

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Future of Britain's Diplomatic Relationship with Europe, HC 514

Wednesday 29 November 2017

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Ian Austin; Ann Clwyd; Mike Gapes; Ian Murray; Andrew Rosindell; Nadhim Zahawi.

Questions 259-342

Witnesses

I: Professor Robert Tombs, University of Cambridge, and James Rogers, Henry Jackson Society.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Robert Tombs and James Rogers.

Q259 **Chair:** Welcome, Professor Tombs and James Rogers. It is very nice to see you both. Thank you very much for making time this afternoon to come and see us. You know the purpose of the inquiry as we look to D-day plus one, as it were. We are not here to discuss Brexit; we are here to discuss the future, and I would be very grateful if you could focus all your attention on that, rather than debating which elements we should and should not agree to in the close battle, as it were.

Perhaps I can start you off. Professor Tombs, what is the UK's role in European foreign policy?

Professor Tombs: I would say that we have the role of one of the guarantors of European security, of course, but unlike most European countries, with the partial exception of France, we also have a global role and have done for several hundred years, at least since the early 18th century. This is an essential part of our world strategy and also part of our relationship with Europe, because over this very long period we have always tried to share our resources between European security and the protection of our interests in the world, which have been very diverse—economic and trading, as well as political and security. Therefore, I think we have to rethink our relationship with Europe in the light of what has been our choice of a more global role, in some ways rather like that that we played in the period before we entered the EU. Our resources are not infinite, so I think we have to make a number of choices.

Q260 **Chair:** We will come to the choices shortly if that's all right. James, how do you see our role?

James Rogers: I broadly agree with Professor Tombs that we have had a critical role in undergirding European security. More broadly, in the Euro-Atlantic space, which includes North America and Europe, we have played a key role in what we might call an ordering principle.

Since the end of the second world war—indeed, before that—the UK has played a key role in establishing a type of order within Europe that is conducive to the kinds of principles that we wish to see flourish—that is, liberal democracy-based systems. Also, through our membership of NATO we have played a very important role in ensuring that the resources and the military-industrial power of the United States and Canada are combined with that of the UK and projected into Europe to underscore the peace.

Since the end of the second world war, we have in some respects seen an institutionalisation of that order through NATO and the forward deployment of our military assets, both in West Germany during the cold war and, increasingly in the modern context, in relation to Russia's revisionist behaviour along the eastern flank of the Alliance, and also in

the Baltic states, Poland and of course Romania, through our air police mission and contributions.

So the UK has played a very critical role in maintaining a cohesive system that in a way has allowed European integration to get off the ground and flourish. Without the key role that the UK has played in binding North America and Europe together, the situation of Europe might look somewhat different today.

Q261 **Chair:** You have used the term “landlord”. Is this what you are talking about?

James Rogers: This was not my term; it was a term used by Professor Simms at the University of Cambridge. He basically says that in a way the United States and the United Kingdom—the Atlantic democracies—own what he calls the freehold of European security and that the European Union or the Europeans in a way are the leaseholder or the tenants of the order. If the two become disentangled from each other, particularly if the Europeans decide to go their own way, the entire strategic order that has emerged since the end of the second world war will break down, which in turn could have consequences for the ability of peripheral powers, like Russia and potentially the actors within the Middle East, to move in and spoil what has been achieved. The key point to think about is that the UK and the US have in a way subordinated European integration to a wider Euro-Atlantic framework, and that framework is the most important thing in understanding European security as it stands today.

Q262 **Chair:** Would you say that the EU27 understand that?

James Rogers: I think some do, but there is a movement within that bloc that maybe doesn’t understand that fully and sees the opportunity to chart a more independent or autonomous course from both the British and the Americans. They seize on this for a number of different reasons: first, the threat from Russia, which is now widely established, both in a non-linear context—that is, Russian infiltration of our democratic systems—and in the sense of being designed to break up the west. There is also the political situation in both the UK and the US—the domestic political situation there—and, more broadly, the rise of China and the way in which it may draw the US away from European security in the way it has supported it since the end of the second world war.

Q263 **Chair:** You said some do. Who doesn’t?

James Rogers: There are a number of different political forces within the continent, and they all manifest themselves in different ways. There are academic forces, there are—

Chair: Sure, but which countries get it and which don’t?

James Rogers: It is very difficult to say, because it is not simply a case of one country supporting it and one not. There are different movements within countries, as well as countries as a whole. We might say that it is difficult to understand exactly what some countries are trying to achieve when they are creating what they hope will eventually be autonomous



systems within the European Union that might provide an alternative to the Euro-Atlantic community and the bilateral relations that exist between the US and the UK and other countries on the European mainland to help to undergird European security, particularly in a very volatile time when Russia is quite actively engaged in trying to undermine European security.

Q264 Mike Gapes: This concept of the Euro-Atlantic community was very much based on what happened at the end of the second world war and the fear of the Soviet Union, and it is underpinned by extended deterrence, with the United States being the ultimate guarantor of western European security. Given the failure in different ways by the last and current US Administrations to really appreciate or understand that, is it not long overdue that Europeans actually start to think more seriously about an autonomous defence capability, particularly given what you just said about Russia; and is it not actually consistent with the NATO goal of the 2% spend that European countries should do more—that it should not be just Britain, and to a lesser extent France, who are the European guarantors? Shouldn't other European countries do that?

James Rogers: Yes. You could say that they do need to more and adhere to the principle that was agreed in Newport in Wales in 2014 that they need to increase their defence spending to the 2% minimum to help to undergird European security. However, remember that that 2% of GDP guideline was set in the mid-2000s, when the European strategic situation was relatively stable, in comparison with today. Russia was not in the situation it is in today and has been in over the last few years, where it is literally trying to revise countries' borders. In a way, this isn't actually a very significant contribution, but they are still not making it.

We have done some calculations at my institute, the Henry Jackson Society, looking at, for example, the kind of money that some of the European countries that have pledged to undergird NATO with that 2% have failed to spend. If we look at, say, Germany over the past five years, it has basically short-changed NATO by the sum of \$255 billion. That is a significant amount of money. If you look at all the EU NATO states, it comes to something like \$450 billion, just over the last five years. In that context, I think we need to look most explicitly at the role of the UK and the US, which have actually, in a way, subsidised European security and continue to do so.

Q265 Mike Gapes: I accept that, but you are avoiding my point about the US. The US in the Obama period was basically reluctant and was leading from behind in, for example, Libya and so on. Trump has made it explicit that he will not behave in the way of a traditional US Administration. Do you see those two presidencies as an aberration, or is there actually a long-term trend and we should therefore be arguing for the Europeans to do more?

James Rogers: I see what you are trying to say.

Mike Gapes: I am not trying to say it, I am saying it.



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James Rogers: I do not accept that Mr Trump is any less committed to European security than his predecessors. Remember, it was Mr Obama who began the pivot or rebalance of the United States towards the east Asian region, and a number of different force deployments were undertaken during that time.

