

Would Churchill have voted to Remain in the EU?

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17 September 2018

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Winston Churchill caused the European Movement to be founded in 1947 to be an international all-party, popular movement of the peoples of the whole of Europe to campaign for several specific ideals:

- To re-create the family of Europe - as a United Europe welcoming all democratic peoples
- To progressively efface frontiers and barriers, opposing tariff walls and passport networks
- A Charter of Human Rights to be at the centre,
- Solve the 'German problem' by restoring its economic dynamism within a United Europe
- Mutual aid in economics and joint military defence - requiring a parallel policy of closer political unity.

Churchill has often been voted the most important/influential Briton ever. After the Second World War and while he was in Opposition, he drove forward the ideas that created today's European Union; is recognised by the EU as one of its "[founding fathers](#)" and approved of our membership application in 1961. Surely he would have been immensely proud of the 2012 Noble Peace prize citation to the EU "for over six decades [having] contributed to the advancement of **peace** and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in **Europe**".

Of course, he would have voted to Remain part of the fulfilment of his life's work

This note analyses the evolution of Churchill's thinking about Europe – as evidenced by his four Great European Speeches (Zurich, Albert Hall, The Hague and Kingsway Hall). These must be read in the context of the daily events that were unfolding all around Churchill at the time. They were delivered amidst huge ceremony and were intended to be documents that set out his views for all time, and he did not resile from any part of them later. Tragically, ill-health during his second Premiership prevented him from encouraging the UK into full participation at the outset.

Links to the four speeches are footnoted.¹This document, and the speeches, should take less than an hour to read. Any elector who wishes to understand the origins – and thus the current implications - of our EU membership should be willing to invest such a modest time in securing their own personal future.

¹ **Speeches:** [1946 Zurich text \(audio\)](#); [1947 Albert Hall](#); [1948 The Hague text \(Pathé news clip\)](#) (70th anniversary celebrations); [1949 Kingsway Hall](#). **Heath** [Edward Heath rebuttal](#)

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Churchill set a formidable goal for the [European Movement in the UK](#) in his 1949 speech at Kingsway Hall ([link](#)) *"To create this body of public interest and public support is one of the main tasks of the European Movement. The union of Europe must be a union not only of governments but of peoples....The European Movement, an international all-party organization, was the inspiration and motive force which brought the European Assembly into being. It must now build up a vast body of popular support behind the Assembly so that the Assembly's recommendations may be translated by the governments into action... I hope that you will join us and work with us in this historic campaign, the triumph of which will be decisive for the peace and well-being of Europe and the world for generations that are to come."*

Summary

In May 2018, the [70th anniversary of the Congress of The Hague was celebrated in some style](#) and triggered many thoughts about what Churchill would have made of the Brexit debate today. As he is long-dead, we cannot ask him. However, we can read his speeches that were painstakingly constructed rather than off-the-cuff comments. These illuminate his thinking at the time. But that is the problem – the world is unimaginably different today. The disappearance of Empire and the largely symbolic linkages with the Commonwealth would have forced the grand strategist to adapt to the reality of the current times.

He topped the BBC poll in 2002 to find the "100 Greatest Britons". More recently, Churchill was voted the most famous Englishman of all time. As the Daily Express [put it in 2008](#) *"To many he symbolises an "old Britain" – a time characterised by the stiff upper lip, discipline and impeccable manners. The cigar-chomping champion was a soldier, artist, historian and was the 20th century's most famous and celebrated prime minister"*

Those who are looking to re-create an "old Britain" and even the role of its Empire and Commonwealth should pay attention to the unshakably strong beliefs of their hero. No-one who reads these speeches will be left in any doubt about Churchill's views on the existential importance for peace and security of the European Union. Given the "Thirty Years War" (1914-1945) that had just ended, he emphasised the importance to the whole world of enduring peace in Europe.

That central mission of peace-making continues to dominate EU policy to this day. The admission of 10 formerly-Communist states in 2004 epitomised the soft power of offering access to one of the world's largest markets as a means of boosting the wellbeing of citizens, thereby encouraging peaceful co-existence within a shared historic and cultural heritage. But this was no more than a repeat – though on a much larger scale – of the assistance to the island of Ireland after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Maintaining the solution to that bitter, intra-EU dispute is one of the EU's 'red lines' in the Brexit negotiations – as befits its basic role as a peace-maker.

