The Moscow Times
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EU and Britain 'Sleepwalked' Into Ukraine Crisis, British Lawmakers Say

By The Moscow Times

February 20, 2015



Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron (R) pose for a family photo during an European Union leaders summit in Brussels.

LONDON — The EU and Britain "sleepwalked" into the Ukraine crisis, failing to grasp its exceptional nature and lacking the ability to read political shifts in Russia, British lawmakers said in a report on Friday.

The findings were released as fighting continued in eastern Ukraine, despite European efforts to resurrect a stillborn cease-fire.

In their report, lawmakers from the upper house of Britain's parliament heaped criticism on Moscow, which they said had been gradually turning away from Europe and had misread Ukraine's appetite for a trade deal with the EU.

But the House of Lords' EU Sub-Committee on External Affairs reserved some of its harshest

criticism for the EU and Britain, saying they had made a series of errors in the run-up to the crisis and were partly to blame for the situation unravelling.

"There has been a strong element of 'sleepwalking' into the current crisis, with member states being taken by surprise by events in Ukraine," the report said, saying the EU's absence of political oversight over trade talks with Kiev had been glaring.

"A loss of collective analytical capacity has weakened member states' ability to read the political shifts in Russia and to offer an authoritative response," it added, saying the EU had failed to appreciate "the exceptional nature" of Ukraine.

Lawmakers also said that Britain, as a signatory to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, had a particular responsibility to Ukraine but had not been as active or as visible as it could have been.

The memorandum guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for its renouncing of its nuclear arsenal.

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