

BREXIT, THE LINE IN THE SAND

Carlo Bastasin, Lorenzo Bini Smaghi,
Marcello Messori, Stefano Micossi, Fabrizio Saccomanni,
Gianni Toniolo, and Gian Luigi Tosato

IN RECENT DAYS, European Council President Donald Tusk outlined the terms of an agreement that would facilitate the permanent inclusion of Great Britain in the European Union. Tusk's proposal would now have to be presented to the 18-19 February European Council.

While vague and lacking in detail, the agreement is likely to pose a threat to the future of Europe, as well as the euro. The compromise on European migrants could actually restrict the right of free movement of individuals and thus calls into question one of the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence in Europe. In addition, countries that have chosen to stay out of the single currency will have the right to interfere with euro-area decisions, if not veto them, guaranteeing London's privileges as a financial center. It also provides a means through which national interests could interfere with common ones, possibly allowing the blocking of European legislation by a 55% majority of national parliaments.

It is important for the UK to remain in the EU. Without it, Europe would be economically, politically, and culturally weaker. Additionally, the area needs to avoid giving the impression of a community in decline and under gradual dismemberment. However, the Italian government should defend the foundations of the European project and refuse an agreement that, through the adoption of unilateral demands, would weaken the area and put it on a path divergent from the aspirations and interests of its citizens. Yielding to British demands that do not align with the common interest not only means abandoning the objectives upon which the European project was founded, but it also opens the door to future blackmail by other countries.

The fallacy of the agreement Tusk proposed is that it will allow London to interfere with future European financial decisions without any analogous responsibility. It would have the power to evade common regulatory systems, inevitably weakening the efforts other countries are making to conform to a single set of financial regulations. London could manipulate the exchange rate between sterling and euro without oversight, but it would retain the right to intervene in euro-area monetary policy. Likewise, it would keep the right to vote on fiscal policies of other countries, while remaining detached from any reciprocal solidarity, as has happened in the case of aid for Greece.

However, other British requests should be accepted for reasons beyond the spirit of conciliation. Acceding to the demand for a more competitive European Union means, for example, confronting the liberalization of services in the internal market and solving the problem of the euro-area's competitiveness gaps in a concrete manner. Some of the measures proposed by the agreement would require a revision of the Treaties. From a political point of view, for reasons of efficiency and democracy, it is unacceptable that the national parliaments have not been involved in the design and acceptance of the agreement, as evidenced by the more than baffling exclusion of the European Parliament. European policymakers should at least schedule a special inter-parliamentary meeting between national parliaments and the European Parliament to discuss the agreement, as well as work toward an inter-institutional understanding between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

We appeal to the Italian parliament to set aside the disinterest with which it has observed the Brexit and to take up its responsibility to put forth a position that reflects the European aspirations and interests of its citizens.