“But those who serve causes as majestic and high as ours need no reward; nor are our aims limited by the span of human life... in a cause, the righteousness of which shall be proclaimed by the march of future events and the judgement of happier ages, we shall have done our duty, we shall have done our best.” **The citation for the 2012 Noble Peace Prize for the European Union was indeed the fitting judgement of a happier age.**

Churchill totalled more than third of a century holding a variety of the highest offices in the land. That gave him the perspective to bequeath his wisdom to posterity in a series of remarkable speeches. In modern times, no UK statesmen/women have matched his breadth of experience of being in and out of both office and Parliament, and through varied political cycles. As an example of the sharp contrast, David Cameron was elected to Parliament in 2001 and held no office before becoming the youngest Prime Minister since 1812 by winning the 2010 election. He left office (and resigned from Parliament in ignominy) just six years later.

However, the great mystery remains: Churchill gave these great set-piece speeches to record his views for posterity. In 1946 – at Zurich – it was Great Britain who wishes 'you' (France and Germany) well in 'your' venture. In 1947 – at the Albert Hall – *“Europe with which Great Britain is profoundly blended... France and Britain must be founder-partners ... Whys should we suppose that [Empire/Commonwealth] will not be with us in this cause?”* In 1948, addressing the pan-European Congress of The Hague *“**We** [Editors' emphasis] must aim at nothing less than the union of Europe as a whole”*. Finally in 1949 at the Kingsway Hall *“Britain is an integral part of Europe, and we mean to play our part in the revival of her prosperity and greatness.”*

BUT, when he became Prime Minister again in 1951 – just two years later - the government that he led did not turn these aspirations into action. **Why not?** According to [his official Prime Ministerial biography](#) “By his re-election in 1951, Churchill was, in the words of Roy Jenkins, “gloriously unfit for office”. Ageing and increasingly unwell,” The Timeline of Events ([below](#)) sets out the forces at work in the 1950's.

The aging Churchill was no longer the 'lion' of earlier days and did not impose his views on his eurosceptic Foreign Secretary Eden – as the Conservative Party was deeply split about “Europe”. **(Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.)** Sadly, he suffered a major heart attack and eventually had to resign just ahead of the Messina Conference. The British official observer (Bretherton) at the subsequent Spaak Committee deliberations that turned 'Messina' into the Treaty of Rome stated that Britain could have shaped the outcome in any way that it pleased.

Even more unfortunately for Great Britain, the eurosceptic Prime Minister Eden was totally embroiled at the time in the Suez crisis that marked a terminal, downward ratchet in the fortunes of the British Empire. As The Times put it in his 1977 obituary, Eden was “the last prime minister to believe Britain was a great power and the first to confront a crisis which proved she was not.” The belief under-pinned his euro-scepticism. Eden suffered lengthy ill-health through this period and resigned just before the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957.

Churchill wanted to progressively efface frontiers and barriers as well as opposing tariff walls and passport networks. However, he could not possibly have foreseen how incredibly complex the modern world would become. There is no point in railing against these complexities and saying 'stop the world, I want to get off'... Modern products and services can be a huge benefit to citizens but they also have the capacity to do huge harm if they are not properly designed and tested. It is no longer remotely plausible for the average consumer to rely on the protection of the Sale of Goods Act 1893 that goods must be of 'merchantable quality'. Who can tell if the shiny new diesel car they are about to buy emits poisonous fumes?

So a body of public regulation – and enforcement – grew up to match the complexity of the products. These rules turned out to be far more potent 'barriers' to trade than simple 'tariff walls'. Europe discovered this the hard way when the customs union was completed in 1967 and did not lead to the 'sunlit uplands' of a huge growth in cross-border trade. It took Prime Minister Thatcher (and UK European Commissioner Lord Cockfield) to crack this problem with the 1987 Single Act. It came into force in 1992 and opened the way to creating a single market across the whole of the world's largest market. But that did require each nation's relevant bureaucratic rules to be changed to a single set of European rules. That was simply the necessary consequence of the desire to efface borders, barriers and tariff walls in the modern age. **Churchill might well not have liked it, but There Is No Alternative (TINA) in the reality of the modern world.**

Churchill's ideal of "world government"

Initially, it was based on four pillars; then only three: USA, Russia and Europe (including Great Britain)

Churchill viewed the grand peace strategy as regional groupings supporting the overarching world role of the United Nations Organisation. He played a pivotal role in setting it up – including drafting the original Declaration while staying at the White House in late 1941.

