

93% of the world's population does not live in the European Union.

By 2050, this figure will increase to 95%.

It is time to free ourselves from the past that Europe represents and connect with the billions of people in dozens of developing countries who represent the future.

It is time to break out of Fortress Europe and blaze a trail for other EU members to follow.

It is time to recognize that the European Union is an idea whose time has gone.

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The EU: an idea whose time has gone.

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigour has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves”.

Inauguration Speech of US President Franklin D Roosevelt 1932

Current pre-BREXIT difficulties together with attempts by EU supporters to persuade voters that leaving the EU should be abandoned as being too complicated have prompted the publication of this document which seeks to reassure the majority who voted to leave the EU that we took the right decision. It sets out the case for BREXIT from a liberal point of view, in which the European Union is portrayed as an outdated 19th century notion, an idea whose time has gone, left behind by advances in communications which have rendered geography in politics irrelevant. Further, it depicts the EU as a distant institution mismanaged by a bureaucracy which is remote from ordinary people and now beyond the control of the political class who created it. The inflexibility of the EU over the last 2 years of negotiations should dispel any doubts that we are right to leave such a hide-bound institution.

Liberals will note that the political structures of the EU are not human in scale and it doesn't make systems sense to wire all the key functions of the government of every member state into one massive European fusebox. Moreover, while the BREXIT debate has to date been pre-occupied with what will happen in the short term, it is more important to consider the long term, to imagine the state of play on our planet in the year 2050 and beyond.

Such projections suggest that the long term future of the European project is dire, thanks to a declining market share and a reducing EU population, which currently represents only 7% of the world's population and will shrink to a mere 5% by 2050.

The troubles over freedom of movement across borders and problems with the Euro currency have holed the EU below the waterline and the whole project is, Titanic-like, slowly but surely sinking, with all talk about reform akin to re-arranging the deck chairs on the doomed vessel. It has never been a question of whether we abandon ship but when. A clean break now will free us from the constraints of the past and enable us to beat a path that other European nations mired in this out-dated endeavour might choose to follow in the future. Anyone who has experienced divorce will know that unpicking a relationship can be costly and time-consuming. But trying to sustain a partnership which isn't working is far worse.

Pages 5 -10 of this document contain a commentary on BREXIT and the current state of play, while pages 11-28 comprise an updated version of a liberal case against the European Union which was originally published in April 2016 for use in the referendum.

Best endeavours have been used to marshal the arguments but in the end this document represents a liberal point of view, as compiled by a layman. It has been published in an endeavour to reassure UK voters that the decision we took in June 2016 was the right one and that we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

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14th October 2018

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The Great British Referendum Disaster: The Cameron scam that went wrong.

“Politicians shouldn’t allow anything onto an agenda they are not prepared to have passed.”
Unattrib.

“Why not do what Harold Wilson did 40 years ago, Prime Minister?”

One can imagine the conversation as newly-elected PM David Cameron was wrestling with the burgeoning UKIP and splits within his own party on the vexed question of Europe.

“Why don’t we replicate what the Labour Premier did in 1975 to manage splits within his own Party? We could cobble together an unexceptional EU reform package, fluff it up to make it look more substantial than it actually is, then get our chaps in Brussels to stage a “crisis” summit punctuated by your frequent appearances before the press wearing your worried face as you threaten to walk away, followed by an 11th hour agreement which we then commend to the UK electorate in a referendum, backed by the entire political establishment, all our chums in big business and a host of celebrities. The voters are bound to support us by 2 to 1, thereby dishing the UKIP, silencing all EU critics and enabling us all to carry on as before. How can we lose, Prime Minister?”

But lose they did, primarily because the powers that be had overlooked the fact that the voters of 2016 were not the biddable innocents of 1975. The voters of 2016 were more savvy, more cynical, less trusting and far less deferential than they had been 40 years before; since that time, they had experienced 11 years of Margaret Thatcher, 10 years of Tony Blair, decades of political sleaze, cash for peerages, MPs caught fiddling their expenses, economic mismanagement, under-resourced military adventures and the loss of several million jobs in manufacturing, together with the job security that voters of 1975 would have been accustomed to. Above all, many older 2016 voters had experienced 40 years of the European project and evidently were not happy with it, even those who in the end were cowed by Project Fear into voting to remain.

The 2016 Referendum campaign itself was dire, due in large part to the adversarial manner in which we conduct our politics in this country. Salvos of dodgy statistics, personal attacks, and portents of doom, all par for the course in any British general election, were deployed by both sides in the referendum campaign, and any chance of a considered debate of the pros and cons of EU membership was elbowed to one side by the big beasts in their battlebuses.

By far the most glaring campaign omission was the absence of a visionary case for a federated union of European states which ought to have been championed by the most fanatical enthusiasts of the European project, the Liberal Democrats. And yet, there was nothing of the sort from the Liberal Democrats or, indeed, from anybody else; the Remain Campaign seemed content to rely on Project Fear, together with endorsements by a host of the great and the good, even though support from many of these was somewhat half-hearted. Conservative Business Secretary of the time, Sajid Javid, seemed to sum up the attitude of many Remainers when he wrote in the Mail on Sunday that, while the EU was failing, overblown and incapable of reform and that we should never have joined in the first place, on balance, we should stay. There was just no enthusiasm for the EU at all; at best it was portrayed as a necessary evil. Jean Monnet’s dream of a United Europe never featured

at any stage in the campaign and one can only suppose that the true Europeans who are now to be seen forlornly waving EU flags on Parliament Square were told to keep quiet for fear of frightening the horses and upsetting the machinations of the political establishment. Frankly, the standard of debate was the poorer for their absence.

In any event, on June 23rd 2016, 72.2% of the UK electorate turned out and voted to leave the EU by a margin of 51.9% to 48.1%. You have to go back to 1992 for a higher turnout.

What happened was huge. It was unprecedented. The voting public had gone against the advice of the entire political establishment and big business. It was as if California had voted to leave the USA. Moreover, the political vibe on the day was palpable, reminiscent of the 1970s, as voters queued to participate; people were phoning to ask how to cast a vote because they had never done so in their lives before and the staff at local polling stations remarked that they had never known anything like it.

But the result was too unexpected and the margin was too close, spawning two problems.

Firstly, Whitehall and both Houses of Parliament were pro-European in sentiment and had been instructed by the electorate to do something which they did not wish to do and clearly had not planned for. Formal notice to Brussels of our intention to leave should have been given on the day after the referendum so that the time during which we suffered the disadvantages of continued membership without the advantages of freedom of action outside the EU could have been minimised. What we have experienced instead has been 2 years of dithering and uncertainty on the part of Westminster and Whitehall, not helped by a Conservative Party leadership contest and a general election which gave Brussels time to get its act together. We have been on the back foot ever since and this has had a debilitating effect on our international standing and has created instability in the markets. Business needs certainty to prosper- even if that certainty involves tariffs and customs, which can be managed and worked around. Not knowing what to plan for is the investment killer.

Secondly, the brutal conduct of the campaign managed to split the country in ways not experienced before. The closeness of the result, combined with schisms between nationalist and unionist, London and England, young and old, those with a university education and those without, all conspired to project disunity and lack of direction. In particular, one component of the campaign debate was immigration, which turned extremely ugly and revealed a latent level of animosity towards immigrants among certain sections of the community which the political class had up to that point chosen to ignore.

The balmy evening of June 23rd 2016 and the heady hopes on the announcement of the result now seem a very long time ago. A beleaguered government staggers from one watered down position to another, with scarcely the bandwidth to cope with BREXIT, let alone a host of pressing issues on policing, defence, health, social welfare and the National Debt. This weakness has been exploited by Brussels, whose intransigence and willingness to put the EU's survival before commercial considerations have come across as strong, unified and principled, rather than as simply providing further proof that UK voters were justified in wanting to leave such a hide-bound organisation.

More importantly, after two years of incessant BREXIT bad news, the British electorate is war-weary. Public opinion is beginning to drift as most voters now just want an end to it, and any end will do. There is now even meaningful support for holding yet another Neverendum. If nothing else, BREXIT has surely revealed the lamentable state of politics in the UK.