The point is not that we should necessarily support European military integration or co-operation in that kind of context to become autonomous; it is simply that there is not a willingness within Europe to actually do what would need to be done in order to achieve that. Even if it was tried, I do not think it would be possible without the support of the United Kingdom and the United States. In any case, they have wider global interests, and they also have an interest in underpinning the Euro-Atlantic system, which kind of excludes them from participating exclusively in the European context.

Q266 **Andrew Rosindell:** Mr Rogers, Professor Tombs, welcome. This is a very serious issue. Mr Rogers talked about an alternative to the Euro-Atlantic community. Isn't that a quite enormous change from where we have been since the second world war? Do you think the UK Government fully appreciate the dangers that such a shift could pose to the complacency in relation to what some European powers feel is a guaranteed right to freedom and democracy? Isn't that a dangerous shift? Do you feel the Government fully appreciate the dangers that lay ahead if this goes ahead?

James Rogers: I would say, in keeping with the response I just gave, that the UK should resist any move that seeks to create on the European mainland an autonomous or independent system of which we are not a part and over which we do not have control, and of which the Americans are not a part, are the Canadians—remember that they play a key role in relation to the deterrence measures that are being undertaken through NATO in the Baltic states, where I have been living for the past five years. In that context, the UK, the Canadians and the US are playing a disproportionate role in undergirding the security of that region. The Germans are playing a key role in Lithuania, but you can see already that the majority of the strategic input into the protection of the European order is coming from outside the EU—particularly once the UK leaves. We have already seen that this is not possible without the support of the major Atlantic democracies, which have the military capability and the willingness to fund it, as well as the operational experience that has been accrued over many decades to play that key role. I don't think that allowing the Europeans to do this by themselves would be a very good move for the United Kingdom.

Q267 **Andrew Rosindell:** As we are leaving the EU, how do the UK Government influence this to ensure that things do not go in a very detrimental way—a bad direction—while at the same time retaining our complete autonomy over our own defences and security policy?

Professor Tombs: Ideally, by being very clear about what we want and realising our true importance. I don't want to flag wave, but it seems to



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me that Britain has been for the past 300 years one of the half dozen most powerful states in the world, and the leading European state in terms of influence and military power. Your organisation actually puts it higher and says we are the second in the world. We need to try to gauge our true importance, which we have been very bad at doing—certainly since the 1950s.

The loss of empire had a very serious effect psychologically. It convinced us that we were no longer important and that we simply have to follow the lead of others. I don't think we do need to follow the lead of others. We need to give a lead, and we need to be confident enough to do that and to realise that we have both an interest and a duty in doing so. European security has always depended on forces outside, certainly from the 18th century, when—I am using war only as a metaphor; obviously we are not in a war situation—the ability to mobilise forces outside Europe was what gave us influence within Europe, and that is still the case. It is because our trade outside the EU is so extensive that we have the finances to play what is after all the leading military role in Europe.

Q268 **Andrew Rosindell:** Are we underselling ourselves? Are we not being bold enough?

Professor Tombs: We are not, and we haven't been for a long time.

Q269 **Andrew Rosindell:** In which case, what would you say to HMG about how the UK can be stronger, in terms of our foreign policy influence around the world, post-Brexit?

Professor Tombs: I think people such as this Committee have to try to formulate a very clear sense of what our duties and our interests in the world are post-Brexit. As I said—forgive me if I repeat myself—perhaps since 1940, we have tended to think we are dependent on others for our security and our influence, either as a second to the Americans or simply as part of a larger EU. As Mr Gapes says, we cannot at the moment depend on the Americans, and maybe we will be less able to do so in the future. We have decided to leave the EU, but we are perfectly capable of setting a course of our own. That is not to say an isolationist course, but one in which we act as equals and claim an equal power in deciding strategy and policy, rather than just behaving as obedient members of the club.

Q270 **Andrew Rosindell:** Do you think traps are being laid to prevent us going down this route—to force us to continue to be obedient members of the club?

James Rogers: If I may go back and answer your question as well, you ask what we can do in relation to Europe. We need to have an understanding of what kind of order we want in Europe—what we want the mainland to look like and how we want it to fit into a wider scheme, both the Euro-Atlantic system, including the US and Canada, and our wider role in the rest of the world. To some extent the Americans—explicitly so—and we have played a role outside Europe, trying to undergird the rules-based

or liberal international order, as it has come to be called, in the wider world.

For Europe, we need to think a little bit as a country and as a Government about how we can achieve that. One thing we need to focus on is our assets and making sure they remain robust. For example, our military spending has fallen to the lowest level as a percentage of GDP ever, save for 2015. We should seek to increase it, to show that as we leave the European Union we are still playing a key role in European security. We are already, but we can do more. As the United States ambassador to the UK said a few weeks ago, the UK can do more, just as the United States is doing. That is one thing we should do.

Another thing is that we can continue to support the importance and centrality of NATO. Many countries in Europe also wish to see that, particularly those that are most vulnerable, along the eastern flank of the Alliance. In addition, as we leave the European Union, we can also think more about the kind of multilateral arrangements we wish to pursue with European countries, to provide them with an alternative to any European Union-style endeavours. For example, we have done much with the northern group of countries to create a joint expeditionary force. We have done much with the Baltic states on Russian disinformation campaigns in those countries. We have done much with some of the southern European countries, but we could do more, and we could provide much more explicit multilateral structures that allow us to more actively facilitate that kind of co-operation.

In addition, we could do more bilaterally, for example with the French. We have done a great deal with them in setting up the combined joint expeditionary force, and with France we may have key interests in the Mediterranean and Middle East. We could do the same thing with Poland and Germany on eastern Europe, and some of the countries of the Nordic region as well.

Q271 Andrew Rosindell: Just to clarify, the crux of this issue is whether we tie ourselves into military arrangements under an EU structure, or do those things independently and bilaterally, at the same time retaining complete sovereignty over our assets. What is your view?

James Rogers: The latter view. We should be seeking to provide an order of Europe and how it should look, so that others can follow our lead, and not simply follow what others have already created, which may not be in our interests.

Professor Tombs: I make the slightly more general point: we have to recognise the fact that Europe is in a very fragile state. The whole of the western world has become politically very volatile, and we see that in America, Spain and even here. The EU is a very difficult partner because of its fragility and its seeming inability really to solve its long-term problems. It is difficult to negotiate with them, as we are seeing, but it is also difficult to know how Europe will develop over the next few years.



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I would have thought one thing we have to do is think about a post-EU Europe, or at least a Europe in which the EU is, in some senses, declining, losing popular legitimacy—it has already gone quite a long way toward that—and some of its states are threatened with break-up or are electing Governments of the sort we definitely disapprove of. We cannot simply assume either economic or political stability in Europe, which makes it a partner that we certainly have an interest in trying to prop up and maintain, but we cannot afford to put all our confidence in it or make ourselves subject to its leadership.

Q272 Mike Gapes: May I pick you up on this thing about the supposed declining popularity of the European Union? As far as I am aware, all the opinion polls in the EU27 countries conducted since the referendum vote in this country have shown increased support in those countries for the European Union, compared with the position before June 2016. Perversely, we are leaving and on the other side the public support seems to have grown.

Professor Tombs: You might not be surprised to know I am less optimistic about—

Q273 Mike Gapes: But I am quoting the opinion polls, which directly contradict what you just said.

