

EU maintains hard line toward UK over Brexit

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On the second day of their summit, European Union leaders continued with their hardline stance towards the UK after its vote last Thursday to leave the bloc.

British Prime Minister David Cameron hardly had time to depart from Brussels on Tuesday before German Chancellor Angela Merkel appeared before the cameras and quashed the hopes of sections of the British bourgeoisie that the decision to leave could be corrected. “I want to say frankly that I can see no way that this can be reversed again,” said Merkel.

It was “not the time for wishful thinking ... The referendum is a reality which exists,” according to the Chancellor. She welcomed the fact that another informal summit was planned in September without Britain.

Although the British government has yet to trigger Article 50, which regulates the procedure for a member state to leave the EU, and is still formally in the EU, Cameron did not participate in the meeting of the remaining 27 EU members in Brussels yesterday.

Instead, the European Council intended to lay out guidelines for Britain’s exit from and future relations with the EU, the official web site of the German government reported. According to Merkel, “all agreed” at the summit that “until the application, there can be no formal or informal negotiations with the United Kingdom.”

EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker confirmed that the EU states urged Cameron to create clarity about the exit of his country as quickly as possible. “We don’t have months to reflect,” he said after the summit. In an earlier press conference, he sharply criticised the Brexit supporters. He could not understand those “who campaigned for the exit and are then completely incapable of telling us what they want.” He had assumed that they had “a plan.”

Germany’s Social Democrats, who for days have been agitating for a rapid British exit, along with the strengthening of Europe’s military power, praised the hard line course. SPD chairman and Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel said on the sidelines of a meeting of SPD leading politicians in Brussels: “Angela Merkel has made clear that there will be no informal negotiations with Britain and that we must quickly reach decisions. She had clearly ruled out the idea that one would, so to speak, show a bit of restraint.”

Gabriel declared in an interview with German daily *Handelsblatt* on Monday that he was in favour of making an example of London if this resulted in the break-up of the United Kingdom. “The politics of Johnson and Cameron have also had the potential result that the United Kingdom could break apart,” he said. Scotland and Northern Ireland had “made absolutely clear they do not want to leave the EU.” Behind the hard line stance is concealed the fear of the German and European elites that the EU could completely collapse. *Der Spiegel*, which used the cover of its last edition prior to the referendum to plead with Britain to stay within the EU, warned in the lead article of its latest edition: “The EU can have no interest in making the exit for Britain as easy as possible. The danger that the British example could catch on would be much too great.”

Already, the article continued, “the populist tendencies in many European countries [sensed] a breakthrough” and “they will be strengthened even if the mere suggestion is created that the British economy can survive largely unscathed from the divorce from a united Europe.” If after the Brexit, a Frexit or Öxit—i.e. an exit of France or Austria—took place, “the European Union would be at an end. And the euro as well.”

Therefore, it was “so important that Europe’s

politicians do everything to prevent such a conflagration,” according to *Der Spiegel*.

While the European elites are desperately trying to contain the political, economic and social crisis on the continent, Brexit is seen at the same time as an opportunity to “further develop” the EU in areas previously blocked by Britain. Above all, this concerns the creation of a joint European defence and security policy.

Merkel declared that the time had now come to act: “The world is in turmoil, the world will not wait on the European Union and we in the European Union must confront the consequences of instability, wars and crises in our neighbourhood and be ready to act.”

At the heart of the meeting on Wednesday was a paper titled, “EU global strategy on foreign and security policy,” by EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini. According to a report in the German daily *Die Welt*, the paper was drafted last year in close consultation with Germany’s defence ministry.

The paper presents a blueprint for the establishment of the EU as an aggressive military power capable of waging war independently of NATO in emergency situations and organising military interventions outside of Europe.

“As Europeans we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats. While NATO exists to defend its members—most of which are European—from external attack, Europeans must be better equipped, trained and organised to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary,” the paper stated.

Within the framework of a “concerted and cooperative effort,” military capacities had to be improved. “Developing and maintaining defence capabilities requires both investments and optimising the use of national resources through deeper cooperation,” it continued.

The document makes it clear that the aim of the EU is not the defence of human rights, but rather the pursuit of its economic and geostrategic interests around the globe. The document states that these interests include: “an open and fair economic system, the need for global maritime growth and security, ensuring open and protected ocean and sea routes critical for trade and

access to natural resources.”

It continues: “The EU will contribute to global maritime security, building on its experience in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and exploring possibilities in the Gulf of Guinea, the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca.”

In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Mogherini explained that “after principled considerations,” she had decided “to lay the strategy on the table now.” As a community of “small and medium-sized states,” it was necessary to stick together “in order to play a role in the world,” she said. Precisely now was “a good moment to remember this,” and the referendum could serve as “a wake up call,” not only for “EU institutions,” but also for “the politicians in Berlin, Paris, Prague or Dublin.”



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