

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in Brussels, Belgium

June 5, 2014

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. It is good to be here with my great friend and partner, Prime Minister David Cameron. Earlier this afternoon we concluded our summit with our fellow G–7 leaders. And I want to thank His Majesty King Philippe, the Prime Minister, as well as the Belgian people for welcoming us back to Brussels.

David and I also just had the opportunity to meet and discuss some pressing challenges, including Syria, Libya, and Iran, as well as the process of ending our combat mission in Afghanistan. We spoke about the deepening partnership that we have on issues like Nigeria, in support of our shared goal of safely returning the kidnapped girls to their families. But what I want to focus on briefly, before we take questions, are two issues that dominated our discussion over the last 2 days, and that's the situation in Ukraine and energy security.

Originally, of course, our summit was supposed to be in Sochi. But after Russia's actions in Ukraine, our nations united quickly around a common strategy. We suspended Russia from the G–8, and we canceled the Sochi meeting, making this the first G–7 held without Russia in some 20 years. All seven of our nations have taken steps to impose costs on Russia for its behavior. Today, in contrast to a growing global economy, a sluggish Russian economy is even weaker because of the choices made by the Russia's leadership. Meanwhile, our nations continue to stand united in our support and assistance to the Ukrainian people. And the G–7 summit was an occasion for me, David, and our fellow leaders to ensure that we're in lockstep going forward.

On Ukraine, I shared the results of my meeting yesterday with President-elect Poroshenko. Like so many Ukrainians, he wants to forge closer ties with Europe and the United States, but also recognizes that Ukraine will benefit from a constructive relationship with Russia. So I believe his Inauguration provides an opportunity, particularly since he has demonstrated a commitment to reach out to the East and pursue reforms. Russia needs to seize that opportunity. Russia needs to recognize that President-elect Poroshenko is the legitimately elected leader of Ukraine and engage the Government in Kiev.

Given its influence over the militants in Ukraine, Russia continues to have a responsibility to convince them to end their violence, lay down their weapons, and enter into a dialogue with the Ukrainian Government. On the other hand, if Russia's provocations continue, it's clear from our discussions here that the G–7 nations are ready to impose additional costs on Russia.

I also briefed David on the new initiative I announced in Warsaw to bolster the security of our NATO allies, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as our focus on building counterterrorism capabilities across the Middle East and North Africa. David will be hosting the next NATO summit in Wales in September, and I appreciated him updating me on the preparations for that summit. We agree that it's going to be an opportunity for every ally to make sure they're carrying their share and investing in the capabilities our alliance needs for the future.

Now, the situation in Ukraine has also highlighted the need for greater energy security. At the G–7, we agreed to help Ukraine reduce its energy risks to include diversifying its supplies.

We're going to help countries in Central and Eastern Europe strengthen their energy security as well. And I—and following the review I called for in the United States earlier this year, every G-7 country will conduct an energy assessment to identify the possible impact of any potential disruptions and to offer ways we can better prevent disruptions and recover from them more quickly.

Related to this, we agreed at the G-7 to continue to lead by example in the fight against climate change, which poses a danger to our environment, our economies, and our national security. I made it clear that the United States will continue to do our part. Earlier this week, we took a major step, proposing new standards that, for the first time, would limit carbon pollution from our existing power plants. This is one of the most ambitious steps that any nation has taken to combat climate change. It would reduce carbon emissions from our electricity sector by 30 percent. It will help us meet the commitments that we made, when I first came into office, at Copenhagen. And it will improve our public health. It's also going to be good for our economy by helping to create more clean energy jobs and ultimately lower electricity bills for Americans. So it's the right thing to do.

This builds on the steps we've taken over the past 5 years to invest more in renewables like solar and wind, raise fuel standards for our cars and trucks, and make our homes and businesses more energy efficient. And today, we're holding our carbon emissions to levels not seen in nearly 20 years. So we're making important progress, but my action plan for climate change indicates that we've got to keep at it and do more.

I know this is a cause that David is also passionate about. We agree that every nation has to do its share. All the major economies, including the G-7 and emerging markets like China, need to show leadership as we work on a new global climate agreement. And that includes putting forward by March of next year ambitious, long-term targets for reducing emissions.

