

EUROPA BOTTOM-UP

ARBEITSPAPIERE ZUR EUROPÄISCHEN ZIVILGESELLSCHAFT / EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING PAPERS

RUPERT GRAF STRACHWITZ

NO BREXIT

WHY BRITAIN BELONGS

IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The Author

Dr. Rupert Graf Strachwitz is the Executive Director of the Maecenata Foundation which operates a policy and research think tank on civil society in Berlin, Germany, and a programme of activities labelled Europe Bottom-Up. He is also Vice-Chair of the Anglo-German Society in Berlin.

www.strachwitz.info.

Europa Bottom-Up

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Linienstrasse 139, 10115 Berlin, Germany

Phone: +49-30-28 38 79 09

Fax: +49-30-28 38 79 10

E-Mail: mi@maecenata.eu

Website: www.maecenata.eu

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Why Britain Belongs in the European Union

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Foreword

This paper is published in the context of the Maecenata Foundation's Europe Bottom-Up programme. The aim of this programme is to help promote the big European project through citizens' initiatives, rather than leaving it to politicians, administrators and business leaders (see www.maecenata.eu/europa for details). As a convinced European of German and English extraction, I feel very strongly that Britain belongs in Europe, should remain a member of the Union and continue to work with the rest of us in pushing the exciting, challenging, and indeed disruptive and yet sustainable European project forward. Notwithstanding the fact I am also Vice-Chair of Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft (the Anglo-German Society), Berlin, the views presented here are entirely my own, while certainly not contending that my thoughts are all new. A few may be original; many have of course been put forward by others before me, and even if (in order to keep this paper readable) I don't quote them verbatim or make personal reference to them, I do wish to thankfully acknowledge that many great minds, both in the UK and in the rest of Europe, are pulling their weight in the same direction and have presented very good reasons on which I have drawn why Britain belongs in Europe and not outside of it. Many people see the need for a balanced and thorough debate, and view the chance BREXIT offers as an opportunity to look into what needs to be improved. We hope all this may convince a strong majority of British citizens to vote for and not against Europe.

Most commentators, for perfectly good reasons, concentrate on the economic side of it all. To complement this train of arguments, and because this is what I have been trained to do, I would like to present some historical, cultural, societal, and geo-political thoughts. For an important reason, this seems imperative. Polls show that Euro-scepticism is much more wide-spread among opinion leaders than it is among citizens in general. It is the well-educated leaders who need to be convinced. Perhaps a mix of arguments can help.

Berlin, in September 2015

Rupert Graf Strachwitz

Abstract

Why Does Britain Belong in Europe ?

- 1)** Brexit would have serious economic and geo-political repercussions for Britain and for the rest of Europe.
- 2)** Brexit would mean a complete reversal of Britain's historic geopolitical strategy, not its continuation.
- 3)** Brexit is likely to make the Scots rethink their majority decision to remain part of the United Kingdom.
- 4)** It is not in Britain's long-term interests to stay on the sideline while Europe develops.

Why Does Europe need Britain ?

- 1)** Europe should not have a hegemon; its development should be lead on by the three major countries.
- 2)** Europe needs to retain Britain as a gateway to the international intellectual Anglo-Saxon community.

- 3)** Europe's values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and its diverse cultural traditions need Britain to help defend them.

What Must We Do ?

- 1)** We must tackle the necessary reforms together, not as a bargain for any single member.
- 2)** We must convince all Europeans that the European Union is an attractive and challenging way to create a new political and social order befitting the 21st century, not a super-state based on 18th century models.
- 3)** We must make all Europeans develop a sense of ownership and belonging. Europe is Us, not Them.

I. Introduction

In the near future, the British people will be called upon to cast a vote on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union or not. Although most people believe a majority will say ‘yes’, this is by no means certain, and some say it has become less likely in the wake of the present migration crisis and Jeremy Corbyn’s election as leader of the Labour Party. In a democratic society, to ask the people is of course entirely legitimate and it is exclusively for the people of the United Kingdom to decide. Whatever the outcome will be, both the UK government and the 27 EU partners will have to respect it. It is most certainly not for others to determine what the British people should vote for. On the other hand, the consequences of the referendum have considerable, and as I would argue, disastrous implications for the whole of Europe. It therefore seems equally legitimate for Europeans wishing to do to offer an opinion. Or, to put it more bluntly, we simply cannot just sit back and wait and see what happens! Most politicians in and outside the UK seem to be doing just that. The sad fact is they are not showing much leadership, and a specific brand of media, for reasons of their own, and with oblique arguments, are trying to nudge people in a certain direction. So, as has been the case ever so often in recent years when crucial matters were up for debate, it is civil society that has to set the agenda and prepare the arguments.

Prime Minister David Cameron, who in 2011 declared that Britain needs to be in the EU and that it was not in Britain’s interest to leave, has now argued that he might be more inclined to recommend to the people to

vote for staying in the European Union if the structure were thoroughly revised. In particular, he wants to see the Lisbon Treaty, the current formal intergovernmental treaty on which the EU is based, amended to the effect that part of the decision making authority of the Council (and to a lesser extent the Commission) would revert to Westminster. So far, formal talks have not even begun for the simple reason that British demands have not formally been put on the table. Philipp Hammond, the Foreign Secretary, recently revealed a few details. He expects serious talks to begin in December 2015, and has named four areas:

- 1) more competition and less regulation,
- 2) national sovereignty and fewer responsibilities of the Union,
- 3) the relationship between the Euro-Zone and the other members of the Union, and
- 4) Migration and social benefits.

He also said the referendum would take six months to prepare after the successful end of negotiations.

Within the time frame set for holding the referendum, a fundamental revision of the treaty is clearly impossible. Even if all the other members governments were to agree, the ratification procedures in 28 countries would certainly take longer. Besides, the outcome would be far from certain, as some members would hardly be disposed to do the UK a favour, while others have euro-sceptic opinions to beware of (and constitutional requirements to hold referenda). Britain's harsh migration policy and its virtual abstention from political cooperation in both the Ukrainian and the Greek crisis have certainly not been helpful

in creating a favourable climate for political and parliamentary debates to this end. As to reforms below the level of treaty revision, there is no reason why the members of the Union – all of them, including the UK – should not sit down and improve on the Lisbon Treaty after the pressure caused by the date of the referendum has been taken off. If the European project is ultimately to succeed, a number of clauses certainly do need to be revisited, not least in view of changing ideas about governance in general. There is ample space for reform, but not under pressure, and not just to please one particular member.