Professor Tombs: They don't, actually. What you have seen is a huge tide of, to some extent, propaganda, but it is certainly reporting of Brexit that has shown it in the most disastrous light. If it turns out to be a disaster, then of course support within Europe for the EU will be higher, but as you suggest yourself, this is an artefact of Brexit and of the uncertainty about Brexit. If you look at opinion polls over the years before the referendum, they show that the EU was more unpopular in several of the EU countries than it was in this country. It was in France, for example; it was in Italy, in Greece and so on.

Q274 Mike Gapes: And now it is not.

Professor Tombs: Now it is not, but wait until after Brexit and then you will see; and wait till the next EU crisis. I do not think anyone thinks that the era of crisis in the EU is over.

James Rogers: I agree with that. The EU has just been through a series of really quite profound crises—we might say some of the worst it has ever experienced. It is not unforeseeable that in the future it will experience further crisis. The way in which it responds to those crises will I think also see increases in criticism of it. In that sense, we are not out of the woods yet. It just needs the next major crisis, whether it is economic or political or whatever, and it will suffer as it has been suffering. It is not a stable edifice in the way that some people and it would like to project. We need to be aware of that. That does not necessarily mean that we need to wish it ill, because one of the key things is that if it does actually fragment, we will be one of the key powers that would have to pick up the pieces—to try and provide an order for Europe as it tries to return to a more prosperous future—as we have so many times in the past. Nevertheless, it is not a

stable thing and we need to be aware of that. We should not buy into the kind of propaganda that has been put forward that articulates it as a centre of order and authority on the European mainland.

Professor Tombs: If we look at President Macron's very interesting speech in September at the Sorbonne in which he set out a plan for Europe, which he presented as the only way of saving the EU—he clearly sees himself in some sense as its saviour, and is seen by many other people in that light—this was an extremely ambitious plan for centralisation at every level. If that happens, it seems to me it risks making the EU more unpopular by moving more and more power from elected Governments to central bodies: budgetary powers, financial powers, powers over immigration and settlement, powers over welfare and so on. It could be that that remedy would be worse than the disease, or at least it will aggravate the disease, but it is very unlikely to happen. Hardly anyone in Europe has an appetite for greater integration, at least at the moment.

So where does that leave Europe? It means that the blueprint for saving it, which is pretty well accepted among all the top level of European institutions, is one that is either going to be unpopular or probably is not going to be accepted, and that means that Europe is left in a rather stagnant state. It seems to be rather like the old Austro-Hungarian empire—it continues to exist because no one can think of a better alternative, but it is not something that is effective or that commands strong support from its people. Its support is very much dependent on what seems to be going on at the time: if we are suffering, the EU looks better. If the EU has another crisis, that support will probably disintegrate.

Q275 **Mike Gapes:** Is it not a fact that today, at this very moment, if you look at the growth rates in the EU and compare them with the British economy, the situation has turned around? Two years ago, you could have argued quite strongly that the UK was at the high end. Now all the other EU countries and the EU average are growing faster than we are.

Professor Tombs: That is true.

Chair: Can I draw a line? I do not want to get into—

Mike Gapes: I am just challenging the assertions factually.

Chair: Forgive me, but we are fighting an old battle and I am trying to move forward.

Mike Gapes: Fair enough—it is on the record.¹

Chair: Yes, it is. Do you want to pick up on the next one?

Q276 **Mike Gapes:** The Foreign Secretary has claimed that we will be closer than ever to our allies in Europe if we leave the EU. Do the European

¹ Note from witness- letter sent to Committee to aid with clarification. Published on FAC website.



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Union 27 think that we will be closer than ever?

Professor Tombs: No. You all know this very well, but when one travels around Europe, one sees an extremely strong reaction—regret of Brexit and so on—at the moment, at least. There is a sense, which I think is entirely misinformed, that Brexit was a vote for isolation and that it means that we intend to cut ourselves off from Europe—and indeed, many people say, from the outside world. There is no reason to think that that will be the case; our future conduct will presumably show our allies that we are still reliable as an ally. Of course we will not be within the political, nation-building project of Europe, but we will certainly be part of NATO and of other European bodies.

James Rogers: Again, it depends on the area in which you are located. If you are in the Baltic states, Poland or Romania, I imagine that you would see quite a strong British connection to the security and the wellbeing of your country. Whether people feel the same in some other countries is another issue entirely. Everyone is aware, despite the sentiment that might be projected at the current time, that the UK has played a pretty key role in European security and the diplomatic order of Europe. In a way, Mr Junker alluded to that a few weeks ago when he said, “Thank you for the role that you played during the second world war, but now you must pay up.” Even in the most extreme case of what you might call antipathy to the UK, you can still see an acknowledgement that the UK has played a disproportionate role.

Q277 **Mike Gapes:** The question is about what happens in the future, not what happened in the past. Do you agree with the former Foreign Secretary, Lord Hague, who told this Committee that in his experience, it is not possible to exercise the same level of influence if you are not “in the room”?

James Rogers: It depends whose order you are alluding to. If we wish to exercise influence through the EU system, of course that must be correct because we would not be in the room. But that is the very point: we should not buy that agenda; we should say that we can have an alternative agenda and we are prepared to put in the effort and the resources to create that. In any case, we will not be in the room so we have to think beyond that area anyway. We need to think about the kinds of structures, levers and resources that we can put in place to achieve the kind of objective that we want in the new reality of the future, where we are not in the EU but still in NATO, and we still have a number of bilateral and multilateral arrangements that we can pursue.

Q278 **Chair:** May I jump in briefly? Both of you have come back, time and again, to the effort and resource that we must now invest to change the direction that the UK is going in, if we are to make a success of this new agenda. You are presumably talking about military hardware, which you have spoken specifically about, and also diplomatic engagement—the need to invest more seriously in our diplomatic networks. Would you agree with that?

Professor Tombs: Yes.

James Rogers: Yes.

Professor Tombs: I read the evidence given by Lord Hague and Lord Ricketts. I can understand why they would say that, but it seems to me that we probably do not want to invest a lot more diplomatic effort in small European countries in the way that we have done in the past because we have needed to influence their actions within the EU. We do not need to do that anymore. It seems to me that we have to reassess our diplomatic resources in Europe in the light of the demands made on our resources more globally. After all, Asia, Africa—these are places in which we have interests and duties too, perhaps more than we have in certain parts of eastern Europe. Diplomatic efforts directly, and to some extent the security effort, but also, after all, our huge resources in soft power—education, scholarships, the BBC World Service—all have a great deal of influence, and we have rather neglected them in recent years, particularly in certain parts of the world where we perhaps ought to increase our presence.

Q279 **Ian Austin:** Which eastern European countries do you think we should not be paying as much attention to, if I have understood you correctly?

Professor Tombs: Those in which we have least security and economic interest—the Czech Republic, Austria. I am not saying we should cut ourselves off from them completely, but the idea that we should spend a great deal of effort in increasing our presence there seems to me to be rather contradictory when we have taken the decision that we are no longer in the EU.

