



The
**Red
Cell**

**For the Avoidance of Doubt:
A Suggested Belated Mission
Statement for Brexit Negotiators**

BRIEFING

NOTE

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Introduction

Commentators as prominent as retired EU legal doyen JC Piris have been suggesting that the Theresa May team does not have a clear idea of what it seeks to achieve from Brexit. In part, this perception is down to anti-Brexit campaigners (including the Commission) seeking to undermine their opponents. Official rebuttal is difficult as negotiations are secret. That noted, clearly there are indeed intense policy debates and disputes ongoing, with leaks portraying factional bias – including and especially bias held by some senior civil servants.

In advance of forthcoming speeches by key Cabinet Members, we here suggest what might constitute the unambiguous common instructions issued to negotiators. This would bury remaining speculation, and introduce a level of clarity that should have been publicly visible from the triggering of Article 50.

The Mission Statement

Separate Red Cell papers explore the detail in far greater depth. What follows here summarises what logically arises from the PM's speeches at Florence and Lancaster House.

We propose that the negotiating objective of Her Majesty's Government's towards Brexit be defined as:

The delivery of a UK-EU Free Trade Agreement, operating outside but in equal partnership with the institutions of the EU; pursuing minimal barriers to trade based on equivalence, mutual trust, and gradual managed sectoral divergence; applied in the context of wider continental and global technical and standards cooperation; cooperating bilaterally in shifting areas of joint concern, through a system of unwelded 'docking ports' rather than institutional integration; funded on the basis of 'juste retour'; and designed in order to take back control of the nation's financial contributions, borders, and waters, and to restore direct democratic accountability in decision-making.

Conclusion

The objective requires the UK to be outside the Customs Union, and outside the Single Market. It rules out as a consequence EEA and DCTFA membership as an end state. Other papers by the Red Cell have comprehensively explored why. We are not here in a position (sitting outside the negotiations) to fully judge their present value as temporary transitional routes, other than to note the very significant risk of them becoming a permanent default – though setting out a clear FTA end ambition along with a trigger date partly reduces that prospect.