Outgunning recalcitrant Remainers

“We said that leaving the EU is the biggest mistake we have made in a hundred years and that we should resist it. And we are right”. Tim Farron, former LibDem Leader, September 2017

“Resisting” the result of a public ballot? What sort of liberalism is that? And yet one of the shocking features of BREXIT has been the unwillingness of those who see themselves as champions of democracy to accept the 2016 Referendum result, together with their incessant scheming to water down, delay or frustrate the process altogether. Remainers have successfully managed to prolong the referendum debate by, for example, introducing bogus considerations such as “textures” of BREXIT - soft and hard - which they say should be the subject of further choice by the voters. And of course, always included in such an exercise is the option to stay in the EU.

It is important to keep up the pressure to leave the EU until we have actually left. Here are some retorts to favourite post-referendum arguments of Remainers:-

“Remainers believe the 2016 decision to leave the EU was a ghastly mistake and that they are justified in trying to stop it.”

The will of the people may seem dubious at times (indeed, we Liberals reckon the electorate has been making ghastly mistakes since 1906!) but the democratic process is logical. Elections yield results that voters supporting losing candidates would not have wished but accept as the democratic decision of the people. Those elected are given a chance to govern by everybody, however they voted, on the understanding that all will give their verdict at the following election. Similarly, referenda are called to settle an issue for the long term and, while the result may not be what some voters want, it should be accepted as the democratic decision on the understanding that the issue can always be revisited if things do not work out. This was what happened after the first referendum. The Brexiteers of 1975, having lost the fight to leave the European Economic Community as it was known back then, were gracious in defeat, did not obstruct closer integration and did not regroup until the 1990s when the Maastricht Treaty put everyone on notice that the European project was about a lot more than just trade. Today’s Remainers should follow the example of the 1975 Brexiteers. They should accept the 2016 Referendum result, without necessarily accepting that it was the right decision, and give BREXIT a go. We Brexiteers happen to believe that we will prosper outside the EU but, if we are wrong, and a couple of decades down the road it transpires that our leaving the EU was a bad idea, we can apply to join again. But we have to try BREXIT first!

“We may have voted to depart but we must now vote on our destination”

Nonsense! People departing on a journey tend to know what their destination is before they set off, and so it was with the referendum. It was clearly a hard BREXIT voters supported because it was a hard BREXIT the Government described as the undesirable alternative to remaining in the EU in their pamphlet sent to every household. Jeopardising our membership of the Single Market if we left was given special mention. Moreover, Brussels has always said that we could not cherry-pick the best aspects of the EU and avoid those parts we did not like. We were either in or out; there was to be no halfway house. The Customs Union was scarcely mentioned during the campaign because it seems to have been generally accepted by both sides that the EU started life as a customs union which has been at its heart ever since, so leaving the EU would naturally entail leaving the EU Customs Union.

“Brexit was overwhelmingly the choice of the older generation.”

The 65+ age group has been singled out by Remainers for vilification because they voted to leave the EU by 64% to 36% in the referendum, and stand accused of “shafting the young” who voted to remain in the EU by 71% to 29% (YouGov figures). What is not mentioned is that these oldies were the very same cohort of voters who as youngsters had voted 62% to 38% (LSE figures) to remain part of the European project in 1975. Perhaps somebody needs to ask what made them change their minds. 40 years’ experience of being lied to, perhaps!

“The lies deployed by the Leave Campaign invalidate the close referendum result.”

Reference has already been made to the adversarial way we prosecute our politics in this country, and the lies and promises – deployed by both sides – are the stock in trade of political parties during any public ballot. The infamous £350 million statistic deployed by the Leave Campaign was indeed the subject of much controversy but then so were the prophecies of Project Fear deployed by the Remain Campaign, not to mention baseless promises of more jobs and lower prices if we remained in the EU. The largest lie of all was the lie of omission by the Remainers who failed to inform voters that the EU was a work in progress towards a federated Union of Europe. If this had been given the higher profile it merited by either side, the majority to leave the EU may have been greater.

“The over-spending by the Leave Campaign invalidates the close referendum result.”

If the law has been broken, then justice should be meted out, but the alleged overspending of the designated Leave Campaign does not invalidate the result because it is only part of the picture. In addition to the two officially recognised “Leave” and “Remain” Campaigns, there was also a second tier of dozens of registered campaigners, and the Remainers spent far more than Leavers at this level. The Electoral Commission reports that the combined authorised Remain expenditure was £19.3 million, far more than the Leavers’ £13.3 million. Additionally, there was the pro-Remain Government pamphlet sent out to every household in the UK at a cost to the taxpayer of £9.3 million which was exempt from inclusion in the authorised expenditure limits. Financially, Remain outgunned Leave by over 2 to 1. The Remainers had it all - resources, the backing of the entire political establishment, big business and a host of celebrities. They can hardly blame their losing on the modest firepower of the Leavers, and their claim that the referendum result is invalidated by an alleged overspend of £675,000 by Leavers in just one part of the campaign is laughable.

“The Referendum was advisory and cannot bind Parliament who should stop BREXIT”

It was Parliament who waved through the referendum legislation, by 544 votes to 53 after the Second Reading in the Commons, courtesy of the overwhelming support of Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs. Moreover, when he launched the referendum before the press in Downing Street on 20th February 2016, David Cameron told the British electorate, “*You will decide and whatever your decision, I will do my best to deliver it...the choice is in your hands.*” And again, the Government brochure sent to every UK household made it quite clear that “*This is your decision. The Government will implement what you decide.*” The political class will ignore or water down these promises at its peril.

“We need a people’s vote on the final deal.”

They mean another referendum! Not only would another neverendum be costly and divisive, it would create months of uncertainty and jeopardise over two years of BREXIT planning by commerce. What sort of signal would this send to potential investors? And do we keep having referenda every two years until the powers that be achieve their desired result?

The final gambit: Chequers Mark II

"I stuffed their mouths with gold" Aneurin Bevan

It was early 1948 and the clock was ticking. Labour's Minister of Health Aneurin Bevan was battling against the medical professions who were holding out against his plans for a national health service. At the 11th hour the medics backed down after more cash was put on the table, hence the infamous quote above, thereby enabling the NHS to be launched that July. The moral of this story is money talks and should inform how we deal with Brussels at this very late stage. We still have access to cash and the EU needs it to pay Mr Barnier's wages.

No layman should attempt to comment other than in the most general terms on the BREXIT negotiations but surely all we have ever had to do was demand a bespoke relationship as befits an economy our size, set out what we wanted and offer to make a generous annual payment in return, all reviewable in a few years' time when things had settled down. The Salzburg EU Summit's negative reaction to Chequers Mark 1 now enables us to make such an offer. Here are some further observations:-

A bonfire of badged lecterns!

To begin with, a general point: Would Lloyd George, Ernest Bevin and Winston Churchill have lasted 5 minutes in British politics if they had been obliged to operate in today's climate of 24 hour news and social media? Probably not; they enjoyed the time and space to ponder far less complex issues than today's politicians have to cope with. With that said, today's statesmen make a rod for their own backs by insisting on punctuating the start of every meeting by pontificating to the press behind some ridiculously badged lectern, only to have their ill-considered remarks played back to them after they have changed their position. This has fuelled an industry run entirely on commentary where everybody has to have an instant opinion on everything. Even news bulletins are infested with opinionated asides. We need to restore some order to necessarily complex processes. We can start by having a bonfire of badged lecterns and by allowing our representatives to think things through in peace & quiet, and to walk into meetings without feeling the need to offer a soundbite or three beforehand.

Obstacles to a deal: the 4 Freedoms

Efforts to achieve a bespoke agreement which would enable us to continue to access the European Single Market have stalled because of the EU's insistence on maintenance of "the 4 freedoms" - the free movement of goods, capital, services and labour. Since immigration played such a large part in the BREXIT debate, our continued support for the free movement of labour is not possible, but this concept was bonkers anyway; as argued elsewhere in this document, you cannot treat people as if they are mere pieces of freight. Humans require shelter, food, health services, education and protection under the rule of law, not only for themselves but for their families as well. It is time to challenge the EU about this.

Obstacles to a Deal: the Irish Border

The Irish Border is being weaponised by Remainers to keep us in the Customs Union – i.e. the EU. An artifice created in haste less than 100 years ago in a desperate attempt to bring hostilities between two communities to an end, the Irish Border has always been a porous pain and over the decades everybody has had to accept that it leaks profusely. Technology will do at least as good a job as any past policing method. This is not pie in the sky. Smart borders operate on the Norway-Sweden and USA-Canada frontiers

Chequers Mark 1: not what we voted for in 2016

The tone that the Government has adopted towards Brussels since the referendum has verged on the apologetic, presumably in an endeavour to ingratiate themselves with the EU. Clearly, this approach hasn't worked; true to form, Brussels bureaucrats have proved obdurate, no doubt aware that their salaries rather depend on holding the EU together and that the departure of the second richest member of the club rather threatens that. Arguably, Chequers Mark 1 was not the BREXIT we had voted for in 2016 and in any case seems to have been killed off by the Salzburg Summit. It did serve a purpose, however, by showing everybody here and abroad that, however much we compromise, the EU is more interested in exacting punishment for our unwillingness to remain part of the European project.