So again, I want to thank Prime Minister Cameron and our fellow leaders for our work here together in Brussels. David, I believe that whenever our two nations stand together, it can lead a world that is more secure and more prosperous and more just. And we'll be reminded of that again tomorrow in Normandy as we mark the 70th anniversary of D-day.

On that day, like so many others, American and British troops stood together and fought valiantly alongside our allies. It didn't just help to win the war, they helped to turn the tide of human history and are the reason that we can stand here today in a free Europe and with the freedoms our nations enjoy. So theirs is the legacy that our two nations and our great alliance continue to uphold. And I'm grateful to have a fine partner in David in making that happen.

Thank you, David.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you. And good afternoon. And I'm delighted to be here with you today, Barack. As we stand together in Europe on the 70th anniversary of the D-day landings, we should remind the world of the strength and steadfastness of the bond between the United Kingdom and the United States.

Seventy years ago, as you just said, our countries stood like two rocks of freedom and democracy in the face of Nazi tyranny. Seventy years ago tonight, thousands of young British and American soldiers, with their Canadian and Free French counterparts, were preparing to cross the channel in the greatest liberation force that the world has ever known. Those young men were united in purpose: to restore democracy and freedom to continental Europe, to free by force of arms ancient European nations, and to allow the nations and peoples of Europe to chart their destiny in the world.

Thousands of those young men paid the ultimate price, and we honor their memory today and tomorrow. Shortly after D-day, my own grandfather was wounded and came home. We will never forget what they did and the debt that we owe them for the peace and the freedom that we enjoy on this continent.

Today, in a new century, our two democracies continue to stand for and to uphold the same values in the world: democracy, liberty, the rule of law. And day in, day out, our people work together to uphold those values right across the globe. And that approach has been at the heart of what we've discussed here at the G-7 and in our bilateral meeting today.

We've talked about one of the greatest opportunities we have to turbocharge the global economy by concluding trade deals, including the EU-U.S. deal, which would be the biggest of them all: a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership that would create growth and jobs, a deal that could be worth up to £10 billion a year for Britain alone. It would help to secure our long-term economic success and generate a better future for hard-working families back at home. That is why I was so determined to launch those negotiations a year ago in Lough Erne. And since then, we've made steady progress, but we've got to keep our eyes on the huge prize on offer and not get bogged down.

We also discussed what I believe is the greatest threat that we face: how we counter extremism and the threat that terrorist groups operating elsewhere pose to the safety of our people, both at home and abroad. This year we will bring our troops home from Afghanistan. They can be proud of what they've achieved over the last decade: denying terrorists the safe haven from which to plot attacks against Britain or the United States. But at the same time, as we've reduced the threat from that region, so Al Qaida franchises have grown in other parts of the world. Many of these groups are focused on the countries where they operate, but they still pose a risk to our people, our businesses, and our interests.

Barack and I share the same view of how we tackle this threat in the fragile regions of the world where terrorist networks seek a foothold. As I've said before, our approach must be tough, patient, intelligent, and based on strong international partnerships. So when it comes to Syria, now the number-one destination for jihadists anywhere in the world, we've agreed to intensify our efforts to address the threat of foreign fighters traveling to and from Syria. We'll be introducing new measures in the U.K. to prosecute those who plan and train for terrorism abroad.

And here at the G-7, we've agreed to do more to work with Syria's neighbors to strengthen border security and to disrupt the terrorist financing that funds these jihadist training camps.

In Libya, we want to help the Government as it struggles to overcome the disastrous legacy of Qaddafi's misrule and to build a stable, peaceful, and prosperous future. Barack and I have both recently appointed envoys who will be working together to support efforts to reach a much-needed political settlement. And we are fulfilling our commitment to train the Libyan security forces, with the first tranche of recruits due to begin their training in the U.K. this month.