In his 1946 Zurich speech, he argued for the re-creation of the European Family as a "*regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe*". Great Britain/Commonwealth, USA and Russia "*must be the friends and sponsors*". A year later at the Albert Hall, he outlined the "*four main pillars of the world Temple of Peace*": United States, Soviet Union, British Empire and Commonwealth and finally Europe "*with which Britain is profoundly blended*". In his Hague speech calling for the Council of Europe, the definitions were made even clearer "*Thus I saw the vast Soviet Union forming one of these groups. The Council of Europe, including Great Britain linked with her Empire and Commonwealth, would be another. Thirdly, there was the United States...*" **So the vision explicitly included Great Britain in the European pillar.**

Nonetheless, he recognised clearly "*that this involves some sacrifice or merger of national sovereignty. But it is also possible and not less agreeable to regard it as the gradual assumption by all the nations concerned of that larger sovereignty which can alone protect their diverse and distinctive customs and characteristics*" (The Hague)

The Position of the Empire and Commonwealth

One cannot forget that Churchill grew up as the Victorian Empire was expanding steadily and was still in his forties when he became Colonial Secretary in 1921 – with responsibility for the Empire just as it reached its peak size the following year. Naturally enough, he would have remained very cognisant of the Empire's interests.

In Zurich, he highlighted that *"We British have our own Commonwealth of Nations"* when expressing support for France and Germany coming together. At the Albert Hall, he reminded the audience of that basic fact, before going on to say that Britain must always think of these countries *"We are the centre and summit of a worldwide commonwealth of nations"*. So British policy to Europe must always enjoy their full sympathy and support – but *"why should we suppose that they will not be with us in this cause? They feel with us that Britain is geographically and historically a part of Europe"*. Indeed, he highlighted that *"their youth has twice in living memory traversed the immense ocean spaces to fight and die in wars brought about by European discord... We may be sure that the cause of United Europe, in which the mother country must be a prime mover, will in no way be contrary to the sentiments which join us all together..."*

(Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau [spoke](#) at Vimy on 9th April 2017 at the centenary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in which 5,000 young Canadian men died *"One hundred years later, we must say this, together. And we must believe it: Never again."* Correspondingly, then-Australian Prime Minister Abbot [spoke](#) at Gallipoli on April 25th 2015 (the centenary of the landings) *"Beginning here, on this spot and at this hour, 100 years ago, they fought; and all-too-often they died: for their mates, for our country, for their King and – ultimately – for the ideal that people and nations should be free."* 8,000 young Australian men died in the campaign.)

He told the audience at The Hague that *"We in Britain must move in harmony with our great partners in the Commonwealth, who, I do not doubt, though separated from us by the ocean spaces, share our aspirations and follow with deep attention our trend of thought."*

In the Kingsway Hall speech, he said that *"Britain is an integral part of Europe, and we mean to play our part in the revival of her prosperity and greatness. But Britain cannot be thought of as a single State in isolation. She is the founder and centre of a world-wide Empire and Commonwealth. We shall never do anything to weaken the ties of blood, of sentiment and tradition and common interest which unite us with the other members of the British family of nations. But nobody is asking us to make such desertion."*

He also made the telling point for *"Britain to enter a European Union from which the Empire and Commonwealth would be excluded would not only be impossible but would, in the eyes of Europe, enormously reduce the value of our participation... The Strasbourg recommendations urged the creation of an economic system which will embrace not only the European States, but all those other States and territories elsewhere which are associated with them."*

By 1949, *"the British Government have rightly stated that they cannot commit this country to entering any European Union without the agreement of the other members of the British Commonwealth. We all agree with that statement. But no time must be lost in discussing the question with the Dominions and seeking to convince them that their interests as well as ours lie in a United Europe."*

By this stage, the Dominions were independent states within the Commonwealth, India had already been given independence and the Palestine Protectorate had finished. So the slide in Imperial power was well underway. Churchill could not possibly abandon the Empire but clearly felt there was unlikely to be a conflict of interest, so he was keen to establish their acceptance of Britain joining the European Union.