I feel that by talking Europe down, the government is playing a dangerous game. It is time to hear the voice of those who wish to see Europe happen – not because it is the worst idea except for all other options, but because it is a fascinating, forward-looking, and rewarding way ahead. Sadly, many people in Britain do not feel this has much to do with them. We need to convince a better than slim majority it does! We need to put the issue of Britain leaving to bed so that we may put all our efforts into meeting our common challenges together. Dealing with BREXIT is draining Europe's resources. Nudging the voters in Britain in the right direction means repeating the reasons why they should have a sense of belonging in Europe and vote to stay in, over and over again. So if this paper is repetitive or redundant, it is so on purpose.

II. History

Theodor Heuss, West Germany's first Head of State, famously remarked that Europe was built on three hills: Rome's Capitol Hill, the Acropolis of Athens, and Golgotha in Jerusalem. This goes for the whole of Europe, and of course for Britain, too. In 55 B.C., Julius Caesar first landed in Britain. For the next four centuries, most of England was part of an Empire that stretched as far as North Africa, Egypt, and the Black Sea. Whether the British Isles had been culturally part of Europe before that may just possibly be a matter of debate. Our oldest European built heritage, Stonehenge in England and Gigantija in Malta, certainly indicates they were. The history of the Celts, who settled in or wandered between what is now Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and Wales (and incidentally Turkey – see St. Paul's letter to the Galatians), developed a sophisticated culture, but unfortunately neither any form of statehood nor a way of writing, do so too. (Geographically, this is of course quite clear. The 21 miles (34 km) of English Channel are not very much in the way of separation.) Be this as it may, since Roman times there is no reason not to include Britain in European history. Britons became Christians more or less at the same time as other people north of the Alps. Missionaries from Ireland played an important part in converting them, as they did with Germans and others, and in the early Middle Ages, after having being invaded by Danes, Britain developed the same kind of political culture as people in France and Germany.

In 1066, the Normans took over England, after having migrated from Scandinavia to France; relations with France became the key element of English politics for centuries to come. English knights went on crusades with the others. Richard I. (Coeur de Lion – died 1199), King of England and Duke of Normandy (as Richard IV.), Duke of Aquitaine, Duke of Gascony, Lord of Cyprus, Count of Poitiers, Count of Anjou, Count of Maine, Count of Nantes, and Overlord of Brittany, was one of them. Magna Charta, signed in 1215, became the model on which all Europe based the rule of law. Richard, 1st Earl of Cornwall (another Plantagenet), was elected as King of Germany in 1256.

As the idea of nationhood developed in Western Europe, England and Scotland were among the nations that made this happen in close contact and competition with the others. It is difficult to imagine Henry the Eighth's Act of Supremacy of 1534 without the reformation in Germany and Switzerland, or without a national church having been established in Sweden in 1527, or for that matter Machiavelli's *'Il Principe'*, first printed in Italy in 1531. When England and later Britain started to build an Empire, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and France were examples to follow and became competitors. In 1648, Britain was too tied up with its own affairs to be much involved in shaping the new European order in the peace talks at Muenster and Osnabrueck, but after Charles II. returned from exile in France and Holland, it quickly realized it needed to reassert its position. In the next generation, the glorious revolution brought a Dutchman to the throne. The battle of Blenheim (Blindheim in Bavaria) in 1704 is one more example for British involvement in

European affairs; the Duke of Marlborough was awarded a German Imperial title as Prince (*Fürst*) of Mindelheim.

In 1714, the Elector of Hanover succeeded to the throne of the United Kingdom as George I., and relations with Germany became particularly close. He and his successors retained their constitutional position within the Holy Roman Empire, and George III., the last British monarch to style himself King of France, became King of Hanover in 1815, as agreed at the Congress of Vienna. With the exception of Edward VII. and George VI., all reigning monarchs since 1714 have had consorts from German families, including of course the Duke of Edinburgh, whose family is Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Gluecksburg, as well as being Princes of Denmark and of Greece.

In the wars against Napoleon, the Crimean War, the First and the Second World War, the UK sided with various European allies, and was victorious each time. The Congress of Vienna, appraised by the Austrian diplomat Charles-Joseph Prince de Ligne as “Europe is in Vienna”, where Britain was one of the big Five, and where the foundations of modern intergovernmental relations were laid, would have achieved little without Lord Castlereagh’s (and towards the end the Duke of Wellington’s) decisive part. The balance of power was the leading axiom of Britain's European policy in the 19th century. In the 20th, Britain’s Army occupied Germany in 1945 with the Allies, and became one of the guarantors of the freedom of West Berlin and the safety of Western Europe in the Cold War. Like other European powers, notably France and the Netherlands, and later Portugal, the British colonial Empire

suffered its dissolution in the post-war years. And although Britain was – and still is – a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and managed to acquire the status of an atomic power early on, it became clear that, like other Europeans, it was no longer a world power of the first order. Arguably, Britain took a bit longer than others to realise and live up to this truth.

These were the years when Britain drifted away from Europe and insisted on being different. I remember, as a small boy, arriving at a British port and having to queue up with ‘Aliens’ rather than with ‘British and Commonwealth Subjects’. The United Kingdom was reversing the most basic principle of its geo-political strategy in favour of imperial nostalgia.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Britain looked on, when other European nations developed a new long-term geopolitical strategy and took the first steps in making it happen together. Charles de Gaulle vetoed Britain’s admission to the European Union twice on the grounds that he did not believe the Brits were European enough. Both times, they were furious, and rightly so. When Britain finally did join, 42 years ago in 1973, as the most promising of possible economic and geo-political projects, the founding six had set the tone, got used to each other, and in many ways dictated the terms. Yet, from then on, the United Kingdom was welcome, for a whole array of

reasons, of which more later. Even when Margaret Thatcher exasperated her colleagues with her demands for special treatment, the others did

almost anything to keep the peace and Britain in. And 66% of British voters said 'yes' to Europe in the 1975 referendum.