In Nigeria, we're both committed to supporting the Nigerian Government and its neighbors as they confront the scourge of Boko Haram. The kidnap of the Chobok girls was an act of pure evil, and Britain and the United States have provided immediate assistance in the search. In the longer term, we stand ready to provide more practical assistance to help the

Nigerians and the region to strengthen their defense and security institutions and to develop the expertise needed to counter these barbaric extremists.

And finally, as Barack said, we had an important discussion on Ukraine and relations with Russia. From the outset of this crisis, the G-7 nations have stood united, clear in our support for the Ukrainian people and their right to choose their own future, and firm in our message to President Putin that Russia's actions are completely unacceptable and totally at odds with the values of this group of democracies. That is why Russia no longer has a seat at the table here with us.

At this summit, we were clear about three things. First, the status quo is unacceptable; the continuing destabilization of eastern Ukraine must stop. Second, there are a set of things that need to happen. President Putin must recognize the legitimate election of President Poroshenko. He must stop arms crossing the border into Ukraine. He must cease Russian support for separatist groups. And third, if these things don't happen, then sectoral sanctions will follow. The next month will be vital in judging if President Putin has taken these steps, and that is what I will urge President Putin to do when I meet him later today.

Finally, we discussed the cancer eating away at the world's economic and political systems: corruption. Corruption is the archenemy of democracy and development. The best way to fight corruption and to drive growth is through what I call the three T's: greater transparency, fair tax systems, and freer trade. That was at the heart of our G-8 agenda in Lough Erne, and today we agreed to push for more action on fair tax systems, freer trade, and greater transparency, things that are now hardwired into these international gatherings this year and for many years to come.

Thank you.

President Obama. All right. We've got a couple questions from each press delegation. We'll start with Jeff Mason at Reuters.

Jeff.

France-U.S. Relations/BNP Paribas/France's Proposed Sale of Mistral Helicopter Carriers to Russia/Ukraine

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You're going to France later this evening. Since you last had French President Hollande visit in a state visit earlier this year, a lot of tensions have arisen in the relationship, including on BNP Paribas. The French say that a potential multibillion-dollar fine on that bank could affect the global economy and could affect trade talks. Do you believe those concerns are valid? And how do you expect to address them with him tonight and also U.S. concerns about the French selling Mistral warships to Russia?

And to the Prime Minister, do you feel isolated, sir, among the EU—among your EU leaders about your position on Jean-Claude Juncker as the European Commission President? And who would you like to see get the job? And separately, do you feel any pressure from President Obama about your position on keeping the U.K. in the EU? Thank you.

President Obama. First of all, the relationship between the United States and France has never been stronger. On a whole range of issues, we're seeing intense cooperation. And I'm looking forward to seeing President Hollande this evening to talk about a range of issues and continue some of the work that was done here in Brussels.

My answer on the banking case is short and simple. The tradition of the United States is that the President does not meddle in prosecutions. We don't call the Attorney General—I do not pick up the phone and tell the Attorney General how to prosecute cases that have been brought. I do not push for settlements of cases that have been brought. Those are decisions that are made by an independent Department of Justice.

I've communicated that to President Hollande. This is not a unique position on my part. Perhaps it is a different tradition than exists in other countries, but it is designed to make sure that the rule of law is not in any way impacted by political expediency. And so this will be determined by U.S. attorneys in discussion with representatives of the bank, and I'll read about it in the newspapers just like everybody else.

Q. He said he's going to confront you about it tonight.

President Obama. He'll hear the same answer from me tonight as he just heard at this podium.

Q. And Mistral?

President Obama. I have expressed some concerns—and I don't think I'm alone in this—about continuing significant trade—defense deals with Russia at a time when they have violated basic international law and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their neighbors. So President Hollande understands my position. I recognize that this is a big deal. I recognize that the jobs in France are important. I think it would have been preferable to press the pause button. President Hollande so far has made a different decision. And that does not negate the broader cooperation that we've had with France with respect to its willingness to work with us on sanctions to discourage President Putin from engaging in further destabilizing actions and, hopefully, to encourage him to move in a more constructive direction.