He could not have foreseen that the potential problem of the Empire does not even exist today as the Empire is no more, and the trading links with the Commonwealth are modest. Moreover, the Brexiteers' attempts to throw history into reverse by asking the Commonwealth to give the United Kingdom the inverse of the early-1900's "Imperial Preferences" seems impossible under the WTO rules – freely and separately entered into by both Britain and the Commonwealth. Even the request simply underlines the UK's dramatic loss of standing. If the Commonwealth states agree the trade deals they are now starting to negotiate with the EU, then the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rules will apply so they cannot offer a better deal to the UK. **What extra can the UK gain by leaving the EU?**

As Great Britain's "pillar" of the world establishment envisaged by Churchill has crumbled so comprehensively, his approach would probably be to ensure that we remain part of Europe. As Edward Heath put it in 1996 – just a year before the final act of Empire transferring Hong Kong to China "***In these circumstances, Britain could only continue playing the role in the world that Churchill had envisaged by joining the European Community*** [Editor's emphasis]. Churchill himself recognised this fact in a letter to his constituency chairman in August 1961, in which he declared, "*I think that the Government are right to apply to join the European Economic Community.*"

What could Churchill have meant by "a kind of Unites States of Europe"? Does it matter?

In the first of his Great European Speeches in Zurich, Churchill set a dramatic target "*It is to re-create the European Family ... and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe.*" But he never defined what exactly he meant by this very specific qualification "*kind of...*" However, later on in the same speech he said "*If we are to form the United States of Europe, or whatever name it may take* [EDITOR's emphasis], *we must begin now.*"

So the qualification did not seem to be significant to him then. Indeed, he omitted it later in this speech and did not use the qualification again. At the Albert Hall, he talked of United Europe many times, "*Europe, with which Great Britain is profoundly blended*", working for a "*federation of the European States*" and United States of Europe. In The Hague, he only used the terms Unites States of Europe and United Europe. At the Kingsway Hall, he talked only of the "*European Union*". So there never seemed to be any intention of simply taking over a version of the constitutional arrangements of the United States of America.

Undoubtedly, constitutional mechanisms would have loomed large for such a statesman but today's Europe cannot avoid looking for clues about economic governance arrangements as they are so divisive at the moment and the role of Germany is so central – precisely as foreseen by Churchill as the "German problem" which he discussed on several occasions. ([More](#))

"I hold that governments are meant to be, and must remain, the servants of the citizens; that states and federations only come into existence and can only be justified by preserving the 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' in the homes and families of individuals. The true right and power rest in the

individual. He gives of his right and power to the State, expecting and requiring thereby in return to receive certain advantages and guarantees.”

In 1936 – in his wilderness years – Churchill had [ruminated on these constitutional matters](#) “*The question we are discussing is whether a fixed constitution is a bulwark or a fetter. From what I have written it is plain that I incline to the side of those who would regard it as a bulwark, and that I rank the citizen higher than the State, and regard the State as useful only in so far as it preserves his inherent rights.*

Such a departure in the British Empire by a chance parliamentary majority or even by aggregate Dominion parliamentary majorities, would shatter it to bits. The so-called ‘rigidity’ of the American Constitution is in fact the guarantee of freedom to its widespread component parts. That a set of persons, however eminent, carried into office upon some populist heave should have the power to make the will of a bare majority effective over the whole of the United States might cause disasters upon the greatest scale from which recovery would not be swift or easy.”

So a solemn, formal legal settling of the rights of the Members versus the Union as a whole would have fitted into such a desired structure. Moreover, a powerful legislative chamber elected by the peoples would indeed make the citizen at least equal to the state. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) now provides exactly this type of arrangement. The next step in the Churchillian vision might be to see the European Parliament become the senior chamber to the Council of the Member States.

The EU has chosen to go down Churchill’s “bulwark” route of a formal, legal document setting out the limits of the powers of the Union versus the Member States – the TFEU. On the face of it, that should mean the EU is very inflexible but it is well recognised that the EU Heads of State have often given themselves great latitude as long as they stay within the strict letter of the Treaty. If they all agree on an interpretation, then there are few circumstances where they risk a formal legal challenge at the ECJ as usually, it is only the Member States themselves who can challenge. If they all agree, then there is no-one with the standing to challenge!

Could he have included economic arrangements in his thinking?

As an economist, this author cannot divorce constitutional arrangements from the taxing and spending that are permitted by the chosen system. Indeed, this matter lies at the absolute heart of Europe’s current problems.