James Rogers: If I may come in on that, I think it depends. Whether we were in the EU or not does not really matter on this issue; the balance within Europe has been changing anyway. We have seen a kind of strengthening of Germany's position in relation to some of the other member states. We have seen that the eastern European member states have come to the fore because of the issue in relation to Russia. So the UK would have to be doing some of these things anyway. It is about trying to understand where the future problems may lie and trying to shape them accordingly to prevent them from becoming problems in the first place. So, irrespective of what the EU does or does not do and whether we remain or do not remain a member, the UK would have to be doing these things anyway.

Q280 **Ian Austin:** What lesson do you think President Putin would draw from Britain being less interested in what is happening in the Czech Republic, for example?

Professor Tombs: It depends on what you think his ambitions are. Not to take over the whole of eastern Europe; to get back bits of territory that he regards as Russian, and to maintain a kind of sphere of influence in eastern Europe. That seems to be the limit.

Q281 **Ian Austin:** The Russians are quite active: they are funding political parties and are engaged in the region—in the Czech Republic, for example. Do you think we should just walk away?

Professor Tombs: No, I am not saying that we should walk away; I am saying we should not spend a great deal of effort on increasing our presence. There is nothing we can do to stop President Putin from trying to influence political parties in the Czech Republic.

Q282 **Chair:** Isn't there?

Professor Tombs: I would have thought not.

Q283 **Chair:** Why are we bothering with the BBC, then?

Professor Tombs: Well, let's do that, but increasing our embassy is not going to prevent it.

Q284 **Chair:** So there is something we can do.

Professor Tombs: Well, I said the BBC World Service is very important.

Q285 **Ian Austin:** I am quite alarmed by this, really.

Chair: That does strike—

Ian Austin: I think Putin thinks there is a new cold war.

Professor Tombs: Russia has about the same GDP as Spain.

Q286 **Chair:** Yes, but it is spending rather more of it on military matters.

Professor Tombs: Yes, but for how long? How long could it keep it up, I wonder? Especially as it is spending a vast amount of money on its intervention in Syria. But you are all experts on this; I am a historian, not a political scientist.

James Rogers: I would say that we need again to appreciate our position in relation to Russia. As Professor Tombs just said, it does have a significantly smaller GDP than even we do, let alone the combined weight of NATO. So why have we enabled the situation to emerge? I am quite accustomed to and aware of it in so far as I have been living in Estonia for the past five years, and I understand how the Baltic states think and perceive Russia. Why have we allowed the situation as it stands to become so serious? Why did we allow a situation to emerge whereby Russia could actually annex large parts of a foreign power, Ukraine?

Q287 **Chair:** They are foreign countries about which we know little, as a historian would presumably put it.

James Rogers: Yes, but at the same time—

Chair: That did not lead to any problems at all, of course.

James Rogers: But at the same time, we need to understand that the EU did not do a great deal to assist in those situations; it did not prevent that from occurring. Nor did NATO, incidentally. This is why I think we need to refocus some of our diplomatic effort and wider strategic effort on the new areas of importance in Europe.

That does not necessarily mean focusing exclusively on the old western



European states; it means putting that towards eastern Europe, where the new frontier of NATO and the wider new Euro-Atlantic security system sits. It also means that we understand exactly the nature of the threat from Russia, which is perhaps no longer a conventional threat in the traditional way it was perceived in the past, but actually a kind of hybrid or—even better—a non-linear threat, which is being pursued through a number of different avenues to destabilise the west, to break it down and to cause consternation and a feeling of helplessness within the major western capitals, of which London is one. We need to try to emphasise our role in these key regions. That does not necessarily mean that we neglect² the others; it simply means that we need to place emphasis on the areas which—

Q288 Andrew Rosindell: You have hit the nail on the head. What is coming out of what you are saying surely must be that Britain needs more flexibility to make decisions about where priorities are needed and what is in Britain's interests, rather than being tied into something that may have other priorities for political reasons. Surely having control over our own defences, and sovereignty over military decisions, gives us flexibility to react. You clearly would not want to walk away from friends like the Czech Republic if they were in serious difficulties, but you do need that flexibility.

James Rogers: I don't think we need to react; we need to proact; that is the point. If we allow the Russians or others to gain the initiative and basically to impose their vision of order or disorder on Europe, we will always be reacting to that. We need to have a vision of what we want Europe to look like, and provide it with funds, resources and the institutional structures accordingly. Those will not always be through the European Union, in so far as we are leaving it; they will be through other avenues. We need to think very carefully about the ones that we want to see created, particularly in relation to the Baltic states in eastern Europe, and to northern Europe. Increasingly, in so far as there is a problem with migration from the unstable MENA region—north Africa and the middle east—we need to think about how we can bond together countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece and, to some extent, France to ensure that the security of the Mediterranean region is upheld as well.

This is not just diplomacy; it is strategic in a much wider sense. It should be directed explicitly to serve not only Britain's national interest, but that of European security itself. We should understand that we play a key role in that, and can provide a vision of order for that too. If we do not, others will simply seize the initiative, whether they are our allies—they may do things that are not necessarily dangerous to us but that nevertheless we do not wish to see—or our potential competitors, such as Russia, which will try to do things that we certainly do not want to see and that may actually have direct implications for our security back at home, and that of our allies.

² Note from witness- letter sent to Committee to aid with clarification. Published on FAC website.



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Professor Tombs: Mr Chairman, you alluded to the 1938 Munich crisis. I would have thought the lesson of that is that we have to choose our battles. We have to know where we can be strong and where we can influence things.

Q289 **Chair:** It is interesting that you have both spoken about engaging in Europe very differently. Mr Rogers has spoken about engaging in Europe and making sure that we have some active alliances that can face off or influence neighbours or other threatening areas that may have an influence. You, Professor Tombs, have effectively spoken about withdrawal—not investing and, in many ways, not reacting at all to anything that is going on in the Czech Republic.

Professor Tombs: I don't think I spoke about not reacting at all to things that happen in the Czech Republic.

Q290 **Chair:** You said it doesn't matter.

Professor Tombs: Well, I don't think it does matter as much to us as to other parts of the world. I said I do not think it sensible to increase our diplomatic investment in parts of the world in which we are inevitably taking less of an interest, and in which we have less interest.

James Rogers: I don't think there is necessarily a problem between us. It may be that, in the future, we consider that our interests in the Indo-Pacific region, such as south-east Asia or the gulf, are becoming more important as trade and commercial activity increases with those regions, and as they become more important in the global economy. I am sure you are aware that the long-term projections show that by 2050, which is hopefully within our lifetimes, the Indo-Pacific region, China, India, some of the gulf states, the south-east Asian states—for example, Indonesia, which has several hundred million people, or will have in the future—will become more important economically. In the 1970s, the European Community, as it then was, or western Europe, accounted for roughly 30% to 40% of the world's wealth; in the future it will be perhaps down to 7% or 12%.

Naturally, our connections with the rest of the world will continue to grow. We already have a strategic foothold in that region, both in the gulf and the south-east Asian region, through our connections with our allies, and our military facilities and trading connections in the region. We may continue, or begin, to prioritise those over some of our relations with Europe, but that does not necessarily mean that Europe is going to be less important, or unimportant, to us; it just means that we need to balance the two.