We are at a point where Mr. Putin has the chance to get back into a lane of international law. He has a President in Poroshenko who he can negotiate directly with. Having spoken to President Poroshenko this morning—or yesterday morning, it's clear that he recognizes that Ukraine needs to have a good relationship with Russia, but also rightly affirms the right of Ukraine to engage with the rest of the world.

And the steps that David outlined earlier and that the G-7 unanimously agrees with, which is for Mr. Putin to take—seize this moment, recognize Poroshenko is the legitimate leader of Ukraine, cease the support of separatists and the flow of arms, work with Ukraine to engage those in the east during this process of constitutional and economic reform—if Mr. Putin takes those steps, then it is possible for us to begin to rebuild trust between Russia and its neighbors and Europe. Should he fail to do so, though, there are going to be additional consequences.

And one of the important things that came out of this meeting today was the recognition on the part of all of us that we can't simply allow drift. The mere fact that some of Mr.—some of the Russian soldiers have moved back off the border and that Russia is now destabilizing Ukraine through surrogates, rather than overtly and explicitly, does not mean that we can afford 3 months or 4 months or 6 months of continued violence and conflict in eastern Ukraine.

We will have a chance to see what Mr. Putin does over the next 2, 3, 4 weeks. And if he remains on the current course, then we've already indicated the kinds of actions that we're prepared to take.

All right?

Prime Minister Cameron. You asked a couple of questions about Europe. It's worth setting the context. We've just had a set of European elections where—to take two countries at random, France and Britain—in France, the Front National, an openly anti-European party, won; and an anti-European party in my country won. And when these things happen you can stick your head in the sand and wish these results would go away, or you can have a strategy for addressing the concerns of the people that you represent in your country. I have a strategy to represent and understand and reflect those concerns.

And that's why I think it's important that we have people running the institutions of Europe who understand the need for change, the need for reform. And I would argue that that is a view that is quite widely shared amongst other heads of government and heads of state in the European Union.

As for Britain's future, I'm very clear what I want to achieve—is to secure Britain's place in a reformed European Union. And I have a strategy for delivering that. It is about renegotiating our position. It's about recovering some important powers. It's about making some significant changes and then putting that decision in a referendum to the British people, but very much recommending that we stay in a reformed European Union.

Again, it's a strategy for dealing with an issue, which, I think, if we just walked away from it, we'd see Britain drift towards the exits, and I don't want that to happen.

Q. Do you feel any pressure from the United States about that?

Prime Minister Cameron. No. We have had good discussions about these issues as we discuss everything else.

President Obama. Absolutely.

Prime Minister Cameron. Let's have a question from the BBC.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Ukraine/Scottish Independence Referendum/European Union

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*from the BBC. Mr. President, even if you don't have a meeting scheduled face to face with Vladimir Putin yourself, are you going to end up talking with him face to face in France? And do you see real possibilities of opening up a path away from the crisis by you engaging with him?

Britain is potentially facing, Mr. President, two major decisions: whether or not Scotland stays part of the United Kingdom and whether the United Kingdom stays a part of the European Union. What do those decisions mean to you and to the people of the United States?

Prime Minister, you'll be the first leader, I think, after this summit to engage with Vladimir Putin face to face. Despite everything you've said, is there something of an olive branch in your hand? After all, Mr. Putin has not actually denounced the electoral process which brought the new President to power in Ukraine. Is there a way out, and is that what you're really going to be exploring with him this evening?

And do you accept that Germany may not come to your aid and stop Jean-Claude Juncker becoming Commission President? Will that actually, potentially blow your entire strategy off course? You think you may be able to negotiate a brilliant reform of the European Union, but

if Jean-Claude Juncker becomes President of the European Commission, will your credibility be so damaged in Britain that people may simply vote to leave the Union?

Finally, who are you more afraid of, Angela Merkel or Theresa May? *[Laughter]*

Prime Minister Cameron. Great question. Right. Do you want to go? Let me take those.

First of all, my meeting with Vladimir Putin, I think it's just important to have this communication about some very important messages about what's happening now is not acceptable, about the changes that need to take place. I think, as the President said, there is an opportunity for diplomacy to play a role and to chart a path, because we've had these elections, the Ukrainian people have chosen a President. He's a capable man, and it's quite possible that he could have a proper relationship with Putin and there could be a proper relationship between Ukraine and Russia. But change is needed in order for that to happen, and that's the message that I will be delivering this evening.