In his Great European Speeches, Churchill only spoke in general economic terms such as the “prosperity of the people”. He did not speak in terms of extra GDP growth - as forecast by some econometric model. But his spell from 1925-29 as Chancellor of the Exchequer must have given him some feeling for the UK’s economic system – perhaps in contrast to that of the “United States of America’s” federal system.

Speaking just a decade after the implementation of Roosevelt’s “New Deal” and in the immediate post-war turbulence, would he have expected the US Federal Government to revert to its “normal” magnitude? Or would he have foreseen correctly the permanent shift to a much “bigger government” that has actually happened? Would he have wanted that scale of “United States of Europe” Government? He was silent on the details of this but a glance at some of the key economic characteristics of “central government” is interesting:

USA

In 1930 (so pre-Depression) Federal outlays were just 3.4% of GDP ([source](#)) – with a surplus of 0.8% of GDP and a federal debt of 18%. This is the type of federal government of the United States of America that Churchill would have known throughout his career (except during World War 1). As the Depression's New Deal hit its stride, federal outlays more than doubled and hit 10.5% of GDP in 1936 – with a budget deficit of 5.5% of GDP, so Federal spending was about twice income and debt had more than doubled to 40% of GDP.

Outlays then fell as the economy grew – with the budget returning to normal, so about balance. Then came the War and outlays rose ten-fold – with the budget deficit hitting 30% of GDP. After the War, when Churchill was delivering his European speeches, outlays were back down to 14% of GDP and the budget in surplus.

So it is unlikely that Churchill would be advocating some “kind of United States of Europe” that would emulate the US federal spending in modern times of 20-25% of GDP because such levels had only been reached in war-time during his career.

European Union

The European Union's own budget provides for outlays that are capped by the Member States at a little over 1% of EU GDP. This spending must be matched by revenues so the European Union – as a legal entity - cannot run a deficit. The Member States are free to run their own fiscal policy, providing they do not run a budget deficit that might imperil the Union as a whole – the famous 3% limit.

United Kingdom

As Churchill came into Parliament in 1900, the UK's public debt stood at about 30% of GDP but had risen to about 135% by 1919 – the end of World War 1. The economic crisis of the early 1920's pushed the ratio above 180%. It remained above 150% of GDP during Churchill's time at the Exchequer as the crisis grew about how to redeem the huge “War Loan” before its final redemption date in 1931. The associated interest costs were even more stunning: interest charges during Churchill's tenure were about 7% of GDP therefore an astonishing 27% of public spending. **The fiscal structure of the United States of America's federal government might have looked much more attractive than Britain's.**

Union with France

Churchill was deeply attached to France *“For 40 years, I have marched with France. I have shared her joys and sufferings... I will never abandon this comradeship...If European unity is to be made an effective reality before it is too late, the whole-hearted efforts of both France and Britain will be needed from the outset”* (Albert Hall, 1947). Indeed, it is reported that Churchill was instrumental in ensuring that France had a seat on the UN's Security Council – thereby giving Europe a second seat.

On 16th June 1940, he obtained the agreement of the War Cabinet to offer France complete union with the United Kingdom (see box below) as an alternative to an armistice with Hitler. This Declaration (co-authored by Jean Monnet) came too late to avoid the armistice, but even the proposal stands as a remarkable action by Churchill and therefore perhaps a foretaste of his radical proposals after the War.

DECLARATION OF UNION

At this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world The Governments of the United Kingdom and the French Republic make this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots and slaves.

The two governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two nations, but one Franco-British Union.

The constitution of the Union will provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial, and economic policies.

Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain; every British subject will become a citizen of France.

Both countries will share responsibility for the repair of the devastation of war, wherever it occurs in their territories, and the resources of both shall be equally, and as one, applied to the purpose.

During the war there shall be a single War Cabinet, and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air, will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated. The nations of the British Empire are already forming new armies. France will keep her available forces in the field, on the sea, and in the air. The Union appeals to the United States to fortify the economic resources of the Allies, and to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause.

The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the power of the enemy, no matter where the battle may be.

And thus we shall conquer.

(However, Churchill's love of France did not extend to every individual Frenchman and his antipathy to General de Gaulle was well-known. In a fit of rage directed at the General personally - rather than at France as a whole - just ahead of the D-Day landings, he said "If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea." This statement has been used by Leave campaigners such as Nigel Farage to argue that Churchill would have been a Brexiteer. The investigative journalist Jon Danzig has [demolished](#) Farage's analysis – along with several other items of what we now call 'fake news'. History will attend to the genuinely momentous speeches of Churchill, rather than off-the-cuff luncheon remarks.)