Chequers Mark 2: Carrot and Stick

There is time for one last throw of the dice. We need a Chequers Mark 2, together with the courage of our nation's convictions. It should set out what we want, not what we think the EU will allow. It needs to be a practical free trade agreement without freedom of movement, providing a template for future use by EU members. We can concentrate minds with a carrot and stick approach: The carrot is the promise of regular cash payments. The stick is the threat to "review" our European defence commitments. As observed elsewhere in this document, the EU may not be the only time-expired institution we belong to; maybe NATO is past its sell-by date as well. President Trump's recent criticism about Europe's lack of commitment on defence simply reflects long-standing American disenchantment which the 2006 agreement by NATO members to spend 2% of GDP on defence was supposed to put right. 12 years later, EU NATO members are still underspending by over 100 billion dollars a year. We are being taken for mugs and we need to concentrate minds in Brussels by saying that, if they don't want us involved in European matters at all, we had best review our membership of NATO. And if we leave, Trump's USA is bound to follow. If push came to shove, we could enter into defence pacts with individual nations as an alternative to NATO, but perhaps something more inspiring is called for...

G.O.L.D. : A new alliance for defence, trade and aid

The problem with the BREXIT debate is that leaving was seen to be a negative and inward-looking act, with the narrative dwelling on the past, rather than the future. This is probably why most young voters sided with the Remainers. On pages 26-28 of this document is the outline of an idea for a new global alliance, a Global Organisation of Liberal Democracies for aid, trade and defence. Proposals for a new alliance have been kicking around the world stage for a decade or two; the late Senator John McCain advocated a League of Democracies during his Presidential campaign some years ago. Perhaps this is an idea whose time has come. Perhaps we Brits could use BREXIT to initiate something worthwhile which other European nations contemplating a future outside the EU could join.

If there's no deal...

6 months of emergency preparation must be accompanied by an uplifting visionary narrative to fuel a Dunkirk-spirited national resolve. Part of this will involve depicting the EU as an idea whose time has gone, a post-war cartel for big business, an inflexible protectionist political, economic and military union which will be an international irrelevance by 2050 and whose one-size-fits-all approach to policy making has crippled many member states forced to comply with the EU's economic strictures. Our leaving won't just be a matter of saving ourselves; not for the first time, our actions will offer hope for other European states who are looking for a way out; we are blazing a trail for others to follow. If we, the fifth richest country on the planet, can't manage to break out of Fortress Europe, nobody else will be able to.

A liberal case against the European Union

"Whoever speaks of Europe is wrong: It is a geographical expression."
Otto von Bismarck, German Chancellor 1871-1890

Contents

What is the European Union?	Page 12
One man's dream of a United States of Europe	Page 13
What was the UK's attitude to a US of Europe?	Page 14
The EU; a politicians', not a people's, project	Page 15
Which political party got us into this mess?	Page 16
The role of Big Business	Page 17
What's wrong with the European Union?	Page 18
The World in 2050	Page 20
Issues: Immigration	Page 21
Issues: Jobs	Page 22
Issues: Peace and Security	Page 23
Issues: Trade	Page 24
The UK: Manchester City or Accrington Stanley?	Page 25
If the EU didn't exist, would we need to invent it?	Page 26
The quest for peace, liberty and contentment	Page 27
Going for G.O.L.D.	Page 28

What is the European Union?

“Sometimes I like to compare the EU as a creation to the organisation of empire. We have the dimension of empire” José Manuel Barroso, President of the EU Commission July 2007

Most inter-governmental organisations are described as “international”, being partnerships of nations making common cause for one particular purpose. The European Union (EU) is different. It is a “supranational”, rather than an international, organisation whose member states have agreed to limit or hand over their powers and freedom of action to a “higher European authority” across a range of policy areas.

The EU is a work in progress rather than an end product. It started life in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community, whose founding members were France, (West) Germany, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy, as part of a step-by-step French plan, initially to create a common market in coal and steel controlled by the world’s first supranational authority, with the ultimate aim of creating a federation of all Europe. In 1957, the same countries signed the Treaty of Rome which brought into being the European Economic Community (EEC), created to bring about economic integration and a common market in goods, services, capital and labour, otherwise known as “the 4 freedoms”. The customs union thereby created is at the heart of the European project. No customs duties are levied on goods travelling within this “Fortress Europe” and – unlike a free trade area – union members impose a common external tariff on all goods entering the Union. International trade deals are conducted by the Union rather than by member states.

It is the 1957 Treaty of Rome where first mention was made of the quest for “ever closer union” and over the next 53 years, a series of landmark events advanced this cause: in 1979, the first direct elections to the European Parliament were held; in 1985 the Schengen Agreement was signed by some member states to create open borders without passport controls; in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty created the EU and paved the way for the introduction of the Euro currency in 1999; the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 gave the EU legal personality, a Council President, a foreign ministry and a foreign diplomatic service.

Not only has the EU become “deeper” in terms of integration, it has also become “wider” in terms of expansion, as countries have queued up to join: Denmark, Ireland and ourselves in 1973, Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995 and in 2004, its largest expansion to date with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Romania and Bulgaria followed in 2007 and in 2013 Croatia became the 28th member, bringing the total population of the current EU to just over 510 million. Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are negotiating to become members. Turkey applied to join in 1987 but recent political developments there have brought talks to a standstill. To become a member, a state must fulfil the “Copenhagen Criteria”, which require the applicant to have a democratic, free-market government together with the corresponding freedoms and institutions, and respect for the rule of law. Recruitment to the Union also requires the consent of all existing members and the candidate's adoption of the existing body of EU law, known as the “Acquis Communautaire”.

Not every European nation belongs to the EU. Only 28 out of 50 European states are members. For example, Ukraine, Belarus and Norway are not members. Neither is Switzerland, a nation that is more at the heart of Europe than we will ever be and yet seems to prosper doing bi-lateral deals with the EU. So, how did the European Union come about?

One man's dream of a United States of Europe

"There will be no peace in Europe if the states rebuild themselves on the basis of national sovereignty... The countries of Europe are not strong enough individually to be able to guarantee prosperity and social development of their peoples. The European states must therefore form a federation or a European entity that would make them into a common economic unit..."

Jean Monnet (1888-1979)

The idea of a union of European states has been kicking around for hundreds of years and has been advocated by the likes of Napoleon Bonaparte, Victor Hugo, Trotzky and Winston Churchill (although the latter was always careful to exclude the UK from his European vision). Even so, the person who is considered to be the founding father of the current European project is French diplomat Jean Monnet, and the above quote was part of a speech he gave in 1943 to De Gaulle's Free French Government, exiled to Algiers as the result of the Nazi invasion of France, the third such incursion by Germany in 70 years. Monnet had returned from the USA where he had been helping to organise the allied war effort. He would have been impressed by the vastness of America, the scale of its resources and industry, and the brash, optimistic, "can-do" confidence of its people. The USA would have represented a stark contrast to war-ravaged Europe and one can understand why Monnet considered a federated United States of Europe to be the way forward.

As it happened, the Germans were thinking along the same lines! In 1940, a top Nazi economist by the name of Walther Funk gave a speech on the economic reorganisation of Europe, which championed a United Europe to provide safe export outlets for German industry. Funk concluded by stating that *"a stronger sense of economic community among European nations must be aroused by collaboration in all spheres of economic policy such as currency, credit, production and trade."* So, several years later, when the French approached a defeated Germany with Jean Monnet's ideas as taken forward by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, they got an enthusiastic reception. While politicians of both countries looked to the Schuman Plan to forge lasting peace in Europe, big business was particularly keen on the protection afforded by a customs union, which would guarantee reliable and unfettered markets during the period of post-war recovery and reconstruction.