I do not think there is necessarily a discord between us. I am saying that we should functionally and geographically target our relations with Europe to provide a vision of order, to prevent a breakdown of the stable order that is in our national interest. However, that needs to be itself nested in a wider global perspective, which can include both the Indo-Pacific region, which is increasingly important to us, and—



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Chair: We shall explain to the Estonians that we have picked our battles, and it isn't them. Let's move on.

Q291 **Ian Austin:** I was going to ask: having written off the Czech Republic and Austria, which bilateral relations in Europe should we prioritise?

Professor Tombs: Again, I didn't say that we should write them off; I said we should not increase our diplomatic investment there. It is clear that our main partners in Europe are France and Germany, and always have been.

Q292 **Ian Austin:** How will the UK's withdrawal from the EU affect French foreign policy and our relationship and engagement with the French?

Professor Tombs: The French have always been very ambivalent about our membership of the EU and of the EEC, as you know. I think Brexit has brought that ambivalence out very strongly. They always saw advantages in our being members, and in our not being members; it depended on which seemed to be in the ascendancy at any particular time. The advantages of our being members are of course that it increases the general power and wealth of the EU, and helps the French—although they do not always say this very loudly—to balance the influence of Germany.

On the other hand, the advantage for them of us not being in is that they think it will mean the EU will be effectively directed by themselves and Germany. That is clear in almost everything the French say about the future of the EU, and it was very clear in President Macron's speech, even if one has to read a little bit between the lines. The French have often thought about a Europe of concentric circles in which they, Germany and the old six will be at the core, and then there will be an outer circle of more or less satellites, of which we may or may not be one, in French eyes—Monsieur Macron more or less said that—and an outer region of European sphere of influence, which the French would like to be the Mediterranean, north Africa and the French-speaking parts of Africa. There is nothing new about that. Indeed, the thing that struck me most about Macron's speech was how clearly he restated lots of very traditional French geopolitical positions, which really go back to de Gaulle.

Q293 **Ann Clwyd:** I do not know how many of the debates of the European Parliament you follow, or whether you have seen any of them recently, but you will know that at the end of the negotiations, whenever they conclude, the European Parliament has the power of veto. What will happen then? Have you thought of what might happen?

Professor Tombs: Yes, I have occasionally thought about it, and I think it is very unpredictable. It is in the interests of the EU and especially of its major economies that there should be some sort of free trade agreement with us. In fact, interestingly, the top five major EU economies do more trade with us than we do with them. They have a balance of trade advantage, so it is in their interest for that to continue. As to whether the European Parliament will take action that puts it on the other side of the main European member states, I am sure you have much more of an idea of that than I. Most people seem to think—of course, you are insiders; I



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am not—that we shall reach an agreement, perhaps at the last minute, over free trade, which is pretty well in all our interests.

Chair: Can we move on? I do not wish to fight the old battles again.

Q294 **Ann Clwyd:** No; people do not talk enough about this. The power of veto is a very strong one, and it could scupper the whole thing. That is what I am asking you to reflect on.

James Rogers: May I say something in relation to what we can do? The Government and wider civil society in the UK should mount a much more vigorous public relations campaign. What would be the consequences of doing things either directly or indirectly to harm the UK economically? There would be two consequences. First, there would be less money for the UK to project into its defence capability, which is critical now to help undergird the security of Europe. Secondly—this is something I think many Europeans consider to be vital—Britain would have less money to divert to its aid programmes. It is one of the largest aid givers in the world.

If the UK was harmed economically over the longer term, it would be less able to project money into those kinds of capabilities, which are very important in trying to shore up the security of some of the countries in, for example, the MENA region, which is critical to European interests, and potentially in the future in some parts of eastern Europe. The British Government and wider British civil society should be much more active in trying to explain the consequences that might arise from any kind of activity or action that directly or indirectly harms the UK in an economic context. The EU, in some respects, is heavily bound up in the Euro-Atlantic security system, and any harm to it will basically mean harming the EU as well.

Professor Tombs: Also, of course, the political consequences in France, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany would be quite severe if trade with Britain was disrupted.

Q295 **Mike Gapes:** In terms of the development of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy after the UK leaves the EU, what would be the advantages of us seeking to have some formal relationship with those, even though we have left the European Union?

James Rogers: I would say there is no harm in there being a relationship between the UK and the EU in the context of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy, but in so far as the UK is leaving the EU, I don't think this could be undertaken through actual indirect, or even direct, membership of those wings of the EU.

Q296 **Mike Gapes:** Would that exclude also some association status?

James Rogers: I am not entirely sure why we would need to be associated with the EU's foreign and security policy arms in the way that some would allege that we should. This is an area where we actually have



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the leading hand. We have the military capabilities that many European countries lack, and also the foreign and wider aid capabilities to project around the world. This should be somewhere where the EU should actually be seeking to gain our support.

Q297 Mike Gapes: Do you see any disadvantages of us not having any relationship?

James Rogers: Not necessarily. We have seen that over the 15 years since the 1998 St Malo agreement between Britain and France, there has not really been a great development in the context of the EU's foreign and defence policy arms. What was initially envisaged during that time—a large intervention force of some 60,000 troops with all the back-up that it requires—has not come to fruition. That is not because of the UK. Many European countries, or many people supportive of the EU, like to attack the UK for not participating directly. It is much more related to the fact that many countries, including Germany, are not prepared to see their troops put in significant combat operations, and also to the fact that European countries are simply not spending what they have pledged to spend through NATO on their defence forces.

Q298 Mike Gapes: Professor Tombs, do you have a view on that?

Professor Tombs: No, I have nothing to add to what my colleague has said.

James Rogers: Can I just say one more thing? I do not think we should do anything that would allow any autonomous capability within the EU to grow. There is no harm in us—

Q299 Mike Gapes: How can we stop it if we're outside the EU?

James Rogers: Because we simply aren't part of it. If we actively promote it, it will grow, because it will have our assets and our capability behind it. If we do not, it will be greatly disempowered.

Q300 Mike Gapes: Sorry, you're not being clear to me. Surely, if we weren't there, we couldn't actually exercise any veto, and the French, the Germans, the Italians and everybody else could decide what they wanted to do. Surely it would then develop further without—

Professor Tombs: It would not be very viable without our co-operation.

James Rogers: Exactly.

Q301 Mike Gapes: You are saying it is not viable, but you can't actually stop the development of it, can you?

James Rogers: You can't stop the development of it from a political standpoint, but in so far as we would not be contributing to it directly if it was not in our interest to do so, we would basically disempower it. Moreover, I would like to point you back to an issue I mentioned earlier: we need to provide alternatives. If we provide alternatives, it is quite likely that countries with specific key interests in relation to probable threats to their own interests will take up those alternatives with us because they



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know that we have the capability to act, rather than with the EU, which they know can't.

Q302 Mike Gapes: Which countries?

James Rogers: For example the Nordic states in relation to Russia, the eastern European states in relation to Russia and the Mediterranean states in relation to the MENA region.