The German Problem

The "German problem" was an immediate policy priority for post-War Europe even though a sizeable chunk of the country was in the hands of the Soviet Union. It was clear that the vindictive Treaty of Versailles in 1919 after the First World War was a mistake and simply created fertile soil for a revival of nationalism. Churchill shocked Paris with his Zurich speech just 18 months after the end of the War and the central message was clear "There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important."

The Albert Hall speech fleshed these ideas out, laying out the problem starkly "The central and almost the most serious problem which glares upon Europe today is the future of Germany. Without a solution of this problem, there can be no United Europe. Except within the framework and against the background of a United Europe, this problem is incapable of solution."

Remember that a third of a century earlier, Churchill had been appointed as First Lord of the Admiralty to build up the Royal Navy to cope with the naval consequences of Germany' rapidly

rising industrial strength. He had seen that recovery again in the 1930's as he warned about German re-armament. At the Albert Hall, he wanted to look on the positive side *"But on the wider stage of a United Europe German industry and German genius would be able to find constructive and peaceful outlets... The German people would be enabled to bring back prosperity ...not only to themselves, but to the whole continent."*

At the Congress of The Hague, Churchill argued that *"For us the German problem is to restore the economic life of Germany and revive the ancient fame of the German race without thereby exposing their neighbours and ourselves to any rebuilding or reassertion of their military power of which we still bear the scars. United Europe provides the only solution to this two-sided problem and it is also a solution which can be implemented without delay."*

The Kingsway speech was given just after agreement on a new Basic Law for Germany and his comments reflected approval of the outcome *"Understanding and co-operation must be established between Germany and the rest of free Europe. Therefore, although belated, we welcome the recent decision in favour of the partial abandonment of the provocative and, at the same time, ineffective policy of dismantling. Western Germany, overcrowded as she is, with millions of German refugees from the East, cannot hope to restore lasting prosperity except within the framework of a wider unity in which her peoples could find a peaceful outlet for their energies and abilities. Europe needs Germany, but Germany still more needs Europe."*

His proposed solution to the "German problem" proved to be enlightened and Churchill's hopes for Germany's contribution to the European economy have been dramatically fulfilled. But the question now may be whether they have been over-fulfilled. The united German population is a quarter bigger than that of France and is 16% of EU-28. In economic terms, German GDP is 40% bigger than France and is 22% of EU-28. The euro crisis underlined German economic, and now effectively political, hegemony.

However, the military aspect that Churchill had such reason to fear is in a different league. According to [NATO data](#), German military spending is about the same as French. But that translates into just 1.24% of GDP – controversially well below NATO's 2% target. If Germany hit this target, its military spending would be a third larger than the UK and about the same as French, Italian and Spanish spending combined (unless they also met the 2% target). It would be about a tenth bigger than Russian spending (as estimated by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).

In the unlikely event that Germany were to take President Trump's advice and spend 4% of GDP, then its defence expenditure would be more than twice that of Russia and roughly match the total spending of all the other EU27 states ex-Germany. Then a military hegemon would have emerged to match its economic power. Would Churchill's "United Europe" be comfortable with that? The recent re-emergence of strong German nationalism might raise the question of whether Germany would really even "need" Europe in a possible world where our political friends of the post-war years were replaced by nationalists.

Would Churchill turn in his grave at the thought of Great Britain abandoning "United Europe", thereby making the emergence of a German hegemon almost an arithmetic certainty?

A Charter of Human Rights

The subject did not feature explicitly in his earlier speeches, though at the Albert Hall Churchill posed the question *"Can he never be free from the fear of...the tramp of the hostile patrol, or what*

is even worse, the knock upon his door of the political police to take the loved one far from the protection of law and justice...?”