Germany and France have been in the driving seat of this project ever since, although there are signs this alliance is not as close as it once was. After their defeat in 1945, the Germans saw a United States of Europe as the means of restoring lost respectability and influence on the world stage. That was over 70 years ago and attitudes are changing. Today's Germans seem increasingly fed up with having to bail out the rest of the EU who, despite all this German munificence, never seem to waste any opportunity to remind Germans about the excesses of their great-great-grandparents. The time may soon come when the German people feel that they have apologised enough, that they do not need the EU to hide behind anymore and are confident enough to be a world player in their own right with their own economy, their own currency and their own armed forces, like Japan.

As for the French, while many still cleave to the European ideal, the fact that over one third of French voters supported anti-EU Marine Le Pen in the 2017 Presidential Elections evidences a cooling of support for the project. Perhaps the realities of monetary union and the economic discipline required to maintain it do not synchronize well with the French social model and way of doing things. What would Jean Monnet have made of it all? If he took one look at today's USA, might he conclude that a United States of Large was not the way to go after all?

What was the UK's attitude to a U.S. of Europe?

"It's no good. We cannot do it. The Durham Miners won't wear it."

Labour Deputy Prime Minister Herbert Morrison on reading Monnet's proposals in 1950

It is not always appreciated that, before they approached Germany with the Schuman plan, France came to us first with Monnet's ideas. If a United States of Europe had been devised as a means of regaining power and world influence lost by European nations during the last war, why on earth wasn't Britain first in the queue?

To begin with, Britain's WW2 experience was different from that of countries on the Continent. While her infrastructure, institutions and manufacturing base had taken rather a battering, all remained functional throughout hostilities. Above all, her nationhood had not been ravaged by invasion. Indeed the cohesion dictated by war made Britain more of a united nation than she had ever been. After the War, the British political establishment saw the UK as a central link between the USA, the Commonwealth and Europe (it still does!). But Britain's preoccupation with being at the heart of the English speaking peoples of the world meant she did not see her future solely in Europe. It did not help that post-war Whitehall considered European states to be down and out, soft on communism and incapable of defending themselves against a possible Russian invasion.

After a series of unproductive meetings with leading UK civil servants in 1949, Jean Monnet observed in his memoirs, *"My attempt to create a nucleus around which a European Community might be formed had met no response from the one great power in Europe which was then in a position to take on such a responsibility."*

The Labour Government of the day was particularly concerned that the envisaged common market in continental coal and steel would threaten the future of the newly nationalised industries at home, hence Herbert Morrison's verdict quoted above and Labour's eventual rejection of the idea.

There was to be no change when the Conservatives returned to power in 1951. During his second stint as PM, Winston Churchill had this to say:

"Our attitude toward further economic development along the lines of the Schuman plan resembles that which we adopted for the European Army. We help, we dedicate, we play a part, but we are not merged and do not forfeit our insular or Commonwealth-wide character".

However, the UK was a trading nation and needed new markets in an endeavour to stem the decline of her manufacturing base. In 1960, Britain inspired the creation of the European Free Trade Association which reflected our view of what form a European trading community should take – an open and free association of countries in a tariff-free area, in stark contrast to the EEC which advocated a protectionist, political, economic and military union.

Even so, it says a lot about the short-termism and lack of resolve on the part of the British political establishment that, within 18 months of EFTA's creation, Westminster decided to apply to join the EEC and there was to be another 10 years of haggling before the UK application was accepted, by which time the EEC was 20 years down the road towards a Union of Europe. If Herbert Morrison and his Labour colleagues had been more enthusiastic in 1950, if we had joined as a founder member, would the UK political establishment have been able to influence the creation of a European institution more to our liking? Discuss!

The EU: a politicians', not a people's, project

"The E.U. has a flag no one salutes, an anthem no one sings, a president no one can name, a parliament whose powers subtract from those of national legislatures, a bureaucracy no one admires or controls, and rules of fiscal rectitude that no member is penalized for ignoring."

George F. Will, Washington Post June 2015

If you are a citizen of the United States of America, you know all about your country's constitution, a document of 7,600 words. You can buy a copy, available as a small pocket book. It is a people's rulebook put together at the start of an 18th century people's adventure into nationhood. And here's the fundamental flaw in the nascent United States of Europe. If you are going to create a federated United States of EXISTING AND DEVELOPED nations, it is vital that you involve the peoples of those nations every step of the way. It has to be a people's, rather than a politicians', project. The EU has never been a people's project.

The creation of the European version of the US Constitution is instructive. Miffed by the rejection of their shiny new EU Constitution by voters in France and the Netherlands in 2005, Brussels re-introduced it by stealth using the Lisbon Treaty. Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, Chair of the European Convention of the time, described the process: *"The legal experts of the European Council. ...have taken the original draft constitution, blown it apart into separate elements and have then attached them, one by one, to existing treaties. The Treaty of Lisbon is thus a catalogue of amendments. It is impenetrable for the public. The proposals in the original constitutional treaty are practically unchanged. The institutions have re-imposed their language and their procedures, taking us even further away from ordinary citizens... When men and women with sweeping ambitions for Europe decide to make use of this treaty, they will be able to rekindle from the ashes of today the flame of a United Europe."*

The resulting document, *The Consolidated Treaties*" (you mustn't call it a Constitution!) is a 103,000 word document comprising 336 A4 pages of articles and supporting protocols. This is no people's pocket book! It's worth accessing on the Web, if only to get an idea of what generations of numpty politicians have signed us up to. It's not just the content, either; the whole tone of the document is authoritarian. Use of words such as *"solidarity"* and *"loyalty"*, phrases such as *"the reinforcing of the European identity"*, with all political parties required to *"contribute to forming European political awareness"* and *"refrain from any measure which could jeopardise the attainment of the Union's objectives"*, are all redolent of the constitution of a totalitarian state.

Even EU supporters acknowledge it's all a bit nineteen fifties naf but respond by offering up that old chestnut "reform". A browse through 20 years of election manifestos reveals that calls for reform of the EU are sprinkled about like salt on chips. In 1997, Labour promised reform, acknowledging that *"Europe isn't working in the way this country and Europe need"*, in 2005 the Conservatives claimed to *"support the cause of reform in Europe"*, and in 2015 the LibDems asserted that *"only by remaining fully engaged in the EU can we deliver the further reforms that are urgently needed"*. One of the reforms identified by the LibDems in 2001 and again in 2010 was the cessation of the European Parliament's current loony practice of meeting in both Strasbourg and Brussels which the LibDems had estimated to be wasting 200 million Euros a year. But it seems reforming the EU is akin to trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; the gravy train rolls on, as MEPs continue to commute back and forth between the two cities; it seems politicians get elected on the back of promises to do something about reforming the EU and then disappear inside the labyrinth they've created with a champagne flute in one hand and an expenses claim form in the other.

Which political party got us into this mess?

"We want to be in Europe but not run by Europe"

Conservative Party Manifesto 1997

Surprisingly, it is the Conservative Party which has been the most consistently pro-European party of government: it was Harold Macmillan's Conservative Government who opened negotiations to join the EEC in the 1960s, Ted Heath's Conservative Government took us into the EEC in the 1970s, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government championed the Single Market in the 1980s and John Major's Conservative Government of the 1990s signed us up to the Maastricht Treaty, arguably the most important step toward European Union. It could be argued that the current split in the party simply reflects the divide in the country.

During this period, the Labour Party's policy on Europe has ranged across the full spectrum of postures; in the early 50s it was opposed, it took no official position during the 1975 referendum being hopelessly split on the issue, its 1983 Election Manifesto declared the Party would withdraw from membership, while the Blair years witnessed a Damascene conversion to outright support for all things European. What remains of Labour's working class roots still looks askance at the role of big business in the EU.

Speaking of U-turns, the positions of the Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru are noteworthy because they campaigned for withdrawal from Europe in 1975 but are now EU supporters. The SNP's 1970's Westminster Leader, Donald Stewart, said the EEC *"represents everything our party has fought against: centralisation, undemocratic procedures, power politics, and a fetish for abolishing cultural differences"*. Cynics might suggest that the EU is the nationalists' "Get out of Jail Free" card; should independence be achieved but subsequently go pear-shaped, failure can be buried in the flaccid bosom of Old Mother Europe, even though one perceived distant tyranny would be replaced by another.