Still, despite tangible economic results and many other advantages, the English have never felt quite happy with their membership and insisted of being different. A sense of belonging has not developed to the same extent it has on the continent. When speaking about a two-speed Europe, Britain is always seen – and indeed sees itself – among the slow ones. In a sense, Britain has come a long way since it set the tone for Europe and beyond in making democracy work and, for that matter, staging the industrial revolution, which underpinned European supremacy in the 19th century. To be sure, as long as the difference is a way of life and an expression of cultural diversity, this is very much what the European Union should be. But on core issues, compromise and ultimate unity in action are of essence. While Euro-scepticism is a fairly new development in most other countries, and has remained an, albeit uncomfortable minority position, it has been part of British mainstream politics for the last five decades. British politicians see the EU as a cost/benefit operation and fail to perceive the crucial points. Today, nobody quite knows what the majority of the people think. No leading politician has dared to pronounce an unequivocal 'Yes' to Britain's membership. So, perhaps, a referendum, is the only way to find out. But voters must be told what the options are.

III. Other Options

Some time in 2016 or 2017 the referendum will be held. While until recently, everybody seemed to think it would be next year, to avoid it getting mixed up with Presidential elections in France and general (federal) elections in Germany, both scheduled for 2017, the Foreign Secretary's most recent utterances seem to suggest the government is aiming at having it then. If the majority of UK voters opt to leave the European Union, the government will not have much of a choice. Indeed, exit procedures, predicted at lasting ten years or more, may then start while the UK holds the presidency in the Council of the Union (in the 2nd half of 2017), certainly a very odd coincidence. Before we try and establish why this should not be allowed to happen, let me look at some of the arguments that are being assembled in favour of this option.

"Singapore in the Channel" is one slogan that has been put forward. This implies that the City would remain a major world financial centre, and like Singapore, Britain would be able to live very well on all the advantages of a free trade hub without the rules and regulations that the EU imposes on them. Frankly, this seems pretty far removed from political and economic reality. Singapore exists in a developing region of the world and is uniquely attractive to its neighbours and others for the services it can provide. London is of course attractive, too, but no more than other centres in Europe, whose need of an independent outside hub is relatively much smaller than that of, say, Indonesia or the Philippines. Furthermore, it is anything but clear whether London would remain the centre it is at all after BREXIT. A number of large financial institutions

have already made it very clear that they would move back into the EU, most probably to Frankfurt. And finally, England and Wales are very much more than just London (more about Scotland in this paper, and what would happen in Northern Ireland, is an open question) – a big difference to Singapore that has only its own urban population to care for and to decide on issues of governance.

Some people argue the ‘special relationship’ with the United States, and Britain’s close ties with Canada would enable England to establish an advantageous arrangement across the Atlantic Ocean. The island would sort of drift away from Europe and towards North America. The trouble is that the special relationship in the form that Winston Churchill once framed it, apart from being his 20th century myth, has lost much of its appeal to U.S. governments in recent years, for at least two reasons. For one, and for some time now, the U.S. and indeed Canada too, have been looking across the Pacific Ocean at least as much as across the Atlantic. Japan, China, and others have become prime trade and political partners. Besides, the European Union is far more important to both the U.S. and Canada than England and Wales could be. One need only look at the political pressure put on the CETA and TTIP trade negotiations to realise where the priorities are. If ever it had a real political dimension, the special relationship has certainly become a myth today. Believing in it could well result in bitter disappointment. The history of last decades has shown that relying on the United States to come to the rescue of a "Western" country in need is anything but a safe bet. The U.S. will always put their own interests first, and whether in the event this interest is

guided by business goals (as in the case of TTIP) or by an irrational train of thought that happens to gain a majority in the Congress or be felt to be popular in a presidential campaign, is impossible to predict. Besides, the U.S. today is a country deeply divided on crucial issues, while battling to retain its world leader position at steadily rising costs. Also, given the appalling educational level of many Americans, it seems to be becoming more and more difficult to see democratic rights exercised in a responsible way. As far as Europe is concerned, it is very difficult to determine what the interests of the United States are at all. Whether the Americans would rather weaken the EU for business or strengthen it for security reasons, or whether they want to do both, is quite unclear. It seems that the EU is more interesting to them as the gateway to Europe and beyond that Britain is. It may well be that conflicting interests exist, and no one knows which of these will prevail. So, much as we value the trans-Atlantic partnership, we Europeans must stand on our own feet, fight for our own if we must, and rely on our own resources, be they military, intellectual, or economic. Obviously, in order to do this, the more good partners we are, the easier it will be.

Some optimists believe Britain could continue to be included in EU funding programmes and enjoy other advantages after having left the Union. After all, Switzerland and others do that, too. For several reasons, this too is unrealistic. The Swiss example is not a very good one. For one, and increasingly so, given the demand from members, non-members are restricted in participating. Secondly, Switzerland, though not a member, has taken on nearly every EU regulation as national law or concluded

agreements with the EU to this effect, which is exactly what British euro-sceptics want to prevent from happening, believing, as they do that regulations from Brussels should no longer override what is debated in Westminster. And thirdly, common sense should tell one that a country that has just voluntarily left the club, will not be particularly welcome when reappearing at the back door.

Europe and the European Union are of course not the same thing. So some people feel Britain will in a sense be and remain part of Europe, even if it chooses to leave the Union. After all, a number of other countries that are undoubtedly European in a geographic, historical, and cultural sense, are not members of the Union and either have no intention to join, or will not be admitted, for many years to come. But there is a caveat to this: Britain might at some point miss the bus, because the others might be all too reluctant to readmit to the Union a former member that voluntarily chose to leave. Besides, the Union is undoubtedly the strongest force in Europe, and one can hardly envisage Europe standing up to global competition with North America, India, Russia, and above all China, not to mention the other BRIICS countries, in a loose alliance, federation, or whatever, separate from the cohesive body that has grown for over half a century. For this reason, the other members will surely do all they can to both widen and deepen the Union to remain competitive. Widening and deepening

are two sides of the same coin, not alternatives. For the same reason, multi-speed Europe, two-speed Europe, and variable geometry Europe, as some models for development are euphemistically labelled, stand a

very slim chance of being adopted as long-term policies. I firmly believe that whatever form Europe chooses to take in a long-term perspective, it will be based on the Treaty of Rome and its successors that have shaped and will continue to shape the European Union. So even if, in the end, Britain and others choose to be part of this again, they will no longer have been involved in shaping it. While a country like Switzerland might argue that it would never be in a position to influence the shaping very much anyway, this would hardly be a good argument for a former world power, (still) endowed with vetoing powers in the UN Security Council and member of G 7.