But a year later at The Hague, he was explicit *“In the centre of our movement stands the idea of a Charter of Human Rights, guarded by freedom and sustained by law.”* In his Kingsway Hall speech, he talked approvingly of the European Movement’s plan *“The basic idea underlying the conception of European Union is the desire to preserve and develop the free way of life of the participating nations. This implies the acceptance of collective responsibility for the defence of liberty and the dignity of man. That was the purpose of the proposal put forward by the European Movement and adopted by the Assembly for the conclusion of a European Convention on Human Rights...We understand that the Government may require to consider carefully the details of such a convention but we ask them, without further delay, to make it clear that they accept the principle of joint responsibility for the maintenance of freedom and that they intend not merely to issue pious declarations but to set up judicial and executive machinery to make this a reality...We trust that the Government will be in a position to announce the signing of this Convention on Human Rights and the setting-up of the machinery to implement it before the next session of the Assembly. Nothing could give to the Assembly more confidence in the Government’s sincerity. Nothing could give greater inspiration to the European peoples than this step.”*

In fact, the Charter was agreed quickly and opened for signature by states a year later. Indeed, the UK was one of the first members of the Council of Europe to ratify the Convention in 1951. Over the years, the lofty and noble ideals of the Charter have been converted into detailed judgments that are sometimes seen as controversial. But the Charter’s continuing and fundamental role as a bulwark against oppression is exemplified currently by the likelihood that the Government of Malta will be forced to investigate properly the assassination of the Maltese journalist Caruana Galizia to prevent her investigation into corruption allegations.

However, the European Court of Human Rights is [still quite distinct](#) from the European Union even though the EU’s European Court of Justice pays great attention to these rights. So a separate line of approach is required that is completely separate from Brexit.

Did Churchill see European Union as a project of the elite?

He had absorbed the message of his own post-war election defeat at the hands of the people and saw European Union as a project of the peoples – to protect the *“proletarian masses”* as he put it. *“We see before our eyes hundreds of millions of humble homes in Europe ...which have been affected by war.... Is the honest, faithful breadwinner never to be able to reap the fruits of his labour?”* (Albert Hall).

He stressed repeatedly the role of the European Movement across Europe as galvanising the people to express their collective will, rather than actions taken by ‘governments’ – inherently the elite. So he would probably be surprised by the way the project is now described by the British media as an ‘elite project’. **Surely the message of the 2016 referendum is that the project has to re-connect with the aspirations of the British people.**

Was Churchill a “eurosceptic”?

At various times, Eurosceptics have tried to argue that Churchill was really one of them.

- Edward Heath probably provided the most comprehensive rebuttal: “Euro-sceptic? Churchill? Never” In 1996, Heath set the record completely straight in [The Independent](#) “I

knew Winston Churchill, I worked with him, I stayed with him at his home at Chartwell and I have read his speeches many times. I can assure you that Winston Churchill was no Euro-sceptic.” [Edward Heath rebuttal](#)

- During the 2016 Referendum, Eurosceptics tried to portray Churchill as likely to have been on their side. The investigative journalist Jon Danzig [examined their claims](#) in detail and found significant, deliberate misrepresentation – in current parlance, wilful ‘fake news’. Another blog came to [similar conclusions](#).
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Timeline: A dramatic Century that shaped Churchill's Views on Europe

1870's

1870/71: Franco-Prussian War

May 1871: German unification was finally cemented by the Treaty of Frankfurt.

June 1871: Italian unification completed when the capital moved to Rome. Much of Italy was united in 1861, with Venetia finally added in 1866.

1874: Churchill born in Blenheim Palace – with an American mother and grandson of the 7th Duke of Marlborough; so a descendant from the 1st Duke whose victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 halted the advance of French King Louis XIV across Europe.

1890's

When Churchill was learning about geography and history as a teenager at school in the 1890's, he would have been learning about these dramatic, then-recent events in European history. He would also have learnt about the continuing rise of the British Empire – the greatest empire the world has ever seen (and he became the minister responsible for it (Colonial Secretary) in his late 40's - at the very peak of Empire). He finished 8th in class at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst; saw active service in India and the Sudan; and was a journalist in the Boer War in South Africa.

1900's

1900: He entered Parliament – at 26 - as a Conservative, before joining the Liberals in 1904 due to **his disagreement with protectionist tariffs** favouring Imperial trade. His career in “front line” politics began in 1905 as a junior minister.

1910's

1912: First Lord of the Admiralty – with responsibility for preparing the Royal Navy for the impending war with Germany.

1914-1919: First World War Sacked from the Admiralty after the disastrous Dardanelles/Gallipoli Campaign and returned to front line service in the Army in 1916.