Of all the parties in the UK Premier Division of Politics, the Liberal Democrats and their forbears have been the most consistent and most enthusiastic in their support for the European project. Uniquely, this is evidenced in the Preamble to their Party Constitution: *"Within the European Community, we affirm the values of federalism and integration."* There's no mention of NATO, the Commonwealth or even the UN. But, incredibly, Europe's in there, as is support for federalism, another LibDem obsession. Federalism is where the same territory is administered by several layers of government, each layer having its own responsibilities and its own powers, including the right to levy taxes. Crucially, each layer enjoys autonomy from each other. The USA has a federal system of government and federalism was key to Jean Monnet's dream of a United States of Europe. The trouble with it is that it requires armies of politicians and civil servants and, even if more of these is a good thing, are there enough capable politicians and bureaucrats to go round?

While the LibDems have been the most committed of all the parties to the European project, they have been unwilling to risk unpopularity by championing the Jean Monnet dream on the doorstep. Accordingly, the Liberal case for a Union of Europe remains a closed book.

Perhaps it's no longer fair to describe Europe as a politicians' project because the EU is now so huge that no politician is willing to expend their 5 year term of office trying to reform it, preferring instead to try and work round it. David Cameron probably elected to try this approach at the start of his premiership in 2010 but it was his bad luck that the Euro, the single currency designed to glue Europe together, itself came unglued on his watch.

The role of Big Business

“The EU began as a cartel of big business limiting competition between central European heavy industries and securing export markets for them in peripheral countries such as Italy and, later, Greece.”
Yanis Varoufakis, from his book **“Adults in the Room”**

Mention has already been made of the involvement of big business as one of the driving forces in the creation of a barrierless common market in Europe.

Big business likes unfettered profit. It does not like strictures such as borders or having to deal with different sets of administrations, with their tiresome taxes and regulations. Big business craves freedom of movement of people, goods and capital, so a United States of Whatever with a single currency, a single set of regulations, a single government and a single tax system is obviously big capital's regime of choice.

But, and crucially for Liberals, just because a U. S. of E. is good for big business, does not necessarily mean it is good for the mass of people. Capital treats humanity as socio-economic groups of consumers, rather than as individuals, families and communities. Moreover, capital imports labour to increase production with little consideration of the social consequences for their workers or the host community. Mass production may well drive down the unit costs of goods and services, but it has a dehumanising tendency, particularly nowadays as computerised automation and artificial intelligence marches on, as humanity is designed out of manufacturing processes, and the ownership of the means of production, together with the wealth it creates, becomes vested in the hands of fewer and fewer people.

So, what big business has to say about our membership of the European Union needs to be taken into consideration but it is not the be-all and end-all.

Besides, good governance and making money are quite different disciplines and there have been numerous occasions when captains of industry have flounced into the political arena and got it seriously wrong. One such occasion was in the late 1980s when big business pressured the Government into joining the European Exchange Rate Mechanism with disastrous consequences on “Black Wednesday” in September 1992, when there was a run on Sterling and Government efforts to keep the Pound in the ERM failed, costing the country £3.3 billion. Then again, in 1999, we were warned by big business that our failure to join the European Single Currency would have serious consequences. As it turned out, there were serious consequences for those countries who joined the Euro and we have benefited from staying out of the Eurozone. Even so, scrapping the Pound still remains a long term objective for Europhiles and Big Business.

Globalization is all too often used by the political class to excuse failure to deal with the intractable problems of taxing and regulating international corporations. Moreover, big business has the power to bring pressure to bear in the political arena. Undue influence is currently being exerted on British public opinion, courtesy of a “Project Fear Mark 2”, promoted predominantly by those speaking for Big Capital. All of a sudden, lurid prophecies of our running out of medicines and food are being highly touted, complete with library footage of unrelated lorry queues and voiceovers of doom-laden portents from captains of industry and commentators on TV newscasts. Clearly, capitalist muscles are being flexed.

What Boris Johnson allegedly had to say about business last June might have been coarse and unstatesmanlike, but it was quite justified in the circumstances.

What's wrong with the European Union?

"I completely underweighted the possibility they would flail around for three years... it was just inconceivable to me they would let it get as bad as they ultimately did,"

Former US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on the EU's handling of the Euro crisis

No other international institution to which we belong has attracted such widespread controversy and hostility. Why is this? What's wrong with the EU? Here are a few defects:-

1. To begin with, war memorials across our land bear witness to the hundreds of thousands of lives that were sacrificed in wars to defend our liberty, and yet the political establishment signed us up to the European project which has over the decades involved the subjugation of our freedom and independence in favour of a supranational organisation. Our parliament has had to process EU directives and observe EU laws; our courts can be over-ruled by the EU. Was this necessary? Of course it wasn't! Have Canada, Australia, Japan, Brazil, New Zealand, Mexico and other nations far poorer than ourselves found it necessary to sign away their independence in some crazed pooled super-power compact? No, they haven't!

2. The EU "Government" is labyrinthine, comprising the European Council (national leaders), the Council of Ministers (Ministers from each member state), the European Parliament (directly elected), the European Commission (the Executive Cabinet) the Court of Justice of the European Union (the chief judicial authority), the European Central Bank (in charge of the single currency) and the European Court of Auditors. It is a hybrid system of intergovernmental and supranational decision-making, where the elements of a super-state have to work alongside national sensibilities. This does not make for speed of, or resolution in, decision making and it can take ages to deal with difficult problems, witness the crises over border control and the Euro which prompted the quote above.

3. The EU's democratic pretensions are a sham. While there is a European Parliament, it is only one element of the legislative process. Moreover, since 751 Members of the European Parliament represent a total European electorate of 395 million, one MP per half a million voters operating in a multi-party-multi-national legislature will be hard pushed to make anything other than a tokenistic job of it. It's huge, impersonal and remote. Democracy loses traction under such circumstances, as few can name their MEPs and declining turnouts (43% in 2014) evidence increasing voter disengagement. The only people with the resources capable of penetrating this maze are lobby groups, big business and national governments.

4. In its quest for super-statehood, the EU has taken on additional responsibilities which needlessly and/or dangerously duplicate existing institutions, with particular regard to defence and diplomacy. The European External Action Service was created by the Lisbon Treaty to give the EU "one voice" internationally. In 2015, it cost 976 million euros a year to run an EU foreign ministry and EU embassies worldwide with a total staff of nearly 5,000. There is also a "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy" which sounds like a Gilbert & Sullivan comic character, but is in fact the EU's foreign minister.

5. The security challenges presented by well-equipped terrorists and by the armed forces of a burgeoning China and a resurgent Russia have made this planet less secure than it was at the height of the Cold War. The EU's unimpressive response to the deteriorating security situation was detailed in a March 2016 EUISS report which stated: *"Europe's 2015 defence spending corresponds to a mere 85.5% of pre-financial crisis levels (2007) and thus the lowest military outlays in almost a decade... In 2012, Asia overtook Europe to become the*

world's second biggest regional defence spender after North America and, in 2015, outspent Europe by 36.4%. Elsewhere, troubled Middle Eastern and North African countries are slowly drawing level with Europe, too. And while Russia's declining economy might prevent it from maintaining its massive defence investments in the long run, last year again saw Moscow devoting a substantive share of its resources to the military: 4.2% of GDP was allocated to defence in 2015, an increase by 9% in real terms compared to 2014." Europe spends nowhere near enough on defence and its military capability simply is not credible without the continued support of the USA, nor by any published reckoning will it be so.

6. Much has been made about the cost of the EU to the British taxpayer, which House of Commons Library figures for 2017 reckon to be £8.9 Billion a year net, assuming we can continue to claw back our £5.6 billion rebate and that we continue giving grants to farmers and other UK institutions currently receiving cash from the EU. While £8.9 billion is a tidy sum, it represents a mere burp in the gale of £809 billion spent annually by the UK Exchequer and in any case both sides are missing the point. By far the largest cost of the EU is the intangible burden of over-regulation and "one-size-fits-all" decision-making.

7. For small businesses in particular, EU over-regulation can be the difference between profit and loss. In 2015, the Regulatory Policy Committee, an independent government body, revealed that new EU rules had imposed £2.3 billion in net costs to businesses since 2013, wiping out the £2.2 billion the UK Government had saved cutting domestic red tape during the same period. In February 2016, Europe's biggest companies, banks and investment groups blamed mounting EU regulations for stifling competition and threatening businesses with hundreds of billions of euros in extra costs. Of course if we leave the EU, there will still need to be regulation but small firms would prefer the rules to be home-grown because, while only a fraction of small businesses export to the EU, all must adhere to EU regulations.