IV. Europe's Interests

Of course, Europe is interested in seeing Britain's economic power included. Not only is London one of the world's most important financial centres, Britain also produces goods that are sellable in the world market and provides services of superior quality that are of use in Europe and beyond. Britain's GNP, the 6th largest in the world, is an enormous asset, as the European Union faces an ever stiffer competition with other large economies, the United States and the BRIICS countries in particular. But Europe's interest in keeping Britain in the Union goes considerably further than that.

Like France, Spain, Portugal, and to a lesser extent the Netherlands and Italy, Britain has a colonial past. Arguably, the British Empire was the

largest the world ever saw. Not much of this has remained in terms of land and people, but the experience of dealing with other cultures is still alive, as are close ties with former colonies, not least through the British Commonwealth of Nations. In a global society, as we now are, this is an asset that Britain brings to the table in the European Union. Not unlike Austria which nearly all Central and Eastern European countries turned to for advice and guidance after 1990, because they had been parts of the Hapsburg Empire until 1918, and not unlike Spain that retains an alliance of sorts with all Latin American countries, although their colonial days ended 200 years ago, so do most former British dominions and colonies continue to look to Britain. Notwithstanding intra-European competition, all Europe can and does gain considerably from these networks and experiences.

The European Union is one of the world's most fascinating political experiments. Changes of boundaries have happened many times in the past. Systems of government have emerged and disappeared, alliances have been formed and dissolved. The European order created in the aftermath of the Roman Empire evolved in countless small steps, and at times under pressure from attacking armies, be they Arab, Hungarian, or Mongolian. Most new systems were created by conquest. Alexander the Great, the Romans, Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, and for that matter Genghis Khan shaped their realms by winning battles. Others were created through succession, the United Kingdom that goes back to James VI. of Scotland succeeding to the throne of England in 1603 being a good example. The colonial empires were won for the

European powers by invading territories that could hardly defend themselves, were virtually uninhabited, or were technologically backward. Today, for the first time in history, we are witnessing, nay we are active agents in the formation of a new political entity on a world scale by democratic procedure and necessarily by popular consent, in the spirit of Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus. It has happened before, in Switzerland for example, but never on such a scale. There is hardly a better way of demonstrating the values our politicians like to profess and we citizens really do believe in by making this project succeed. We need as many staunch defenders of democracy and the rule of law as we can muster to do so.

In a global perspective, this, clearly, is a necessity. No single European country is in a position to compete with emerging economies like India or China, each made up of over one billion people, not to speak of established powers like the United States and Russia. On the other hand, having been able to end the Cold War, there can be no sensible alternative to doing everything we can to prevent European powers going to war against each other ever again.

But beside these obvious reasons, there is a more positive perspective. Over the past 2,000 years or more, Europe has accumulated a treasure of intangible heritage that is absolutely unique. Science, technology, medicine, the arts, philosophy, and political science "made in Europe" are - as yet - unequalled world wide. Even if, over the past one hundred years or so, the United States of America have become world leaders in more than politics, Europe still retains the potential to remain the brain

trust of the globe for some time to come - on condition we do this together. The great minds of Britain have contributed to all this in no small way. Inventions, thoughts, and ideas have been forthcoming for hundreds of years, and there is no reason to believe they will not continue to do so. After all, British universities and schools hold top places in any international ranking.

Because this is so, Britain's contribution to the development of the Union has always been considerable. Common sense, a pragmatic approach as brought to the table by British members and civil servants of the European Commission has in many cases been the key to success. Out of the limelight of headline politics, and probably more effective for that, Britain has on the whole been a loyal and pro-active member of the Union and has supplied its various bodies with first rate expertise, excellent leaders and efficient staff. Indeed, a good number of valid points has been put forward by serious UK political scientists and economists in the present debate; it is in Europe's interest to see them pursued, in order for the EU to work better.

Perhaps strangely, another veteran axiom of British European politics would also be sorely missed, were Britain to leave: the age-old notion of a balance of powers in Europe. For centuries, successive British monarchs and governments aimed at keeping an equilibrium between France, Spain, at some point the Netherlands, and more often than not Austria, Prussia, and later Germany. Obviously, much has changed. But as long as the sovereign nation state still holds as the basic form of political organisation, Europe's stability will depend on keeping a

balance of power between the three top countries - France, Britain, and Germany, if for no other reason than to make the next three, Italy, Spain, and Poland have their voice, too, and the rest feel comfortable with this arrangement. Reducing the top to a Franco-German tandem, let alone to German hegemony, would be hugely unpopular with the other EU members, would certainly be detrimental to this balance - and incidentally would hardly be of advantage to a United Kingdom (or the remainder of it) outside the Union. In short, we need a European Europe, not a German or a Franco-German one.

Admittedly, the notion of the nation state is giving way to much more complicated governance structures. The system devised 200 years ago in Vienna has certainly outlived its usefulness. In Spain, Italy, France, and of course the UK sub-national tendencies are gaining momentum. Germany, for a long time derided as never having really achieved the ideal centralised nation state, today is seen by some as a model of a good balance between national and regional interests and loyalties, while others, Scots, Flemings, and Catalans in particular, believe the German states to be far too "soft" in regard to independence from their national government. Indeed, a separate legal system, like in Scotland, or a separate language, like in Catalonia, would not be conceivable in Germany. But what, apart from the fact that Scotland is a prime case, has this to do with Europe's interest in Britain? It is the fact the Britain, partly through its colonial experience, partly through its own history and that of its philosophers and political theorists, and partly through its constitutional, legal and political tradition is well versed in coping with

difficult, "messy" political realities: British pragmatism has enabled a plethora of solutions to exist beside each other, to an extent that a French sense of order or a German sense of legality would never have permitted. The current debate over devolution in respect to England and the options put forward are a wonderful example of this sense of practicability triumphing over a systematic approach. As the notion of the nation state wanes, it is foreseeable that we will need practical rather than systematic solutions to reframe our global and with it our European political system. We will need Britain to help us meet this challenge.

