



“Northern Europe and the Future of the Western Liberal Order”

Conference Resolution

NKSU Council Meeting in London (UK) – Friday, 25 October 2019

We, the Nordic Conservative Student Union (NKSU), understand the following:

From the second half of the 20th century onwards, Northern Europe has seemed to find itself on a steady trajectory towards progressively closer cooperation amongst its constituent nations. Historically unprecedented political, economic, geostrategic, and cultural ties were developed among the states in the whole region as part of the efforts to establish the so-called “Western liberal order” and institutions underpinning it. These were accomplishments which were not least the result of the ambitions and work of many centre-right leaders from Northern Europe.

This began in 1949 with the foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of which Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Norway were founding members. Initially disengaged from the European Economic Community (EEC), a large share of the Northern European nations came together to launch the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960 to promote open commerce among its members.

This development culminated from the end of the century onwards, as the fall of Soviet communism accelerated the completion of the Western security architecture and European integration process. Thus, in 1992, the UK and Ireland signed the Maastricht Treaty to help forge the modern European Union (EU). In the same year, the EEA Agreement further integrated the economies of the EFTA and EU Member States, before Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995. In the 2000s, the recently liberated Baltic nations became members of both NATO and the EU. Added to this, the success of the Northern Ireland peace process laid the foundations for an ever-closer relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It also aided the development of greater links between Ireland and NATO.

For at least the past fifteen years therefore, there was a stable and close liberal order binding together all states represented in the NKSU. They were united by close economic cooperation within the framework of the EU or the EEA. They were all members of or closely aligned with the NATO.

This order has been significantly challenged on multiple fronts in recent years. First, the United Kingdom’s narrow vote in 2016 to leave the EU is threatening to sever the close economic, geopolitical, and security links between the country and the rest of especially Northern Europe. This is all the more pertinent in light of the ambitions of the present UK Government to seek the “hardest” possible exit from the EU, resulting in the highest possible trade barriers between the two economies. The “Brexit” decision has further created new insecurity in relation to the status of

Northern Ireland. Secondly, the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States has led to a *de facto* weakening of the transatlantic alliance, as the US commitment to its military partners has been called into question under his administration. In parallel to these developments, many Northern European states have seen the emergence of nationalist, populist movements that actively seek to roll back the accomplishments of economic, political, and military integration in favour of a more isolationist and protectionist Northern Europe.

We, the Nordic Conservative Student Union (NKSU), believe that:

- The Western liberal order, as forged in the second half of the 20th century, remains the most effective guarantor of peace, freedom, stability, and prosperity on the European continent in general and Northern Europe in particular;
- Brexit and the actions of the current US presidential administration pose a significant risk to the integrity of the Western liberal order and thereby the welfare of Northern Europe;
- NATO and transatlantic relations in general remain the bedrock of Northern European security;
- Any form of Brexit will significantly harm economic, political, and security cooperation between the United Kingdom and the rest of Northern Europe, especially the Republic of Ireland; and
- The defence of the peace process in Northern Ireland must be the unconditional priority of any government of the United Kingdom;

We, the Nordic Conservative Student Union (NKSU), call for:

- Political and civil society actors in Northern Europe, especially on the centre-right, to defend the Western liberal order and its institutions from its detractors at home and abroad;
- The EU to develop a strategic autonomy in the military and diplomatic realm, in the absence of firm global leadership by the United States;
- Any such EU strategic autonomy to complement, not supersede, the aims and work of NATO;
- The UK's membership of the EU to be ended under the terms negotiated at the EU Council Summit on 16 October 2019, unless the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland decide to reverse Brexit; and
- Both parties to negotiate the closest possible economic and political partnership, ideally in the mould of the EEA model, should the UK leave the EU;