8. The EU fails to make the crucial distinction between unity and uniformity. This quest for sameness and conformity should be of particular concern to Liberals. In any case, it doesn't work; one size clearly did not fit all during the Euro crisis. When European governments were in charge of their own currencies, there was a range of measures they could deploy to regulate their economies, such as adjustment of exchange and interest rates, so they could manage their national finances in the interests of the people who elected them, and if they failed to do this, they could be voted out of office. But, once they joined the Euro, most of these remedies were no longer available to them; they were locked into a centralised and democratically unaccountable institution whose sole priority was protection of the Euro.

9. The ultimate EU objective is, and has always been, the creation of a federated Union of European states, with one economy, one currency, one army, one law and one president. It even has its own flag and national anthem. But is a United States of Large still relevant or desirable? Thanks to the Internet and the Jumbo Jet, the world is a much smaller place than it was in 1950. A union of countries having nothing much in common apart from their borders might have had something going for it in the 19th Century but does European exclusivity and identity still make sense? Why a union with Germany but not Japan, with Austria but not Australia, with Belgium but not Brazil?

Most British voters want to sell goods, not their souls, to visit the Continent because it's different, not because it's the same. They want their country to be a member of everything but belong to nobody. They are unsettled by today's EU, which they perceive to be undemocratic, distant and inimical to their interests. It's a gut feeling which, up until the 2016 Referendum, the political class had been able to ignore.

The World in 2050

“If Europe today accounts for just over 7 per cent of the world’s population, produces around 25 per cent of global GDP and has to finance 50 per cent of global social spending, then it’s obvious that it will have to work very hard to maintain its prosperity and way of life,”

Angela Merkel Dec 2012 in an interview with the Financial Times.

In mapping out a future international policy, it is important to try and forecast what the global situation will be in, say, 2050 and how we can best prepare and prosper. Our world is changing at bewildering speed, as hundreds of millions of people in a host of developing nations demand a standard of living that we have taken for granted for decades. If we are to survive, let alone prosper, in this challenging environment of shrinking resources, burgeoning populations and highly competitive markets, we need to reach out and make common cause with those nations - European or not - who think as we do. Much has been written about the shape of things to come during the course of this century and forecasts can be made about the state of play in 2050 under 3 headings- population, share of world trade and global GDP.

Population

According to the United Nation’s World Population Statistics, Europe’s population is in decline. In 2050, it is estimated that our continent’s population will reduce by 5.29 million. 17 of the 28 member states will experience a reduction in their populations. Germany’s alone will decline by 1.2 million. Moreover, age profiles in 2050 evidence a reduction in the proportion of youngsters and a rise in the number of retired. Again Germany, the EU’s workhorse, will be in serious trouble with only 48% aged between 15 and 59 and a massive 39% aged 60 plus, of which 14% will be 80 and over. All of this has worrying implications for shrinking workforces, reduced influence on the world stage and a declining skills and talent base. The same statistics forecast that, while 15% of the world population was domiciled in today’s EU in 1950, this proportion will decrease to 5% by 2050, with only Russia featuring as a European nation in the top 20 most populous countries. The most populous nation currently in the EU will be us, ranked 24th, with 75 million people.

Share of World Trade and Global GDP

An EU Commission report published back in 2002 cast doubt on the viability of the EU as a trade block. In 2002, the share of world trade for the EU was 22%, North America 25% and China 18%. By 2050, the Commission calculated that the EU’s world share would have shrunk to 12%, North America suffered a slight reduction to 23%, while China’s share increased to 24%. So, by 2050, the EU share of world trade will be half that of either North America or China. This decline is also mirrored in Global GDP share. GDP is Gross Domestic Product, a measurement of a nation’s total annual output. The following table uses statistics taken from another EU Commission report entitled Global Europe 2050 which features 3 scenarios from worst to best case. The “best case” stats have been used here:-

World GDP share	2010	2050 best case
USA	26%	18%
EU	29%	17%
India	2%	11%
China	8%	23%

Even use of the Commission’s “best case” stats shows a decline in EU GDP share by 2050. From these projections, it can be concluded that the EU on its own does not provide economy of scale in areas where it matters. It’s just not big enough.

Issues: Immigration

"I refuse to imagine a Europe where lorries and hedge funds are free to cross borders but citizens are not,"

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament 2012-2017

If politicians are trying to create a United States of Whatever, they will not allow border controls between member states; goods, services, capital and, most important of all, people must be allowed to cross from one united state to another without hindrance. The only way to regain total control of UK borders is to leave the EU. A grown-up debate in the UK about migration is overdue, shorn of post-colonial guilt trips and sloppy use of vocabulary such as racism. Here are a few thoughts to be going on with:-

Most Brits are generally not racist, although there have been post-war problems accepting "cultural pluralism" - not the same thing at all - as foreign workers were imported by industry to do the jobs we couldn't or wouldn't do. But even here, even though voters were never consulted about it, Brits have generally tolerated a multi-cultural metamorphosis of society over the decades and are the better for it. Even so, tolerance should not be confused with empathy or even acceptance and an immigration free-for-all can easily sour community relations, not only for those just arrived but also for those who have been settled here for many decades. There has to be a limit to the numbers of people these islands can comfortably accommodate without changing the nature of our built, natural and social environment, with consequences for social cohesion. In 2016, the average number of people per square kilometre in the UK was 270, over twice the EU average of 118. In England, the figure is 427 people a square kilometre, making it the most crowded landmass in Europe.

It is time to challenge the nonsense that is talked about freedom of movement of people as if they were mere goods. People require shelter, food, health services, education and protection under the rule of law, not only for themselves but for their families as well. Moreover, within a given social spending budget, the greater the immigration, the less there is to go round for everyone else, and so-called freedom rapidly degenerates into anarchy as the chaos of migration defeats all attempts to plan for jobs, schools, houses and hospitals in a highly developed welfare state such as ours. Having open borders is like leaving the front door of your home open to all comers so that even complete strangers can walk in for food, bed and shelter. Quite apart from the security risk this would present, there is no way you could plan to accommodate the comings and goings. Even leaving the door ajar for skilled immigrants raises a moral issue for Liberals: Plundering developing countries of their most valuable asset - their skilled workforce - is arguably the worst form of colonialism there is.

We are the fifth richest nation on the planet and we need to realise that the poor and destitute of other countries are quite prepared to risk coming here without access to any welfare services, to live off the black market or off the crumbs we drop from our well-stocked table, because even this will represent an improvement in their quality of life.

It's time to consider immigration as part of a holistic foreign policy, so we can accommodate prospective newcomers, for the benefit of our country, for them and their countries of origin. There has to be a plan, involving immigration control, aid and education packages, perhaps even Hong Kong-style enclaves. And then perhaps we will see people from other lands as less of a liability and more of an asset: the young and agile from other nations, confident, bright-eyed & bushy-tailed can-do individuals, those with get up and go who got up and went. But it has to be our debate and our plan, not part of somebody else's.

Issues: Jobs

“Your arms are hanging limp at your sides, your legs have nothing to do; some machine is doing that for you”
 In the Year 2525; Richard Evans 1969

“MORE JOBS, LOWER PRICES” proclaimed the 2016 *“Britain Stronger in Europe”* leaflet. The same sort of propaganda was churned out during the 1975 referendum. When we first joined the Common Market in 1973, unemployment was 806,300. Since then, it has fluctuated across the decades as follows:-

UK Unemployment totals	Lowest	Highest
1960-1969	292,500	932,900
1970-1979	511,500	1,635,800
1980-1989	1,470,600	3,408,000
1990-1999	1,310,000	3,062,000
2000-2009	1,397,000	2,484,000
2010-present	1,410,000	2,708,000

Clearly, if the EU was supposed to protect employment, it has not been doing a very good job! Some of us are old enough to remember Parliament going into a blind panic when the jobless total went over 1 million in the 1970s, but, as the table above shows, the number of those out of work has never since dipped below that figure in the following decades. It was in UK manufacturing where the pro-European promises of 1975 were broken. Here are some “Then and Now” workforce figures:-

Manufacturing Workforce	1966	2011
Steel & Metal Production	630,000	230,000
Mechanical Engineering	1,260,000	340,000
Electrical Engineering	910,000	130,000
Shipbuilding & Marine	210,000	40,000
Textiles	810,000	70,000

Several million UK jobs in manufacturing have been lost since we joined the EU. There are, of course, other reasons for this decline as capital chases the cheapest means of production and developing countries make their own clothes and steel. Automation too is partly responsible and sooner or later somebody is going to have to address the problem of how you distribute the wealth machinery creates if you do not have salaries and wages as a conduit. Capital does not have the answer and no philosophy in politics has yet addressed the problem. BREXIT will hopefully prompt a debate about how we Brits do things in the future and part of that debate will have to address the problem of how to keep everybody gainfully employed and connected, with their wages from conventional employment topped up courtesy of a stake in the wealth generated by automation. Perhaps globalisation and the tons of consumer junk it creates will be replaced by a more considered and environmentally friendly process which can deliver bespoke and longer lasting products in smaller local workshops, thanks to 3-D printing, human skill sets and the Internet.