One of the outcomes, and possibly the most important one, of Britain's colonial past is that English has become the *lingua franca* of the world. Whether they like it or not, Indians, Chinese, Brazilians, and of course all Europeans as well as North Americans, Australians, New Zealanders and many other citizens of this world need to use one language as their prime way of communicating. Anybody who aspires to communicate internationally or to be seen as a world citizen, needs to speak, read, and write English.

In many ways, the impact of the world-wide community of native English speakers that includes the UK, the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and a host of smaller countries, is far greater than that of many governments and parliaments. Obviously, the rise of the United States to being a world power has a lot to do with this; still, England remains the keeper of the language. Outside the U.S., virtually none of the American ways of speaking or spelling have been adopted. This, to mean the predominance of English, is infinitely more

influential than just language, although that alone is important in itself. The Anglo-Saxon linguistic, cultural, and scientific community is the largest and most dominant community of its kind. Any researcher or writer who wishes to be recognised, indeed be read outside his or her own country, needs to publish in English. The international research community not only speaks and writes in English, but follows the rules, procedures and tradition established at Oxford and Cambridge and first copied at Harvard and Yale. English customs to large extent have become those adopted by the global intellectual, economic, and political elite.

For some time to come, this will not change. The way we live together, work together, and cope with the global issues together, will have an English flavour. Neither Spanish nor French, as the other two global languages spoken in Europe, let alone German, most Europeans' first language, are even remotely in a position to compete. For the rest of Europe, Britain is the gatekeeper to this world. With England out, Europe would be left with Ireland, Malta, and probably Scotland to take on this role, all of them fine countries, but unquestionably too small to perform such a task. (Besides, all three have their own language as well.) Europe needs Britain so as to be part of where creativity and thinking ahead have their global hub. This said, and given the huge advantages the European partners may draw from this opening, they will have to recognise the connections and responsibilities that Britain has in this respect, and find ways and means to accommodate them. The British Commonwealth of Nations, and whatever is left of the special

relationship with the United States, are assets for Europe and needs to be treated accordingly. After all, the Commonwealth Charter that enshrines commitments to a common language and aspirations for good governance, the rule of law, freedom of the media, and respect for human rights, is imbued with values and ambitions developed in a common European effort. The Commonwealth has proven to be surprisingly communicative, influential and trend setting, although it has no "hard" executive powers in the sense that politicians and civil servants like to see themselves having a monopoly.

In a longer term perspective however, overcoming the idea of nations as such will prove to be a challenge for law makers, politicians, and civil servants equal in size and relevance to those caused by the globalisation of the economy, global warming, the digital age, and the revolution in communication. In any case, the last two of these are already having such a fundamental impact on how society works and is organised that it is impossible to believe this will not lead to changes. Indeed, it has been suggested that we are heading for a new 'Middle Age' where very diverse forces - business, governments, science, civil society, the media, and others - fight for influence and decision making powers on a more or less level playing field. The end of the welfare state, and the emergence of supra- and sub-national entities, of global corporations and seemingly uncontrolled power centres (take the International Olympic Committee or FIFA as examples) are indicators of the probability of this scenario. The United Nations, OECD, NATO, G7, and other intergovernmental bodies have assumed executive powers, and it is the members' strength,

not a head-count that determines their influence. Core functions of the state have passed to supranational organisms long ago; the military is a good example. People's lives are influenced or even determined by regional entities including cross-border ones, by decisions taken in corporate board rooms anywhere in the world and by the activity of civil society organisations to at least as large an extent as by national government action. In many countries, even today the police and tax collecting are not the responsibility of the national state. (E.g., in Germany, responsibility for both is vested with the states, the "Laender", rather than the federal government; in Italy, the police forces are national and local.)

Challenges like global warming cannot be dealt with at a national level either. No measure of subsidiarity or traditional sovereignties will help us face global issues of that scope. Our fellow citizens are increasingly aware of these momentous changes in the fabric of society. Were it not for occasional displays of pageantry and for showing flags and singing anthems at sports events, the nation would rank still lower in most people's minds. To be a Londoner, a world citizen, a member of a particular club, a Roman Catholic, a fighter against poverty or NSA surveillance, or a Welshman may be equally important in defining an individual's collective loyalties. As long as this is matched with respect for everyone else's personal choice, modern society is no worse off for this. The plain truth is, that this is what 21st century global society is about. If the analysis is correct, and I believe it is, a complex multi-tier political entity like the European Union is potentially better suited to

provide long-term resilience than a concept of sovereignty based on a model described in the 16th century (by the French political theorist Jean Bodin), developed in the 17th century by Thomas Hobbes, and finally written into international law at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It would seem that Britain and the British have made major contributions to challenging an all too rigid notion of sovereignty. Moreover, the history of Britain is one of adapting forms to changing circumstances smoothly rather than insisting on their preservation until revolution sweeps them away. This is the spirit we need in order to build the Europe we need and want.

Finally, since this is my prime field of study, a few specific remarks on the role of civil society. First used by the Greek philosophers of old, the term was brought to light again by the Scottish philosopher James Ferguson in the 18th century. Since then it has undergone several shifts of meaning. Today, most people, including myself, would define civil society as comprising all those collective organisms that are neither part of government nor regard making a profit as their prime aim, and profess to pursue the public good (or some detail of it) collectively and through voluntary action. In Britain, the image of a three-legged stool is often used to explain that modern society, in order to be stable rests on three legs – or distinct spheres, or arenas: the state (to comprise any expression of statehood ranging from the local community to the nation, and arguably the European Union, and from the military to government-run works and agencies), business (including the local craftsman as much as a global corporation, an agricultural producer as much as a

financial services provider), and civil society. The latter would include a local sports club or amateur theatrical group as well as international NGOs registered with the United Nations, large and small foundations, amateur theatrical institutions, traditional charities as much as citizen action groups, an organisation like the Anglo-German Society in Berlin as much as Greenpeace, and increasingly, informal gatherings of citizens.

Obviously, there are huge differences between them as well, and many of them do not like each other to the point of not recognizing them as fellow CSOs; still, in a systematic approach, they are active in the same arena. By definition, this distinction makes for fuzzy edges and hybrids, but the broad picture is still as described here. In 21st century society, civil society has adopted a number of roles, and many civil society organisations (CSOs) perform in several of these: service provision, advocacy, watchdog, self-help, intermediary, community building, and political debate. Civil society is challenged on grounds of legitimacy, accountability, and representativity, and accused of infringing on the constitutional rights of representative democracy, alternatively of distorting fair competition by taking advantage of tax exemption. But beyond these arguments, CSOs have become important and highly effective contributors to the public good. To give just one striking example: The end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe would not have happened without CSOs like Solidarnosc, Charta 77, and many others in all countries concerned.