Q303 Mike Gapes: So you are suggesting that the Swedes and perhaps the Danes or Finland might choose to have a co-operation with the United Kingdom rather than with their European Union partners.

James Rogers: It is not either/or; it is the fact that we can provide alternatives.

Q304 Mike Gapes: Isn't that unnecessary duplication—the kind of thing that we have been opposing for many years?

James Rogers: No, and they already are. Remember that Sweden and Finland both recently agreed to join the joint expeditionary force concept that the UK has been promoting in relation to the northern European countries. The UK has already played a role in that area.

Q305 Mike Gapes: But for decades, under successive Governments, we have said we don't want a European Union headquarters that duplicates the NATO headquarters. Now it seems to me you are suggesting a third option, whereby neutral countries that are not in NATO are both in an EU structure and in a structure with the UK.

James Rogers: It is highly improbable that the European structure would be coherent. It would not be supported with sufficient resources. The second issue is: how would it be used? It is to my mind very unlikely that the European countries collectively, in so far as the design is to create an inclusive system, would always agree to interact with specific threats that they might be forced to confront in the neighbourhood of Europe. It is all very well that they might be deployed on small peacekeeping operations in parts of Africa, or even in parts of eastern Europe, but when it comes to the crunch and a significant operation needs to be undertaken, I cannot imagine that any European country would be willing to do that without the support of either the UK or the US.

Mike Gapes: Can we move on? I take it from what you have said—

Chair: Mike, can I ask Andrew to come in very briefly?

Mike Gapes: Sorry, yes.

Q306 Andrew Rosindell: On that very point, it sounds like you are saying that the EU structure simply will not be effective at all and that it will be a distraction from creating a serious defence mechanism for Europe. Should the EU not just drop it? Should it not focus on just trade, which is what it was meant to be about in the first place, and leave it to NATO, the UK and the serious players to put it together?



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James Rogers: Exactly. Over the last 15 years or more, since 1998, the EU has not done anything of significant substance. All the great plans that were put in place in the late 1990s have not come to fruition and it is very unlikely that they will in future. The most important issue of all is where they would actually be used and who would agree to use them. The Germans do not seem to be willing to use their forces in significant combat operations. We have already seen that they would not participate in the Libya operation, which clearly was a challenge to European security. I believe that they even withdrew some of their assets from the Mediterranean, in a way, to make it harder for the countries that wanted to participate in that operation to do so.

In relation to defence spending, European countries simply are not coughing up the cash, even though they agreed to do so in 2014. There is also an in-built reduction in European capability, so the fact that they are spending less now means that they are relying on what they were spending some years ago. So what happens in future when the French lose their aircraft carrier? They are not planning to build another one. What happens when further reductions occur in Germany?

The other issue on top of that is the democratic changes taking place in Europe. I am sure that you are probably aware of those. For example, in Germany, we are likely to see a reduction in the population of some 15% over the next 20 or 30 years. We are likely to see significant reductions in some of the southern European states and in the eastern European states. They will become older and less capable of doing these kinds of things. It makes absolutely no sense—

Q307 **Andrew Rosindell:** So it is more about political EU ambition than it is about creating a serious defence mechanism?

James Rogers: Yes, I think so.

Q308 **Mike Gapes:** Should we seek permanent observer status of the Political and Security Committee of the European Union?

James Rogers: There is no harm in observing, but I do not see why it needs to be formalised. Again, in a way it basically turns us into a supplicant and the EU into the object around which we rotate. We should not need to seek that; we should seek constantly to support NATO and constantly to build up bilateral and multilateral efforts that support NATO and, where possible, that can use NATO structures, to secure the agenda that we are seeking to achieve.

Q309 **Mike Gapes:** How can we ensure that we are automatically consulted on any of the issues being discussed if we do not have permanent observer status?

James Rogers: I simply do not think that many of them will be able to produce anything of great substance.

Q310 **Mike Gapes:** So it doesn't really matter.



James Rogers: Yes. We should be pursuing our own ambitions and our own order for Europe.

Q311 **Nadhim Zahawi:** Mr Rogers, everything that you said makes complete sense if you are looking in a rear-view mirror at the behaviour of Germany or other European countries in their spending and their commitment to NATO. But there seems to be a change, including in Germany, which is moving in the right direction in terms of defence spending, or is certainly making those moves. I want you to look forward to a good outcome to Brexit and a new partnership. If we are in that new world of a new partnership, what would be so bad about us looking to co-operate more positively towards Europe? We are geographically in Europe; we will be out of the EU institutions and rightly so—I campaigned for that. But why would it be so bad for us to play a strategic role—we are good at it—in developing European defence?

James Rogers: I am sorry, but I simply do not see the increases in defence spending that you allude to. Yes, the Germans have increased their defence spending as a gross sum, but that is not a significant increase at all. I do not think that it is an increase even in terms of GDP. The only countries that have made a significant change in that relation are Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, which are all relatively small—with the exception of Poland—and significantly poorer than countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany.

Q312 **Nadhim Zahawi:** Fair enough. Let's look forward rather than backwards, and assume that they step up to the plate and make those commitments.

James Rogers: With the greatest of respect, this is a critical issue. You cannot underpin a significant European capability unless you are prepared to put in the investment required to regenerate it. Many European countries' armed forces have fallen into a state of parlous disrepair, far worse than anything we have in this country. We already have some problems ourselves, of which I am aware, but in the case of some of those countries it is far, far worse.

I simply do not see the need to provide support through that context, because I do not think it will lead to the kinds of developments that we would like to see. We should instead be doing this through NATO, which is a tried and tested mechanism that actually draws us into the equation directly—the biggest military spender in Europe, the biggest defence power in Europe and also the island that is offshore with the means and the ways to defend itself, which also has connections with the wider world. Why should we do this through a European Union context when we can do it through an alternative context, which already exists and is already tried and tested? That is what we should be trying to achieve, not pursuing some other project that we are not even a part of anymore. We should seek to try to develop our own systems based on our own capabilities for the security of ourselves and of our European allies.

Professor Tombs: May I just add that I do not think anything that either of us has said suggests that we do not want to co-operate with Europe?



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What we do not want is to be tied into a system of decision making over which we have no control.

Q313 **Nadhim Zahawi:** I hear you, but it just sounded like Mr Rogers was saying that we should actively hinder it by not co-operating with it. That was what I was getting. Maybe I'm wrong, and you have an opportunity to correct that; but what I was saying is that if I am looking at a new world where we want a positive partnership with Europe, and if they step up to the plate, why would you want to hinder it? Why would you not try to take a lead role in that as well as a lead role in NATO? That can only be good for our security in Europe. I do not see where the contradiction is. If, and it is a big if, they do step up and change their own behaviour—they have made the right noises certainly to our American allies; that is what we hear from President Trump on this stuff—I do not see why we would then actively want to pursue the old strategy when we were in Europe of hindering it.

James Rogers: No, let's be very clear here: I am not saying that we should actively hinder it. I am also not saying that we cannot co-operate with it. I am saying that we should be able to co-operate with it if it develops, but we should leave it to develop by itself, and I do not think that it will actually develop very much, for the reasons I have just alluded to. Simultaneously, we should provide alternatives that are actually going to work and are tried and tested that we can utilise to undergird the security of Europe, because we are ourselves an active participant and a member of those institutions.