In the meantime, the claim that membership of the EU protects jobs is clearly nonsensical; according to Eurostat figures for 2017, the UK had an unemployment rate of 4.4%, while the Eurozone percentage was double the UK total at 9.1%.

Issues: Peace and Security

"For over 6 decades (the EU) contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe"

Citation for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize Award to the EU

Credit where it is due; the EU has indeed acted as a Liberal Democratic beacon for those European countries previously run by dictatorships or communist regimes. These countries total half of the current EU member states. So the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU was quite justified, even though the timing of the award was curious, announced as it was in the middle of the Euro crisis, with harmony between member nations at an all-time low.

And the key word in the citation is "contributed". There were other contributors, not the least of whom was - and still is - the United States of America, who underpinned the post WW2 peace with huge amounts of money courtesy of the Marshall Aid Programme and who has shored up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation with most of the military hardware and personnel. Without NATO - i.e. the USA -, Europe could not defend itself.

The problem with this is that the USA is in a similar position to the one we were at the beginning of the last century when we were still top dog but aware that our hegemony would not last for much longer. Just as we were mindful of the need for change then, the USA is doubtless aware that, in 50 to 100 years time, she may not be big enough on her own and will need reliable allies to replace the bunch of freeloaders she is currently saddled with. A sober re-appraisal by the USA of all current alliances is in prospect, especially since the Pentagon was recently obliged to quadruple spending on US military preparations to defend NATO allies in Europe who were not pulling their weight. The only EU members in the Organisation spending the 2% of GDP minimum on defence as agreed in 2006 are Poland, Estonia, Greece(!) and the UK. Germany's spending is a pathetic 1.24%. Matters are made worse by the EU establishment's venture into diplomacy courtesy of the newly created EEAS, the Union's shiny new Foreign Ministry. The EU's disastrous meddling in Ukraine evidences an institution writing cheques that it's diminutive military clout cannot cash.

President Trump may have highlighted the problem, but American exasperation that the EU is not doing enough to defend itself is long-standing. In 2011, US Defence Secretary, Robert Gates warned: *"There will be dwindling appetite and patience in the US Congress, and in the American body politic writ large, to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defence."*

Defence is not a luxury. We need a defence and security system for the same reason we need a police force – it provides protection against the darker side of human nature. Now, while there will always be human depravity, there are other measures that can be taken to contain crime and reduce the level of enforcement necessary. The rule of fair law, freedom of thought & action, and equality of opportunity to access welfare and education, and to participate in government are arguably all factors which minimize domestic criminal activity and constitute what dictionaries define as "liberal democracy". Aside from domestic benefits, liberal democracy has advantages on an international scale. Liberal democracies tend not to let disagreements with each other degenerate into war and are able to co-operate with each other because their systems of government and aspirations of their peoples are similar.

It is well-defended liberal democracy, rather than the EU, which underpins peace in Europe.

Issues: Trade

“Whether the UK will stay in the EU or not will not do any harm to trade and economic ties or financial relations between the UK and China. We have a smaller world and everyone is connected with each other and it is the age of globalisation. I think whether the UK stays in the EU or not will not have an impact.” Wang Hongzhang, Chair of the China Construction Bank

Free trade within the customs union that is the EU might have had something going for it 70 years ago when global trade tariffs averaged 13% but after GATT and the birth of the WTO, average tariffs are down to 4%. Current trade disputes have rather stalled this process but markets always defeat politics in the end and restraints on trade can be expected to reduce further as globalisation renders customs unions like the EU redundant.

You will hear people say that “half our trade is with the EU”. What they should say is that 44% of our *international* trade is with the EU, not the same thing at all. When you buy a paper from your local newsagent, trade takes place, but it is not international trade. So, how reliant are we on exports for our income and what proportion of our exports go to the EU?

According to World Bank statistics for 2017, 30.5% of our GDP (Gross Domestic Product, which is the nation’s total annual output) is derived from our export of goods and services. This contrasts with a much greater reliance on exports by Europe, averaging 44.6% of GDP across the EU.

Of our total exports, only 44% go to the EU. Once again, this is in stark contrast to the vast majority of EU countries who are far more reliant on Fortress Europe for trade; according to Eurostat figures, nearly 60% of Germany’s exports are to the EU, Austria’s EU exports exceed 70%, and Hungary’s exceed 80%.

So, if 30.5% of our GDP is derived from total exports and 44% of those exports go to the EU, that means that only 13.42% of our GDP derives from our exports to the EU.

No nation state is completely self-sufficient but the above figures indicate that we are more self-sufficient than most. Even so, while international trade is not the be-all and end-all, leaving the EU requires a re-balancing of UK trade. As the following table using 2017 World Bank figures shows, there is teeming life beyond the staid confines of the EU:

	Population (millions)	Population, (as world %)	% UK Exports
India	1,339	18%	0.9%
China	1,386	18%	4.8%
USA	325	4%	13.2%
EU	512	7%	44.0%

This is simply an illustration using just the USA and a couple of the leading emerging super-economies as examples, never mind the dozens of other countries listed by the World Bank. We need to take urgent steps to re-connect with the world at large, especially in view of the EU’s projected decline in terms of GDP, trade share and population over the next 3 decades. After all, we are the fifth largest economy in the world, with the second largest population in the EU, currently comprising 47 million well-educated and sophisticated adult consumers.

We represent a huge market which everybody will be keen to trade with.

UK: Manchester City or Accrington Stanley?

"Britain is a third rate power nursing illusions of grandeur of its colonial past"

I.K Gujral, Prime Minister of India 1997

Are we big enough, strong enough, productive enough and talented enough to go it alone? Yes, we are. The UK comprises a reasonably healthy and educated population which enjoys the benefits of a welfare state run by a democratically elected government; our island status has protected us from hostile land powers over the ages and enables ready access to maritime resources and trade routes; our temperate climate delivers a bounteous supply of fresh water and seasonal weather which enables us to grow 61% of the food we eat (we could grow a lot more!), and our location on the planet has spared us the extremes of major earthquakes, volcanic activity, storm and flood.

There are 67 million of us, making us the 21st most populous nation in the World. Centuries free of invasion and civil war have enabled our institutions to become well established and respected; we are the sixth highest spender on defence, maintaining armed forces which include a nuclear deterrent, a blue water navy, state of the art fighter aircraft and an army of 112,000; the global use of our English language enables us to wield considerable "soft power" overseas. While the days of Empire are long gone and the Union Jack no longer flutters over countless government buildings worldwide, we are still a rich nation, currently ranked the 5th most prosperous in terms of GDP after the USA, China, Japan and Germany. While we will soon be overhauled by a host of other nations such as India, Brazil and Russia, this will not be the result of our becoming poorer but of other nations becoming richer.

We are not without our problems, of course. Our education, health, legal and welfare services are creaky and we have allowed our institutions to fossilize; the UK brand has taken a battering of late, thanks to our antics in the Middle East; we are picky about the jobs we do and how productively we do them; we waste resources and have become a nation of shopaholics, racking up private debt on the acquisition of consumer junk which falls to pieces almost as fast as it falls out of fashion; and, speaking of debt, for all the talk of Tory cuts, the National Debt still increases year after year, a damning indictment of government competence and a shameful inheritance for us to leave our children and their children. Even so, all these defects are well within our gift to solve, improve or change. No nation is completely self-reliant but we are better placed to determine our own destiny than most.