Civil society is here to stay. In the foreseeable future, the three-legged stool will serve as the model for the type of society the citizens wish to have. This said, if we look at the heritage of civil society, Britain certainly has the most to offer. The first legal framework for charitable activities became law in 1601, and in no other European country do civil and human rights, including the right to congregate and to express an opinion in public, have such a long history, and are so firmly rooted in what the people consider to be right. Europe must not miss out on this strong and consistent advocate of volunteerism, philanthropy, and citizen action.

Over the past five years, Germany has emerged as the leading EU member, a situation the EU has never so far had and which is certainly not in Germany's interest. Yet, some German politicians are already pursuing a dangerous policy of turning the Euro-Zone into a German sphere of influence. It was Germany that dictated the conditions for Greece, and if not hedged in, it might well act the same way when the next crisis arises, as is sure to happen. This development makes many people in Germany feel very uneasy indeed. I confess to be one of them. Taking a larger share in global responsibilities is a very delicate issue that needs to be treated with the utmost of caution and if at all possible in the closest possible alliance with its European partners. Weakening the UK's position by treating it as an 'extraordinary' rather than an 'ordinary' member, would serve to strengthen Germany in the short term, to its own and Europe's detriment in the long. For Britain, a balance of power today in Europe is only achievable within the European Union, not by

looking on from the side-line. It is in Europe's interest to help Britain develop a sense of belonging.

V. Britain's Interests

If the referendum goes wrong, while Westminster will be negotiating 'BREXIT' with the other EU members (possibly with Britain in the chair) and the European Commission, Scotland will be getting ready for another vote on whether to remain part of the United Kingdom. Given how small last year's margin was, and how pro-European most Scots feel, it seems most unlikely the result will be the same as in 2014. So what we would get, is little England, possibly connected to the Union in some way or another like Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein (if the others were willing to agree on some special arrangement), while Scotland would quickly become a full member, most probably with Euro, Schengen and all. With all due respect for the people's voice, this is not a scenario that would seem advantageous to anybody, whether in England or anywhere else in Europe. And whether England would be able to retain its position on the world stage, is an open question.

Keeping the United Kingdom together, therefore is one of the most important points to be remembered when debating whether Britain would be better off inside or outside the Union. How Wales, and possibly even Northern Ireland would react if the signals were set on rethinking the United Kingdom, is anybody's guess. (In the case of

Northern Ireland, some complicated constitutional issues plus issues to do with the Republic of Ireland would arise.) The plain truth is - as has been shown by a number of other members of the EU - that small countries which might find it difficult to survive on their own, can prosper as EU members; and this is not due to excessive subsidies from Brussels paid for by others, as is often suspected, but because of the advantages of a common market and many others connected to membership. Scotland, as an independent member of the EU, would have every chance of prospering, too. It is, of course, an open question, what other constitutional issues would arise, were the United Kingdom to break apart. It would certainly involve the position of the Monarch as Head of State, and judging from the habitually cautious but nevertheless clear remark she made before the last Scottish referendum, the Queen is well aware of this and rightly concerned. The Prince of Wales, who after all may succeed to the throne any day, could possibly be more outspoken, especially as he is supposed to feel more strongly about Europe than his mother. If, despite all this, the United Kingdom did break up, the remainder would indeed be "little England", a nation in search of a new identity. So, quite apart from the real advantages of EU membership, the price for leaving seems inordinately high.

Some people argue Scotland would get the same kind of warning it got last time, and vote accordingly. The European Commission would again make it clear that it would be a long procedure before a Scottish government could sign in to EU membership. The fact is, it wouldn't. For one thing, Mr. Juncker's remark in 2014 was a friendly gesture to Mr.

Cameron, for which he had very little support in the Council. In the middle of BREXIT, there would be no reason for him to repeat it. More importantly, despite the fact that similar noises are being heard in respect to Catalonia, it is not the Commission's business to determine who should become a member and how. It is the Council that will have to take that decision, and the governments represented there will certainly be much keener to keep Scotland in than to do a difficult non-member a favour. Also, of course, Scotland would have virtually no difficulty in meeting all the conditions of membership in terms of law and economy.

If Britain decides to leave the European Union, the Union and the ongoing European project will be dominated by France and Germany. France may believe this to be an attractive proposition, Germany certainly should not, and does not. Germany has never done so well as when it refrained from being too much in the limelight. One would have to go back to the early Middle Ages to find a time in history when Germany was surrounded only by friendly partners. Sitting in the middle of the continent, this is a geopolitical factor of supreme importance, which should not be jeopardized. Besides, the country and its elites are neither trained nor accustomed to take on that kind of a role. This will not necessarily change, were she left alone with France. On the contrary, the Franco-German alliance has worked extraordinarily well now for nearly two generations, and will predictably grow closer, as the years go on. Be this as it may, it is not in Britain's interest to face a strong

united Franco-German alliance wielding considerable influence over at least 26 other European countries.

To create a new political entity in times like these, is as exciting a venture as you can make it. Nobody knows today what Europe will look like fifty years from now. What we may guess is that competition with other parts of the world will have become fiercer, climate change, clearly a challenge not to be tackled by any one country on its own, will have accelerated, and the way we organise ourselves will be different from what it is today. It does not seem unlikely that traditional democracy as we know it today will have been replaced by other procedures. What we should hope and fight for is that we will still enjoy a participative, bottom-up way of decision-making. I suspect that either Europe will have survived as one entity or its parts will have had to succumb to a non-European global power. I fail to imagine it could be in Britain's best interest to head for the latter option.