Q314 **Nadhim Zahawi:** Which is a good thing, but what I am asking is if it does develop—give it the benefit of the doubt; let's be good partners—what is the reason of not then engaging with it?

James Rogers: I think there is an issue of time. We do not know where it will lead to.

Q315 **Nadhim Zahawi:** It can only be a positive thing, in my eyes. Why would it be a negative thing?

James Rogers: No one can tell that. If we have no control or oversight over it, either through the Euro-Atlantic structures or through some alternative arrangements that we create and have already been creating both bilaterally and multilaterally, we simply cannot tell where it will go or where those who gain control of it will take it. The same applies for any country as well.

Q316 **Nadhim Zahawi:** But forgive me, you are trying to ride both horses at the same time.

James Rogers: To some extent, yes.

Q317 **Nadhim Zahawi:** On the one hand you are saying that the reason you want to engage with it is because we have no control over it, but at the same time you are saying you don't want to engage with it. I am saying, would it not be a positive thing if we engage and lead it because we are good? This is one of the things that we have relative advantage in, and



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therefore if we lead it we will be in a better place with it as a good partner. Why wouldn't you? That didn't make sense.

James Rogers: That is because a) we won't be a member of it and b) the British people decided to leave the European Union, or opted to leave it in a referendum that said they did not want to be a part of the European Union.

Nadhim Zahawi: There is a difference between being part of the European Union and having a bilateral partnership with Europe.

Chair: I am sorry; we are getting on to our next series of questions. I am going to draw that to a close and ask Andrew to pick up on a few points. I am sure you will come in again in a moment, Nadhim.

Q318 **Andrew Rosindell:** The root of this is whether we are entangled in something that involves ceding power and sovereignty over our defences and our ability to command and decide what happens to our armed forces, or whether it is a bilateral arrangement. I think that Nadhim and I would agree on a bilateral arrangement.

On that basis, on the discussion we have just had, give us your views about the potential dangers that PESCO poses to the United Kingdom. Is there a danger that we could unwittingly be tied and entangled in something that we think is all very nice, co-operative and friendly, but under the surface is actually like an ERM or EEA-type situation whereby we are giving away power to make our own decisions in our own national interests?

James Rogers: I do not understand how we could participate in PESCO when we would have no oversight over the decisions that are made. We would be a supplicant to it and not an objective actor within it, and that is already laid down within the agreement of the participating member states—it is explicitly within the agreement.

Q319 **Andrew Rosindell:** On the UK Government's position—UKRep, for instance—what discussions are going on that are not open at this point? Is there a danger, perhaps as part of this negotiation and so-called deal that we are meant to be doing, that we could finish up conceding things in this area, which would not be to our national advantage in the long term.

James Rogers: Potentially, yes.

Professor Tombs: We have to realise that although our relationship with some of our European partners is bound to remain very close, their interests are not the same as ours. France is the country that I know best. I am a great admirer—a Francophile and all that—but I think France is quite a difficult partner for us, because they have a very clear sense of their own interests and mission, and their whole policy-making establishment is extremely strong, cohesive and homogeneous. It has a clear and established doctrine about France's interests.



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We have to be aware of the fact that the French would wish us to be an instrument in their strategy rather than an equal partner in formulating a strategy. Their strategy is very clear: to maintain France's position as an independent world power and to maintain the closest possible relationship with Germany. Anything we could do to serve that purpose, they would be willing to use us for, but we should not assume that this would be—at least in the eyes of the French—an equal relationship. There is a danger that we will be drawn into serving purposes that are not necessarily our own. Therefore, as you suggested, we need to maintain the ability to make our policy independently and choose whether we co-operate in particular actions or institutions.

Q320 Andrew Rosindell: Do you feel that UKRep is taking us in that direction, or do you think there is an agenda to tie us closer to this than we would otherwise wish? Do you have any evidence on that?

Professor Tombs: My colleague is the expert on this.

James Rogers: I am not privy to the discussions that have been taking place between British and European officials, but from what I have seen, the paper that came from the Department for Exiting the European Union, for example, contained mentions or discussions that suggested we might be drawn in that direction. But again, that is not relevant. The main point is that we need to reconceptualise, as we leave the EU, what we want the European mainland to look like. That is the key point that we need to understand as a country and from the perspective of the Government. This is the issue: we keep being drawn in to all of these different frameworks that are supposed to increase security in Europe, but probably serve other agendas—of the member states that want to be part of them. In fact we should be thinking about this from a national perspective and a perspective that benefits the Euro-Atlantic community. It is about what we want to do, not what we should be joining that other people are already doing and that we will not have any say over.

Q321 Ian Murray: Can I follow up on Mr Zahawi's questions? It seems to me that you are arguing that when the UK leaves the European Union, it should only participate in these kind of arenas if it has significant influence over their structure, direction, policy and strategy, and if we do not have that particular influence, we should not participate. As with trade, the Irish border, the divorce bill, immigration, etc., is it not again the case that we are discussing having our cake and eating it?

James Rogers: I do not understand this phrase. You always want your cake to eat. You do not have your cake to sit in front of you to do nothing with, so I do not understand.

Q322 Ian Murray: Do we want to make our bed and lie in it then? Without debating the phrase I used, it is the case that we want everything while not wanting to be a part of it.

James Rogers: We already are a part of it. We contribute very significantly through NATO and the historical role we have played in relation to European security and diplomacy. I would say that other than



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the United States, we are the second country to play that kind of role, so the idea that we are acting in some kind of selfish or un-European way is itself an unfair assessment of the UK's situation.

Q323 **Ian Murray:** But you are also arguing that if we don't have enough influence, we shouldn't play a part in it.

James Rogers: I am saying that if we are under the control of alternative structures that have been created by others, which we have no say over—i.e. through the European Union—it means that in a way we would be part of or remain part of certain structures within the European Union. That is not in our interests and it is not in alignment with the referendum result of June 2016. That does not preclude us from having co-operation with things that are developed through the EU by the European Union itself, or even having a form of partnership where the relationship becomes more sustained over a period of time. It simply means that we should not be a part of it directly.

Professor Tombs: We should not talk ourselves into a position of weakness, economically, militarily or politically. We have a perfect right to say what our interests are, and we shouldn't allow the agenda to be dictated by, let's say, certain interested voices who are opposed to the course that we have chosen. The Northern Ireland border is, I think, a case of that. It is very difficult to see how we could resolve the issue of the border before we know what our trading relations with the EU will be.

Q324 **Ian Murray:** I've yet to hear anybody tell us what our interests are. Do you have a view on what our interests may be? Nobody from the Government has told us yet.

Professor Tombs: I suppose that's because it is pretty obvious. We have an interest in the stability of the European continent and its security. We have an interest in being able to trade freely with it and the rest of the world. We have an interest in maintaining and perhaps increasing our influence in those parts of the world that will become increasingly important to us. In a sense, you could say those have been our interests for several hundred years—I don't think there is anything particularly new about that. If one is to formulate something like that, it sounds like a truism, but I think those are what our interests are.

