in the development of a culture of individual liberty and free markets on the British isles. The first fundamental manifestation of such developments is the adoption of the Magna Charta in its first form in 1215. It affirmed certain Church rights, granted liberties to members of the nobility, and guaranteed the validity of all monetary loans - but most importantly, the Charta instituted a principle that taxes were not controlled by the central Royal authority, but rather by the local nobility and gentry (an urban upper class of wealthy and prominent citizens). This dependence on the public opinion for funding has been henceforth a defining feature of Anglo-Saxon societies. The liberties were further extended in 1689 with the Bill of Rights which fully placed the final authority on taxes and military in the hands of the British Parliament, while guaranteeing civil liberties for all subjects of the Crown and limiting Royal power. Such an environment naturally proved to be a fertile ground for economic progress. By the mid-eighteenth century Britain was the world's leading commercial nation, controlling a global trading empire with colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and India. The development of free trade and the rise of business were major causes of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain, and many of the technological innovations were of British origin. Thinkers like Adam

Smith helped establish free market capitalism as the national philosophy of the British Empire. Another British achievement during that time is the successful fight against colonial slave trade. A global naval dominance gave the British the power to enforce such a liberal policy which was viewed as radical by many continental European governments at the time. The struggle to abolish slave trade during the late 18th to early 19th centuries is an example of a liberal popular movement successfully working within the existing system to implement a major policy decision from the bottom up, another defining feature of the British society that is an important factor which often distinguishes Britain from continental European societies [1]. Britain's golden age came about during the latter half of the 19th century, with the British Empire ascending to be the position of the first global superpower. The overwhelming power of the British fleet granted it the ability to project power globally, and the Empire controlled about a quarter of the Earth's landmass and population at its zenith. However, during the late 19th century, a second power arose on the European mainland to challenge the established, British-dominated global order, and to take its own place under the sun. In 1871, Germany united itself, went through a quick industrialization and began rapidly to catch up to Britain in terms of economic activity [3]. In the ensuing First World War (1914-1918), Britain defeated the German Reich, using its naval supremacy to starve Germany out economically, while its allies and colonies provided a steady stream of manpower. At a critical point in the war, America joined on the British side, shipping over a million troops to Europe by 1917 and rendering a German victory unviable. It is hard to overstate the importance of British diplomacy in preparation for the war, since Britain managed to lure Italy over from the German to the British alliance and even managed to settle differences with Russia, which left Germany encircled by hostile powers. While the British Empire survived World War I with its global power virtually undiminished, this would change in the aftermath of World War II. The first World War claimed the lives of many prominent upper-class Britons, which caused a strong anti-war sentiment to rise within the British elite [2]. This manifested itself in the weak foreign policy of the Chamberlain administration which was reluctant to provide a strong response to Germany which was resurging to great power status under Adolf Hitler. Britain emerged victorious after World War II, with Germany defeated and divided. However the victory has weakened the Empire, and independence movements in the colonies grew in strength. America has replaced Britain as the primary naval power and took over the mantle of the liberal superpower, with the U.S. fleets guaranteeing the safety for the global shipment of goods. India left the Empire in 1947, Egypt in 1952, South Africa and most other African colonies between 1960 and 1970. Having lost its global status, the UK deferred back to its European identity and joined the EU (then called European Economic Community) in 1973. This has led to the British GDP immediately collapsing [3], as capital fled the country, seeing the former superpower surrender parts of its sovereignty to a governing body dominated by continental European countries. Britain's economy gradually recovered, however it never reached its former strength relatively to mainland Europe and remains relatively on par with France [3]. In 2016 the British public made a historic decision as they voted in an extremely controversial referendum to leave the European Union, and to regain sovereignty over their borders and their jurisdiction once more. In



2017 the British parliament complied with the public will and triggered Article 50, thus beginning the proceeding to leave the EU, which are still ongoing as of today. Any proposals of a deal regulating the future relationship between the UK and EU keep getting voted down in the British parliament as all involved parties prepare for a no-deal situation [4]. Since the decision to leave the Union, Britain is experiencing an economic boom [5], and is looking for a new national identity distinct from the Continent. The question of whether Britain is a part of Europe or not remains to be answered as the UK makes preparations to leave the block it was once very eager to join.