Whether by air, sea, or (for the last 21 years) the tunnel, Britain is not far from the continent of Europe. Brussels is nearer from London than from most capitals and metropolises in Europe. What happens in Brussels and in Europe in general will always have a profound effect on Britain (as indeed vice versa). Having a voice and a vote in shaping the future of Europe must therefore be of prime concern to any government in Britain. By the rules of the game, you have to have membership rights in order to have this voice and vote. The days when Winston Churchill could give good advice to Europe while not being or intending to be part of it, are long passed. Splendid isolation works both ways. The slow,

cumbersome and often frustrating process of creating a resilient Union that will safeguard the wellbeing of all Europeans will continue, with or without Britain. Re-admittance at some point in the distant future will mean that many more steps will have been taken upon the decision of others, and Britain, like any other 'candidate' will have to live with all that. It seems unthinkable that this could be in the best interest of a major European and - yes, still - world power in Europe.

Britain's economy, the 6th largest in the world, is intertwined with that of its European partners. More than 50% of all British exports go to other EU member countries. In this respect, much has changed since Britain joined the European Union more than 40 years ago. Britain has gained export markets. The City of London is a financial centre in and for Europe. It would lose profoundly, were Britain to leave. This would not make it more popular with the British people, 81% of whom are City-sceptics, while only around 35% are Euro-sceptics. Besides, the Brits have grown accustomed to European products and services they would no longer have easy access to. Employment, too – and I am referring to actual fact here, not merely to rules and regulations – has gone pan-European. On leaving the Union, Britain would not only lose its 'Polish plumbers', but also face compatriots streaming back home in large numbers against their will.

But again, there is much more to it than that. Besides, economic arguments make many people suspicious. One can hardly blame them. Joining the Union in the 1970s was an act of blending the history of Britain with the challenges of the 21st century, of following up on two

millennia of European involvement by becoming a partner in its latest and most ambitious project. This project is fundamentally different from that of uniting 13 colonies to become the United States of America. This happened in the 18th century and was based on 18th century political ideas. The European Union should not and will not follow that role model. 21st century political ideas are widely different. In the age of global communication and global economy, of multiple international bodies and of a vibrant civil society, a new transnational political entity in Europe will be far removed from any other merger of territories that has ever taken place in history. Charles de Gaulle was profoundly wrong in predicting that Europe would be a Europe of patriots and nations. So was Margaret Thatcher, when she talked about the European super-state she did not want to see. Whatever Europe will look like in the future, it will not be a super-state, it will be something totally new.

The European project will have to accommodate many different traditions – monarchies and republics, central and federal forms of government, a large number of languages, legal and welfare systems, and above all, completely different mindsets of its citizens. It may well be that governments, members of parliamentary bodies, and civil servants, still believe they can carry on as they always did and will be supported by the executive powers they have assumed, but if the transition is to be peaceful, they will have to adapt to much greater changes. The disruption of the old European system has in many ways already taken place. Even in the last fifty years, living patterns have changed beyond recognition. Traditional pillars of the system have disintegrated. Most people are

more than sceptical about large uniform organisations, as declining membership in Churches, political parties, and trade unions demonstrates very clearly. They will not put up with the EU as an even larger one without safeguarding the legitimacy of other forms of collective action, even if these do not include the nation state of old. It is in Britain's interest to help shape this transition and to see it happen.

A century ago, the British Empire was the world's leading power. And although this has been a bygone age for at least half a century, there are still some remnants left. The permanent veto-endowed seat on the UN Security Council is one. A highly professional army and navy with an ongoing experience of active duty are two more. Some of these remnants are costly, keeping up a presence in Gibraltar and Cyprus for instance, and Britain is continually torn between preserving its status in the global arena, and reverting to little England, whereby rational arguments like budgetary constraints and a sentimental quest for happiness seem to form an alliance. Sometimes it seems that some people in England would prefer to close the door on the world and live happily ever after, indulging in memories of bygone glory. The real world however is different. Britain needs to be part of it. Britain is not only one of the largest economies world-wide. It still aspires to have its voice heard in the world, and rightly so, while at the same time becoming more isolationist, and emphasizing trade interests much more than values, once the prime paradigm of Britain's political guidelines. Britain's future does not lie in fading into oblivion, but in having a voice and vote in the

best and most important developments world-wide. The European project is one of them.

Could it not be that using Europe as an intermediary is the best way of adapting to the real world and not losing the special character of the island? In any case, Britain seems to need a forward-looking strategy rather than closing its eyes to what has changed since 1945 and what will continue to change in the 21st century. Since 1215, when Magna Charta made England a pioneer of what was to become European values, since the Act of Union of 1707, and since V-E-Day in 1945, a long time has passed. Britain today is in many ways a 'Disunited Kingdom', not only in terms of party politics, but also as regards regions, social services, and a national consensus on basic political aims. While 60% of British opinion leaders believe Britain should remain a world power, 40% (as opposed to 20% of all its citizens) feel Britain should accept no longer being one. Britain must regain its self-confidence by looking ahead, not by looking back. Being a powerful player in Europe should be a way of achieving this.

Finally, an argument against allowing the UK to have a special arrangement: You might argue, it has one already. Neither has Britain adopted the Euro, nor has it joined the Schengen Agreement, the two other driving forces of the European project. Sensible and rational as these decisions may have been, in a sense they have backfired. If many Brits today do not feel a sense of ownership in Europe, this does connect to having to show passports and using different money. Also, Margaret Thatcher's "I want my money back!" resulted in Britain receiving special

treatment in respect to its financial contributions to the budget of the Union. It would be more than counter-productive were the heads of government to agree to more extras. It would weaken Britain's position and would hasten her exit from the world stage.

It seems hard to believe that the British public is actually behind all the government's wishes. Not only do all the polls show an albeit slim majority is in favour of staying in, although the government talks have not even begun. A recent unofficial polling against signing a TTIP agreement between the EU and the U.S. fetched more than 3 million signatures throughout the EU, with a well above average participation in the UK. The research community is also obviously intertwined with that of the rest of Europe. 125,000 students from the European Union attend British universities at any given time; 65% of Britain's top research partners are from the Union. Many researchers depend on EU grants. The research community is obviously intertwined with that of the rest of Europe. No wonder Universities UK, the umbrella body of British universities, has come out strongly in favour of staying with the Union: "We are international. But above all, we are European." 'Scientists for Europe', founded after the last general election, is attracting Facebook 'likes' by the thousand.