In terms of your other questions, look, on this issue of who runs the European Commission, the European institutions, what matters is people who understand the need for change, who understand the need for reform, who realize that if things go on as they have, this Union is not going to work for its citizens. And that was the message that I think was loudly received in these European elections.

As for who—as you put it, Angela Merkel or Theresa May—look, I'm very fortunate in my life to work with some extremely strong and capable women, of which they are undoubtedly two. *[Laughter]*

President Obama. I have no doubt that I'll see Mr. Putin. And he and I have always had a businesslike relationship, and it is entirely appropriate that he is there to commemorate D-day, given the extraordinary sacrifices that were made by the people of the Soviet Union during World War II.

And should we have the opportunity to talk, I will be repeating the same message that I've been delivering to him throughout this crisis. Keep in mind that although we haven't had formal meetings, I've spoken to him by phone repeatedly from the outset of the protests in the Maidan. And my message has been very consistent, and that is that Russia has a legitimate interest in what happens in Ukraine, given that it's on its border and given its historical ties, but ultimately, it is up to the people of Ukraine to make their own decisions; that Russian Armed Forces annexing pieces of a neighbor is illegal and violates international law and the kinds of destabilizing activities that we now see, funded and encouraged by Russia, are illegal and are not constructive; and that there is a path in which Russia has the capacity to engage directly with President Poroshenko now. He should take it. If he does not, if he continues a strategy of undermining the sovereignty of Ukraine, then we have no choice but to respond.

And perhaps he's been surprised by the degree of unity that's been displayed. I do think the fact that he did not immediately denounce the outcome of the May 25 election perhaps offers the prospect that he's moving in a new direction. But I think we have to see what he does and not what he says.

With respect to the future of the United Kingdom, obviously, ultimately, this is up to the people of Great Britain. In the case of Scotland, there's a referendum process in place, and it's up to the people of Scotland.

I would say that the United Kingdom has been an extraordinary partner to us. From the outside, at least, it looks like things have worked pretty well. And we obviously have a deep

interest in making sure that one of the closest allies that we will ever have remains strong, robust, united, and an effective partner. But ultimately, these are decisions that are to be made by the folks there.

With respect to the EU, we share a strategic vision with Great Britain on a whole range of international issues, and so it's always encouraging for us to know that Great Britain has a seat at the table in the larger European project. I think in light of the events that we're going to be commemorating tomorrow, it's important to recall that it was the steadfastness of Great Britain that, in part, allows us to be here in Brussels, in the seat of a unified and extraordinarily prosperous Europe. And it's hard for me to imagine that project going well in the absence of Great Britain. And I think it's also hard for me to imagine that it would be advantageous for Great Britain to be excluded from political decisions that have an enormous impact on its economic and political life.

So this is why we have elections, and we'll see the arguments made, and I'm sure that the people of Great Britain will make the right decision.

Stephen Collinson [Agence France-Presse].

Release of Sgt. Bowe R. Bergdahl, USA, From Captivity by Taliban Forces in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Have you been surprised by the backlash that's been whipped up by your decision to do a deal to free Bowe Bergdahl? And what do you think is motivating that? In retrospect, do you think you could have done more to consult with Congress or announce the deal in a way that might have spared him and his family being caught up in the political crossfire?

And, Prime Minister, how do you respond to criticism that your decision to meet Vladimir Putin and his meetings with other key European leaders are actually devaluing the punishment that was meted out to Russia by throwing it out of the G-8? And finally, should Qatar be deprived of the right to host the World Cup? And if so, is England willing to host it?
[Laughter]

President Obama. I'm never surprised by controversies that are whipped up in Washington. [Laughter] Right? That's par for the course. But I'll repeat what I said 2 days ago. We have a basic principle: We do not leave anybody wearing the American uniform behind.

We had a prisoner of war whose health had deteriorated, and we were deeply concerned about. And we saw an opportunity, and we seized it. And I make no apologies for that.