Q325 **Andrew Rosindell:** Could you say something about the British defence industry? It seems to me that there are vested interests at work here as well. What influence is the defence industry bringing to bear about how we should continue to be entangled in some of the EU institutions in the defence area post-Brexit? Do you feel that the UK Government are encouraging them in any sense?

James Rogers: As I said before, I don't believe that we should be formally part of any EU structure—

Q326 **Andrew Rosindell:** But if the defence industry is sort of lobbying for it and if there are those in that industry that are trying to tie us in and are worried about the possible loss of contracts, is that not a danger?



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James Rogers: There are, no doubt, many different economic sectors that would like us to have particular relationships with many different countries and different actors, but we have to adhere to what is in the British national interest from a strategic standpoint. It is working that out to begin with, which I would say we haven't completely done, that should judge what is in our interests. I cannot see how it would be in our interests to be, in a way, part of a foreign actor that we have no direct influence or control over.

Q327 **Andrew Rosindell:** What is your view of Denmark's position on PESCO and European military co-operation? It has clearly decided to take a step back from that.

James Rogers: Yes.

Q328 **Andrew Rosindell:** So is that not a position that Britain really should be in, especially as we voted to leave the EU?

James Rogers: Well, we have already opted to leave the EU. That is the result in itself. I don't see it as being about leaving certain parts of the EU. The British people, through the referendum, opted to leave the EU in its entirety—

Chair: I am sorry; I don't want to re-fight the referendum. Mike.

Q329 **Mike Gapes:** Michel Barnier just made a speech this afternoon in which he said that the UK will be outside all the institutions of the European Union; he even mentions Europol. Is that your view?

James Rogers: I don't know what Mr Barnier is thinking—

Q330 **Mike Gapes:** Are you in favour of us leaving Europol as well?

James Rogers: I am in favour of us leaving, in so far as—what I am in favour of is neither here nor there.

Q331 **Mike Gapes:** Well, you have been advocating a certain position, so I assumed that that is what you are in favour of.

James Rogers: I have been advocating a position that the British people sought in the referendum.

Q332 **Mike Gapes:** Or your interpretation of it.

James Rogers: It is not up for interpretation. There was either leave or remain, and the people opted to leave.

Q333 **Mike Gapes:** So they voted to leave Europol as well.

James Rogers: They opted to leave the European Union.

Professor Tombs: There are lots of European institutions that are not connected with the EU. We shall remain part of many of them, as many non-EU countries are.

Q334 **Mike Gapes:** I am aware of that, but I am asking about Europol. Do you have a view on that?



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James Rogers: I am not an expert in the area of Europol. I said to begin with that the British people opted to leave the European Union, and that is the position that I support.

Q335 **Chair:** Let us not fight the referendum battle again, please. How much scope is there for the UK and the EU to have deep and strategic partnership in foreign, security and defence policy if we do not converge in other areas such as customs, trade and regulation?

James Rogers: Again, this opens up a number of issues. That is what I have been trying to say all along: this is not just about the European Union per se; it is also about the wider Euro-Atlantic system. If the UK is put in such a position, or if the politics becomes such, that the British people become quite hostile towards the European Union—if they feel that it is out to punish them or create consequences for them that are quite obscure; irrespective of whether that is right or wrong, that may be the political result—it will have wider implications for Britain's support for European security and even its support for the Euro-Atlantic system.

Q336 **Chair:** By your earlier argument, that would be damaging to the UK's national interest, would it not?

James Rogers: Of course it would.

Q337 **Chair:** So in fact we could end up damaging ourselves by a perception of punishment.

James Rogers: It would be mutually damaging for the UK and the EU. That is why to some extent we are bound together—we are interdependent in this discussion. The EU is dependent on NATO and the wider Euro-Atlantic structure that has been constructed by Britain and the United States since the end of the second world war. That is the point: those things are interrelated and we will need to understand how they will interact if we are to look to the future of the diplomatic relationship with Europe.

Q338 **Chair:** I hear you on that. You have explained the military structure—you are very supportive of NATO, and it will not surprise you to hear that I am, too—but presumably you are talking about other structures as well: common action on sanctions, for example. How do you see structuring co-operation on those sort of things?

James Rogers: As you said at the beginning, it is dependent on the type of relationship that emerges. The British side and the European side both have an interest in ensuring that we establish a mutually advantageous relationship after the UK leaves the European Union. That needs to be borne in mind both by us and by the Europeans. We also need to communicate very clearly to them how we see this in a wider framework.

After the UK has left the EU, the optimal solution would be for a very positive relationship to emerge, but it should be a partnership of two equals, not one in which the UK becomes in some way subordinated to European structures and institutions. That is what we should seek to pursue. There may be some areas in which the Europeans have the upper



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hand, perhaps in terms of economic mass, but there are other areas in which the UK will have a good strong set of cards, like the strategic-military-diplomatic portfolio and even, to some extent, the economic portfolio. We should be seeking to create a prosperous, orderly Europe after Britain's withdrawal from the EU; we should not be obsessing ourselves with the European Union itself as an institution.

Professor Tombs: Could I add simply that of course the EU is a state-building project? The idea of convergence in all fields is part of that overall project; in a sense, it is subordinate to the greater vision of unity. We do not have to be part of that, any more than we have to be part of or converge with the United States in order to co-operate with them. These are different levels.

Q339 **Chair:** But we do converge with them extremely closely. They set the rules for NATO; we buy their ammunition at their standard; we use their comms at their standard, their tracks at their standard, their aircraft at their standard and their fuel at their standard. It is a converging organisation. That is exactly what it is, so that we can fight alongside them.

Professor Tombs: But we are not converging with them in terms of political systems, and we are not converging on immigration.

Q340 **Chair:** We are converging. We rely on them diplomatically and on military matters. I support NATO, but that is exactly what it does: it standardises to a US doctrine so that we are able to fight alongside them. We are a plug-and-play. That is what NATO does.

Professor Tombs: But that is very sensible. That is done not for ideological reasons, but for practical reasons.

Q341 **Chair:** Well, you say it is not done for ideological reasons, but that is a matter of opinion.

James Rogers: The point is that the UK is not part of the US political system; it is an independent state. We should seek the same relationship with the European Union, so we remain independent of European structures and institutions, but try to establish—to the best of our ability, within the wider framework and in accordance with our bilateral and multilateral arrangements with our other European partners and allies—a system beneficial to everyone within the European strategic system. That is what we should be seeking to create.

Q342 **Chair:** So in some ways we should be looking to replicate the military aspects of NATO with the economic aspects of the EU.

James Rogers: No, I don't think I mean it in that way. I don't mean integration, but co-operation where it serves our national interest and the interests of our allies—the potential countries with which we will be co-operating. We cannot simply force them to co-operate with us if they have no interest in doing so; that is why I am saying that we should pick functional areas where we think there are mutual and similar interests,



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and pursue them quite vigorously. That should be our understanding of what the order should be.

Chair: I think we will leave it at that. Professor Tombs, thank you very much for your time; Mr Rogers, thank you very much for your co-operation. We are very grateful.

James Rogers: Thank you.