VI. Conclusions

BREXIT is being taken very seriously throughout Europe by responsible citizens. The relaxed attitude shown by some European governments, notably in Austria, France, and Spain, is not what other opinion leaders and citizens think about it. Most certainly, BREXIT is not a matter of 'If they want to leave, let them'. On the contrary, governments, political circles, CSOs and citizens should be, and most of them are concerned. The great majority of citizens want Britain to stay in, and if for no other reason than that they simply like the Brits with all their little eccentricities and special traditions. The Germans in particular like the Brits, and the Brits are beginning to like the Germans again, too. This seems like a good starting point for doing things together. Nobody seriously believes the European project would be easier to push forward without Britain. On the other hand, many people fear that a wave of disintegration might spill over into other countries and a wide range of areas.

What needs to be explained to citizens everywhere in Europe is that Britain in Europe is in effect a win-win situation. Both Britain and the rest of Europe profit from as close an alliance as possible between as many Europeans as possible. All the big European countries (with the possible exception of Turkey and Ukraine) are now joined together and should stay together. Whether and when Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and San Marino join up, too, is comparatively unimportant. They are all so much smaller.

The European social security system is in need of reform, not because one country wishes to gain an advantage over the others, but because the whole Union needs to find a new system. The welfare state of old is no longer affordable. On the other hand, all Europeans believe that all its citizens should be protected from being impoverished. That some fear migration could topple this base, is understandable and needs to be addressed by the EU and all its members.

But it is more than that. The whole European project needs a new thrust, and we must all combine forces to make this happen. By all, I mean Britons, Germans, French, Italians, Poles, Spaniards, Dutch, and all the others. And I mean civil society, the business community, and the state, to mean governments, parliaments, and civil servants at national, regional, and local level. We need academia, and the media. We need pressure groups and artists, philosophers, political scientists, and economists. In short, we need everybody, if Europe is to happen our way –it must be Europe bottom-up, not Europe by command of a conqueror, no matter where he might come from.

At the end of the day, we have many more commonalities than differences. More than others, we share and uphold common values and beliefs. We believe in government by the people, and indeed we believe in subsidiarity – to mean any smaller unit taking priority over any larger one, not just national governments over the European Council and Commission. We all believe that in a free, open, and democratic society, the individual is the principal, and all governments are agents. We share the belief that a governance system that puts responsibilities on as many

shoulders as possible is superior to a centralised system. So, we do want to see whether matters dealt with by the European Commission could not be dealt with more efficiently within a smaller unit, be it national, regional, local, or indeed non-governmental. Our citizens are telling us that smaller does not necessarily mean national. Admittedly, these thoughts and values are shared in part by non-Europeans, too. But we Europeans have a unique chance to see them being decisive in creating a new societal order that meets the conditions for being sustainable in the world of the 21st century. We have the basic form in place and the geographic, educational, intellectual, economic and human resources to go ahead and do that.

The Council of Europe that upholds the values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, is surely an important institution. (The British government has uttered threats to rethink Britain's membership in the Council of Europe, too.) So are OSCE and many others that bind Europeans together, above all NATO. Arguably, the North Atlantic Treaty, the basis of the NATO Alliance, which requires member states to come to the aid of any other member state subject to an armed attack, keeps Britain tied to Europe in matters of war and peace. But this article was invoked for the first and only time after the 11 September 2001 attacks, and it remains unclear what would need to happen for it to be invoked in a European crisis. Besides, while fighting off an attack may be a way of forging people together, this is not the way we had imagined we would build Europe.

The European Union is the most challenging, the most forward-looking in terms of global governance, the most prestigious. A country that is already a member and has every chance in the world to be one of its prime developers, should not voluntarily abdicate this chance, and its partners should do everything they can to prevent it from doing so. Norway, which pays and participates, but voluntarily refrains from shaping and deciding by not formally joining, is not a role model to be followed by the United Kingdom.

Not everybody in the UK sounding the trumpet of withdrawal from Europe is sincere, and concerned with the happiness and wellbeing of the British people. There are hidden agendas galore, and some of the media who delight in running down anything to do with Brussels merit questioning what their real interest is in doing so. Beating up popular sentiment is one thing; analysing the pros and cons fairly is something very different. We can only hope that those in Britain who want their country to be part of the European project, will get their act together and give their position a strong voice, before it is too late.

Europe has a lot to lose. A high-handed attitude adopted by the partners' governments would certainly backfire on the Union as a whole. It should be everybody's concern to handle Britain's demands for reform of the EU institutions with respect and an open mind. Britain is certainly right with some of them. They should be dealt with fairly. Germany in particular has a lot to lose. Three leading (national) economies at the forefront of realising the European project is certainly a more attractive option than just two. It is not in Germany's interest either to be seen as Europe's

hegemon or to be left alone with France. Besides, Germany has much in common with Britain, in nearly every respect.

Britain has a lot to lose, too. It should not insist on unrealistic demands, be they procedural or of content. And most importantly: Political leaders in Britain should not shy away from telling people what their opinion is and why, and actively campaign for their opinion before the referendum. They should not wait for the winning horse.

There can be no doubt that Europe's position in the world is in danger of diminishing. It may be expected that this trend will speed up over the next generation or so. It seems natural that this pressure from outside should forge the Europeans close together. Pooling resources in creativity and ingenuity, and of course economic strength will help all Europeans, including, of course, the Brits. If for this reason alone, Britain belongs in Europe. Brits who agree to this fundamental statement must convince the others that they really do belong, and the other Europeans must do all they can to help them do this.

Should Britain decide to leave, there will not be a special deal. Britain will be isolated, and it will not be 'splendid isolation'. Britain will not have returned to an age-old base line of involvement with the rest of Europe, it will have reversed it. Britain, out of sheer necessity and political wisdom, has always been very much involved in European affairs. Its citizens should think more than twice before opting to divert from this policy.

In the Scottish referendum, it was not a 'Scotland the Brave' sentiment that decided in the end how the citizens cast their vote. It was sound rational arguments, pros and cons, weighed responsibly. In the last parliamentary elections, UKIP fared much less well than had been predicted. I feel optimistic that the same thing will happen in the whole of Britain, as the referendum draws nearer. I believe that when it comes to actually taking a decision, the majority of British citizens will see the advantages of not pulling out of the Union and will cast their vote accordingly. But we should hope for more than that. We should hope for a substantial margin that convinces those who do want to leave that the battle is lost for good. We need this in order to be able to move away from BREXIT and tackle the serious and pressing issues we are facing together.

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