We had discussed with Congress the possibility that something like this might occur. But because of the nature of the folks that we were dealing with and the fragile nature of these negotiations, we felt it was important to go ahead and do what we did. And we're now explaining to Congress the details of how we moved forward. But this basic principle that we don't leave anybody behind and this basic recognition that that often means prisoner exchanges with enemies is not unique to my administration. It dates back to the beginning of our Republic.

And with respect to how we announced it, I think it was important for people to understand that this is not some abstraction, this is not a political football. You have a couple of parents whose kid volunteered to fight in a distant land, who they hadn't seen in 5 years and weren't sure whether they'd ever see again. And as Commander in Chief of the United States Armed Forces, I am responsible for those kids. And I get letters from parents who say, if you

are in fact sending my child into war, make sure that that child is being taken care of. And I write too many letters to folks who unfortunately don't see their children again after fighting a war.

I make absolutely no apologies for making sure that we get back a young man to his parents and that the American people understand that this is somebody's child and that we don't condition whether or not we make the effort to try to get them back.

Did you have a second question?

Q. For the Prime Minister.

President Obama. Oh, okay. Well, I—you can ask him about football.

Prime Minister Cameron. On the issue of—first of all, on the issue of meeting President Putin, I think it's right to have this dialogue, particularly if you have a clear message and a clear point to make. And I think there's a world of difference between having a dialogue with President Putin and excluding someone from an institution as significant as the G-8, now the G-7. I think it was absolutely right to exclude Russia. I think I was one of the first G-8 leaders to make that point. It was totally the right decision, and there's a world of difference between the meeting we've just held, which did not include Russia, and having a bilateral meeting where we discuss these issues about Ukraine.

On the issue of football, we should let the investigation run its course, but of course, England is the home of football as it's the home and inventor of many sports—tennis, rugby, golf, skiing, table tennis, cricket. I don't think we can lay claim to—

President Obama. Baseball, basketball. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, I'm not sure that it goes all the way—

President Obama. I just want to be clear here.

Prime Minister Cameron. So we're always happy to provide a home for these sports.

President Obama. You did invent the English language, though.

Prime Minister Cameron. We did. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. We appreciate it.

Prime Minister Cameron. You've made a few changes.

President Obama. We have. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Cameron. You've made a few changes to it, but they don't hold us back. [*Laughter*] Final question from Rageh Omaar of ITV, I think.

U.S.-European Unity in Response to the Situation in Ukraine/International Sanctions Against Russia

Q. Mr. President, Rageh Omaar, ITV News. You spoke about the importance for you and your allies to be in complete lockstep on the crisis in Ukraine. If this crisis shows no sign of deescalating, you say that the next step will be to—sectoral sanctions. Are you confident that you will be in lockstep with all of the European allies and G-7 allies? Because there will be costs and consequences for them and their economies as sanctions get widened.

Prime Minister, my question to you is, you spoke forcefully about the threat of extremist ideology at home and abroad, described it as the greatest threat to Britain and its allies. And

even by your own government's estimate, there are several hundred British citizens learning to fight and kill in Syria. With regard to extremist ideology at home, particularly in schools—where there's been a lot of concern—don't you think it's not only unseemly, but wrong for members of your own government to engage in an argument about it whether the priority should be protecting British children against extremist ideology? Thank you.

Prime Minister Cameron. First of all, let me just say on the issue of sectoral sanctions and this issue of lockstep between the U.S. and countries of the European Union, I think it has been very striking, actually, over the last few months how we've been able to stay as unified as we have. And I pay tribute to Barack for his understanding of how important it is for us to try and work together and deliver these messages together. And I think it has surprised people. And I hope it has surprised President Putin.

In terms of tackling extremism, I mean, I set up the U.K. Extremism Task Force, which I chaired after the appalling murder of Lee Rigby, because I wanted to make sure that Government was doing everything that it could to drive extremism out of our schools, out of our colleges, off campuses, out of prisons—in every part of national life. And I think it's very important that we recognize that you've got to deal not only with violent extremism, but also the sink of extremism, of tolerating extremist views from which violence can grow. And the whole Government is signed up to that agenda and is driving through changes to deliver that agenda.