### 3 Political Position

Under leadership of Theresa May of the Conservative Party, the primary concern of the British government is to organize a transition for the UK as it leaves the EU. However, while it is still a member of the Union for at least the near future it makes sense to elaborate on the British position on key European issues. Despite the fact that it was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who first proposed the idea of a United States of Europe, Britain today is cardinally opposed to any attempt of increased federalization within the EU. The UK is not part of the Schengen agreement and keeps its own independent currency. The growing prospect of a European army is almost universally regarded as wholly unacceptable in the UK and the war in Ukraine have made no difference to this assessment [9]. Britain has increased its own military spending since making the decision to return to independence. This includes the resurrection of the old British navy, a process which has been started by constructing two colossal aircraft carriers which are to be put into operational deployment by 2021 [6]. The discussion of military armament is an exclusively national one, with little or no European dimension outside of NATO. Proposals for a "European army" from for instance Mr. Juncker have been generally seen as proof of his desire to create a United States of Europe. Mrs. Merkel's approach to the reception of Syrian refugees in Germany and elsewhere within the EU has attracted much unfavourable commentary in the United Kingdom, with most commentators welcoming the United Kingdom's ability to opt out of European arrangements in this area [9]. Eventhough Theresa May came out in favor of remaining in the EU at the time of the Brexit referendum, she pledged to fulfill the will of the British people as Prime Minister and organize a what has been termed a "hard Brexit", a scenario in which Britain would not only leave the EU's political structures, but also the European single market. However, she disappointed many Members of Parliament by agreeing to pay tens of billions of pounds to the European Union. Especially within the Conservative party the "no deal" alternative and a return to WTO rules is finding supporters [7]. Two of her proposals for a deal with the EU have been voted down by Parliament already, and the future of her political career is uncertain.

### 4 Foreign Policy

Britain has been more of an outsider within the EU for some time, long before the Brexit referendum. It's political attitude towards the Union is characterized by a frustration with the way it operates and by dissent against mainstream ideas within the EU establishment. Over the years of its membership, the UK more often than not found itself to be on the losing side of political issues, usually outnumbered by a Franco-German pro-European majority [8]. However it is unclear, whether Brexit will give Britain more clout and influence on the global stage as both British and European politicians warn of isolation and a slide into irrelevance. However, Britain is in a uniquely favorable position amongst EU countries to make it on its own, as it has its own Anglosphere to join as an alternative to the EU. There are advocates within the British public sphere who promote the idea that Britain has in fact never been a part of the European continent, and shares closer cultural ties with the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, than it does with Europe.

Regarding the political position towards Russia, it is difficult to discern any predominant view in the United Kingdom. Russia's intervention in the Ukraine is generally regarded as brutal and aggressive, but there is little political will in the British government to take any military measures to resist this aggression [9]. Moreover, sympathy for Ukraine is heavily tempered by a general belief that political and financial corruption is widespread in that country and is unlikely to be eradicated in near future. It is also widely believed that Russia had been provoked by the aggressive diplomacy of the European Union, who by inviting Ukraine to join an association agreement violated the boundaries of what Russia perceives as its sphere of influence [9]. Despite the fact that relations to Russia are at an all time low due to the poisoning of two British citizens in Salisbury in 2018, historic precedent from the wars against Napoleon and Hitler shows that Russia is a natural ally of Britain to use against a united European mainland. In so far as events in the Ukraine have influenced British attitudes to any other general European issues, they have caused a growing British popular hostility towards the further extension of the European Union. Traditionally, the British government has been favourable to the expansion of the EU, an attitude in which British public opinion shifted over the recent years, losing enthusiasm for enlargement of the Union and seeing new member states as an additional burden for the British taxpayers to carry. Successful campaigns by UKIP and other political forces drawing attention to the large number of Central and Eastern European citizens from the EU working in the United Kingdom have helped in shifting political attitudes towards that position [10].

### 5 Domestic Policy

Domestically, Britain has to deal with an array of pressing issues including child poverty, homelessness [11], and the failure to effectively integrate and prevent the ghettoisation of many Muslim communities [12]. However at the moment those are being largely overshadowed by the need to make preparations to deal with the domestic impact that Brexit might have. Britain leaving the EU is widely expected to cause short-term economic instability, with some media outlets warning of shortages in imported consumer goods and medicine due to the reimposition of customs duties and new border checkpoints [13]. While predictions regarding the domestic consequences of Brexit differ by source, it is universally accepted that the UK is headed for a period of uncertainty, a fact which is already having economic consequences. Inflation jumped to 2.9 per cent, well above the central bank's target of 2 per cent. Prices are rising faster than wages do, which has a negative impact on consumer spending [14]. In addition to that, many transnational companies based in the UK are considering relocating their headquarters to mainland Europe in the wake of the chaos which is Brexit. While the short-term consequences are generally regarded to be negative, the outlook is different in the long term, where the lifting of the regulatory burden previously imposed by the EU is expected to make Britain an attractive location for business and capital again [15].

### 6 Recent Developments

Amidst the chaos around the Brexit vote, Britain recently discovered that it might be not as isolated in Europe as it looked at first after the referendum. Nationalist governments in Hungary and Poland share some of British criticisms of the EU, and while neither of the two countries plans on leaving the block themselves, they share an opinion on immigration, opposing migrant quotas and condemning the unilateral decision Germany has made as it has welcomed millions of refugees into Europe over the past decade. The 2018 election in Italy brought a right-leaning populist movement into power under Matteo Salvini who expressed sympathy for Britain and condemned the EU treatment of Britain in response to the triggering of Article 50 as punitive [16]. The UK is supposed to leave the EU on the 29th of March 2019, and much hinges on the decisions made by Parliament in the upcoming weeks.



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