In the 2016 Referendum, there was much talk about the UK's power and influence abroad, which is a fixation of the political class. While the post-war British public seemed to have been quite unaffected by the loss of the largest empire the world had ever seen, the British political establishment had, in the words of US Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "*lost an empire but not yet found a role*". Today's UK politicians still seem desperate to have power and influence on the world stage, and there is frequent reference to "punching above our weight" which has, if the truth be known, landed us in so much hot water over the last few decades, as is evidenced by our under-resourced adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The British electorate is no longer bothered about international clout or influence and would probably prefer a clear conscience, peace and independence. Voters seem happy with our place in the world as we slide slowly yet gracefully down the various global league tables monitoring wealth and influence – perhaps not a Manchester City any more, but certainly not an Accrington Stanley.

If the EU didn't exist, would we need to invent it?

"Nobody would have deliberately designed a government as complex and as redundant as the EU"

Tom Reid US Journalist

If the EU had been a business, it would have gone the way of Woolworths years ago, but because there is no commercial imperative, politicians keep pumping taxpayers' money into it, rather than ask whether it continues to serve any useful purpose. By asking the above question about the EU and, indeed, other international bodies, we can plot a way forward for ourselves and other nations, unencumbered by the constraints and clutter of history.

For example, if the United Nations didn't exist would we need to invent it? On paper, Yes, absolutely. It is the only global institution where (nearly) every nation, democratic or not, has a forum to raise grievances and debate international issues. Even so, when push comes to shove, the UN is an institution which never ceases to disappoint; it dithers while innocent civilians are killed in their beds. So, while we work away to make the UN more effective in the long term and acknowledge the good work it does in other areas, we need to consider an alternative body which could tackle the global tasks for which the UN is currently unsuited.

And, if the Commonwealth did not exist, would we need to invent it? Sadly, No. While this worthy and global institution once had the potential to become a powerful multi-cultural brotherhood which could have achieved co-operation in everything from trade to defence, we have allowed the Commonwealth to languish over the decades and, as currently constituted, its future is uncertain. Moreover, notwithstanding all the fine sentiments embodied in the 1991 Harare Declaration about individual freedom, the rule of law and democracy, many members can be weighed in the balance and found wanting in this regard. Even so, elements of the organisation could provide a template for a new global body.

And what of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation? Yes, NATO works. It does its job, even if that job is to do nothing other than organise and strike a military posture that is sufficient to give Russia and others pause for thought. Even so, it is hopelessly reliant on the USA, whose future commitment to the alliance is uncertain due to the unwillingness of the majority of EU NATO members to pull their weight by spending 2% of their GDP on defence, as previously agreed. Moreover, once NATO partners found themselves waging a land war in hostile territory as part of ISAF, it is fair to say that some proved rather inept about it. There are also many nations beyond the confines of the North Atlantic who could make a meaningful contribution; NATO needs to be global rather than regional. It also needs to remind members of its commitment to *"the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law"* enshrined in the founding treaty of 1949.

And finally, do we need the EU? No, none of us do. It is an old-fashioned artifice created in the aftermath of war in the erroneous belief that a regional and federated customs union of states, rather than liberal democracy, provides the best guarantee of peace and prosperity. Any benefits of membership can be realised just as well by other means. The UK's semi-detached dalliance with the concept of a United Europe was badly thought through by Whitehall and has needlessly complicated our foreign policy. Indeed, future historians may conclude that our entire 20th Century pre-occupation with all things European was a ghastly mistake. Clearly, the days of painting a map of the world in different colours according to regions and continents and requiring geographical proximity for alliances are over. We need a more mature approach to making common cause with like minds worldwide.

The quest for peace, liberty and contentment

“By building relations we create a source of love and personal pride and belonging that makes living in a chaotic world easier”
Susan Lieberman, Author

For all their shortcomings, liberal democratic nation states are still the best means of government, which can then come together to make common cause as international government organisations. While some Liberals will claim that nation states fuel tribalism and war, nationalism in moderation is nothing more than community politics writ large. The impersonality of vast super-states will always be bested by the diversity of smaller nation states; humanity prospers when people feel that they belong and are involved.

Even so, the social benefits of community, both in a local and national sense, are reliant on a healthy civil society. This is all too often taken for granted. Civil society in turn thrives best in a liberal democracy where participation, diversity, exchange of different ideas and human interaction foster desirable human traits such as enthusiasm, industry, thrift, kindness, respect, love and generosity. This does not happen automatically; it needs to be worked at, otherwise there is a danger that we will end up distanced and alienated from each other, our experiences limited to what we see on an edited screen, doing everything remotely and making choices for everything from politicians to pizza on some greasy keyboard, while wealth and the means of producing it is vested in the hands of fewer and fewer people. In this way humanity is devalued, resentment festers and the chance of violent dispute is thereby increased, fertile territory for angry gods directing nutcases with minds that hate.

This quest for liberty and contentment needs to be given some much-needed international focus because liberal democracy is currently very much on the defensive. After the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe nearly 30 years ago, the march of individual freedom seemed unstoppable. It was argued that a liberal democracy incorporating individual freedom and the rule of law was necessary to create the conditions for wealth generation. Unfortunately, Communist China has since proved that this is not the case and that, provided the mass of people can be bought off with a better standard of living, or at least the prospect of one, they will submit to authoritarian rule and forgo democracy and individual rights. In this regard, the 2017 Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy makes depressing reading. This index ranks 167 nations (the survey excludes micro-states) according to their performance under five general categories; electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture. The following table gives the total numbers of countries grouped into 4 categories according to the 2017 survey:-

Regime Type	Number of Countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	19	11.4	4.4
Flawed democracies	57	34.1	44.3
Hybrid regimes	39	23.4	17.7
Authoritarian regimes	52	31.1	32.3

Under one twentieth of the world’s population enjoys the full democracy status which we British take for granted, urgently requiring a co-ordinated response from the nations whose democracies pass muster. Even those in the premier league of “Full Democracies”, such as the UK (ranked only 14th out of 19), need to keep their democratic fabric in constant repair before they can start lecturing the 57 countries in the second division about tackling the flaws in their systems of government, never mind the rest. What’s to be done?

Going for G.O.L.D.

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried”
Winston Churchill

Perhaps we can use the golden opportunity of BREXIT for everybody’s benefit by creating something new, visionary and purposeful, certainly as a replacement for the EU, NATO and possibly the Commonwealth. Whatever it is needs to be global and exclusive, with membership restricted to full liberal democracies that are prepared to commit a certain percentage of their GDP to international security as their membership fee. If they haven’t got the troops or the equipment, they pay the balance in cash to those members who have, or they lose their membership. Additionally, richer members would undertake to provide a further percentage of their GDP to a targeted aid programme for poorer members.

We could lead the way by building a Global Organisation of Liberal Democracies, for aid, trade and defence, with a core membership drawn from liberal democratic nation states. This would not be a union like the EU whose weakness lies in its failure to make the distinction between unity and uniformity. In G.O.L.D, each member nation would have their own economy, currency, borders, language and system of government and welfare.

Members of G.O.L.D. would commit to defending themselves and each other, they would commit to trading fairly with each other and the richer members would commit to improving the welfare of poorer member nations. There would also be a programme of assistance for prospective G.O.L.D. members in the form of aid, trade agreements, security and civil society development packages. For the first time, aid, trade and defence would be combined to create a global triumvirate of resources, a step-by-step, nation-by-nation means to a peaceful and prosperous liberal democratic end.

G.O.L.D would give a much-needed focus on what trade, cooperation, and defence of our collective and individual freedoms are all about. It would not just be a re-active regional defence pact with no final objective. Liberal Democracy is always a work in progress and we are on the same road as, say, China, but a little further ahead, thanks to nothing more than accidents in history. Moreover, we must avoid making the mistakes we made in Iraq and Afghanistan by naively assuming that a ballot box would somehow substitute for order on the streets and a reliable water supply. Democracy is the icing on the cake of civil society and G.O.L.D. support for a prospective member nation would need to be in place at least 20 years to bear fruit, allowing a generation of youngsters to grow up in peace and liberty under a full liberal democratic regime.

G.O.L.D would not necessarily need to be created from scratch. A merging of existing organisations is possible. For example, NATO is already a well-established military alliance, with its HQ in Brussels. If the EU, also based in Brussels, were to ditch all its pretensions of continental statehood, it could merge with NATO and metamorphose into a global body whose remit would be fair trade, aid, and the promotion of liberal democracy. Some members of the Commonwealth might also be part of this, providing the global dimension.

Clearly, the devil will be in the detail, particularly on the vexed question of terms of trade: one man’s free trade is another’s unemployment. Even so, just because something is difficult in politics does not mean it should be avoided; indeed, it is often the only way to go.