As for these issues for the last day or so, I will get to the bottom of who has said what and what has happened, and I'll sort it all out once I've finished these important meetings I'm having here.

President Obama. Well, I think what has been striking is the degree of solidarity between the United States and Europe in dealing with the Ukraine crisis. I think a lot of people anticipated very early on that immediately, the two sides would fly apart. And in fact, there has been consistency in affirming the core values that have been at the heart of a united and prosperous Europe. And that's despite the very real economic consequences that can arise by applying sanctions against Russia.

I think Europeans understand that the reason we've seen such extraordinary growth and peace on this continent has to do with certain values and certain principles that have to be upheld. And when they are so blatantly disregarded, the choice is clear: Europeans have to stand up for those ideals and principles even if it creates some economic inconvenience.

Now, having said that, sectoral sanctions are broader; they'd be more significant. Our technical teams have been consulting with the European Commission to identify sanctions that would maximize impact on Russia and minimize adverse impacts on European countries. And that work is ongoing. My hope is, is that we don't have to exercise them because Mr. Putin has made some better decisions. I think, by the way, it would also be better for Russia, because the Russian economy is not in good shape right now. We've seen significant capital flight just from the sanctions that we've already applied; that could easily worsen. And if we have sectoral sanctions, I think it will inevitably hit Russia a lot worse than it hits Europe, which have much more diversified and resilient economies.

Do I expect unanimity among the 28 EU members? I have now been President for 5½ years, and I've learned a thing or two about the European Union, the European Commission, the European Council. Sometimes, I get them mixed up—

Prime Minister Cameron. Welcome to the club. [Laughter]

President Obama. —but the basic principle that if you've got 28 people sitting around a table, that not everybody is going to agree, I think we take that for granted. And I also think that if in fact we have to move to sectoral sanctions, it's important to take individual country sensitivities in mind and make sure that everybody is ponying up, that everybody is bearing their fair share. Some people are going to be more concerned about defense relations, some people are going to be more concerned about the financial sector, others might be more concerned about trade in basic goods and services. And so that's the technical work that is being done.

Again, my hope is, is that we don't have to use it. But I've been heartened by the steadfastness of Europe thus far. I think that people underestimate the degree to which, given the history of this continent—certainly in the 20th century—that people are not interested in seeing any chinks in the armor, and they recognize that that's worth working for.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you, David.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:35 p.m. in the Justus Lipsius Building. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo of Belgium; and Robert and Jani Bergdahl, parents of Sgt. Bergdahl. Prime Minister Cameron referred to United Kingdom's Special Envoy to Libya Jonathan N. Powell; U.S. Special Envoy to Libya David M. Satterfield; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; and Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Women and Equalities Theresa M. May of the United Kingdom. Reporters referred to former Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, a candidate in the race for President of the European Commission.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: United Kingdom, Prime Minister Cameron.

Locations: Brussels, Belgium

Names: Bergdahl, Bowe R.; Bergdahl, Jani; Bergdahl, Robert; Cameron, David; Di Rupo, Elio; Holder, Eric H., Jr.; Hollande, François; Philippe, King; Poroshenko, Petro; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Sgt. Bowe R. Bergdahl, USA, release from captivity by Taliban forces; Belgium : King; Belgium : President Obama's visit; Belgium : Prime Minister; Commerce, international : Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Communications : News media, Presidential interviews; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Developing countries, energy sources; Energy : Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation; Environment : Carbon emissions; Environment : Climate change; Europe : Energy sources, diversification efforts; France : D-day landing at Normandy, 70th anniversary; France : Military equipment sale to Russia; France : President; France : Relations with U.S.; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia : International diplomatic efforts; Russia : Military equipment purchase from France; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Ukraine : Democracy efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; Ukraine : President-elect; Ukraine : Relations with Russia; Ukraine : Russia, role; United Kingdom : European Union, membership status; United Kingdom : Prime Minister; United Kingdom : Relations with U.S.; United Kingdom : Scotland, independence referendum.

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