



Geoffrey Van Orden's
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From Brussels and Strasbourg
Special Edition - The Speech



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Conservatives



SPECIAL EDITION

THE SPEECH: A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU

"For us, the European Union is a means to an end - not an end in itself [...] the single market, and our ability to help set its rules is the principal reason for our membership of the EU [...] It is wrong to ask people whether to stay or go before we have had a chance to put the relationship right [...] when we have negotiated a new settlement, we will give the British people a referendum with a very simple in or out choice"

The Prime Minister, 23 January 2013, London

What a great speech from David Cameron on Britain and Europe - "well judged, elegantly phrased, persuasively argued and expertly delivered," according to one newspaper. I agree. I was one of three British MEPs that were there. The tone was exactly right - not confrontational but very reasonable, not fanciful but realistic, not tub-thumping but very serious with a clear vision. The British national interest was the Prime Minister's guiding principle - and what he set out should appeal to the British people across the political spectrum. It should also appeal to many friends across Europe - except the French, of course, who seem to think they have a monopoly in steering the EU project. For the doubters I would ask, do we just leave it to other capitals, to Paris, Brussels and Berlin, to make the running, relentlessly heading in the wrong direction, or does Britain put its stake in the ground? Now we need to unite behind the Prime Minister, who has heard our views and responded so effectively.

WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID:

About why it was necessary to speak out

"the problems in the Eurozone are driving fundamental change in Europe [...] there is a crisis of European competitiveness, as other nations across the world soar ahead [...] and there is a gap between the EU and its citizens which has grown dramatically in recent years [...] we need fundamental, far-reaching change."

Reminding the continental Europeans of our credentials

"Over the years, Britain has made her own, unique contribution to Europe. We have provided a haven to those fleeing tyranny and persecution. And in Europe's darkest hour, we helped keep the flame of liberty alight [...] In more recent decades, we have played our part in tearing down the Iron Curtain and championing the entry into the EU of those countries that lost so many years to Communism".

His vision for the future

"The members of the Eurozone should accept that we, and indeed all Member States, will have changes that we need to safeguard our interests and strengthen democratic legitimacy. And we should be able to make these changes too [...] We understand and respect the right of others to maintain their commitment to [ever closer union] but for Britain – and perhaps for others - it is not the objective [our] vision of flexibility and co-operation is not the same as those who want to build an ever closer political union – but it is just as valid.

"We believe in a flexible union of free member states [...] to represent and promote the values of European civilisation in the world. To advance our shared interests by using our collective power to open markets. And to build a strong economic base across the whole of Europe. And we believe in our nations working together to protect the security and diversity of our energy supplies. To tackle climate change and global poverty. To work together against terrorism and organised crime. And to continue to welcome new countries into the EU.

"For us the European Union is a means to an end – not an end in itself [...] Britain is not in the single currency, and we're not going to be. But we all need the Eurozone to have the right governance and structures to secure a successful currency for the long term.

"And those of us outside the Eurozone also need certain safeguards to ensure, for example, that our access to the Single Market is not in any way compromised."

Principles on which to meet the challenges ahead

- 1. Competitiveness** - completing the single market; trade deals with US, India, Japan; less bureaucracy and cost.
- 2. Flexibility** - "We need a structure that can accommodate the diversity of its members [...] we are a family of democratic nations, all members of one EU, whose essential foundation is the single market rather than the single currency [...] those of us outside the euro recognise that those in it are likely to need to make some big institutional changes."
- 3. "Power must be able to flow back to Member States".**
- 4. Democratic accountability:** "we need to have a bigger and more significant role for national parliaments."
- 5. Fairness:** "whatever new arrangements are enacted for the Eurozone, they must work fairly for those inside it and out."

Why we shouldn't have an in/out referendum now

"A vote today between the status quo and leaving would be an entirely false choice."

"It is wrong to ask people whether to stay or go before we have had a chance to put the relationship right. And when we have negotiated that new settlement, we will give the British people a referendum with a very simple in or out choice."

What about the Norwegian or Swiss option?

"There are some who suggest we could turn ourselves into Norway or Switzerland – with access to the single market but outside the EU. But would that really be in our best interests? I admire those countries and they are friends of ours – but they are very different from us. Norway sits on the biggest energy reserves in Europe, and has a sovereign wealth fund of over 500 billion euros. And while Norway is part of the single market – and pays for the principle - it has no say at all in setting its rules: it just has to implement its directives."

"The Swiss have to negotiate access to the Single Market sector by sector. Accepting EU rules – over which they have no say – or else not getting full access to the Single Market, including in key sectors like financial service"

There will be a referendum! A chance for the British people to have their say

"Some people say that to point out [the need for fundamental change] is irresponsible, creates uncertainty for business and puts a question mark over Britain's place in the European Union [...] But the question mark is already there and ignoring it won't make it go away."

"The next Conservative Manifesto in 2015 will ask for a mandate from the British people for a Conservative Government to negotiate a new settlement with our European partners in the next Parliament [...] It will be a relationship with the Single Market at its heart [...] it is wrong to ask people whether to stay or go before we have had a chance to put the relationship right [...] [the question will be] to stay in the EU on these new terms; or come out altogether. [...] It will be an in-out referendum."

The full text of David Cameron's speech, as given, can be found at:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/01/david-camerson-speech-eu-full-text>

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE MANY ISSUES ON WHICH I AM ENGAGED.

I welcome invitations to speak to Conservative Associations, as well as businesses etc. throughout the East of England

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