1920's

The peak of the British Empire - according to Wikipedia: At its height it was the largest empire in history and, for over a century, was the foremost global power. By 1922 the British Empire held sway over about 458 million people, one-quarter of the world's population at the time, and covered more than 33,700,000 km², almost a quarter of the Earth's total land area.

1921: Churchill became Colonial Secretary at the very peak of the British Empire, but lost his seat in Parliament in 1922 when the Tories swept back to power. Back in Parliament as a Tory, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer 1925-29 (In his first budget, he decided to put Britain back on the Gold Standard at the pre-War parity, causing a major problem for export industries – leading on to the General Strike of 1926). He lost his seat in Parliament when the Tories lost the 1929 election.

1922: Irish Free State gained independence

1926: The UK agreed that Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were completely independent countries, "freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations".

1930's

Churchill's wilderness years – but warning strongly against the policy of Appeasement as Hitler achieved dictatorial power in Germany.

1931: South Africa became independent of the British Empire

1939: Outbreak of World War II – Churchill appointed as First Lord of the Admiralty.

1940's

10 May 1940 – Churchill appointed as Prime Minister at the "darkest hour"

19 June 1940: he proposed complete union with France ([more](#)) but it was too late to avert France signing an Armistice with Hitler on June 22. (*Even making such a proposal underlined his capacity to think outside the bounds of 'narrow' sovereignty when the genuine sovereignty of survival of the nation was at stake*).

- Many of his great speeches rallying the spirits of the nation

1942: After the first British victory (at El Alamein), Churchill [wrote](#) to his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden '**Hard as it is to say now... I look forward to a United States of Europe, in which the barriers between the nations will be greatly minimised and unrestricted travel will be possible.**' (Making such a proposal at that moment underlined his capacity to think beyond the bounds of 'narrow' sovereignty to ensure permanent, genuine sovereignty later).

5 July 1945: Post-War General Election and landslide victory to Labour (393 seats) over Conservatives (197). **Churchill out of office.**

May 1946: Churchill's speech in Fulton Missouri about an Iron Curtain falling across Europe signalled the start of the Cold War.

September 1946: Speech to the academic youth at Zurich University. Some key extracts:

1. "It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom.
2. We must build a kind of United States of Europe
3. The first step in the re-creation of the European Family must be a partnership between France and Germany.
4. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important.
5. Time may be short. At present there is a breathing-space. The cannons have ceased firing. The fighting has stopped; but the dangers have not stopped.
6. In these present days we dwell strangely and precariously under the shield, and I will even say protection, of the atomic bomb.
7. If we are to form the United States of Europe, or whatever name it may take, we must begin now.
8. Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America and I trust Soviet Russia ...must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe."

May 1947: Speech to the United Europe Meeting at the Albert Hall. Some key extracts:

1. *“Are the States of Europe to continue for ever to squander the first fruits of their toil upon the erection of new barriers, military fortifications and tariff walls and passport networks against one another?”*
2. *In my experience of large enterprises, I have found it is often a mistake to try to settle everything at once.*
3. *There is the United States...; there is the Soviet Union; there is the British Empire and Commonwealth; and there is Europe, with which Great Britain is profoundly blended. Here are the four main pillars of the Word Temple of Peace.*
4. *...several important bodies working directly for the federation of the European States and for the creation of a Federal Constitution for Europe. I hope that may eventually be achieved.*
5. *We [i.e. European Movement – EDITOR] ourselves are content to present the idea of United Europe, in which our country will play a decisive part...*
6. *The central...most serious problem... today is the future of Germany. Without a solution... there can be no United Europe. The German people would be enabled to bring back prosperity ...not only to themselves, but to the whole continent.*
7. *We seek to exclude no State... which assures to its people those fundamental personal rights and liberties...*
8. *When I first began writing about the United States of Europe some 15 years ago...*
9. *..Great Britain have always to think of the British self-governing Dominions – Canada... - we are the centre and summit of a world-wide commonwealth... They feel with us that Britain is geographically and historically a part of Europe. If Europe united is to be a living force, Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family.*
10. *His Majesty’s Government ... should approach the various pressing Continental problems from a European rather than from a restricted national angle.”*

August 1947: UK parliament enacts law to grant independence and partition to India.

7 May 1948: Opening speech at the Congress of Europe, The Hague. Some key extracts:

1. *“Since our British United Europe Movement was launched in January 1947...*
2. *Europe can only be united by the heart-felt wish and vehement expression of the great majority of all the peoples in all the parties in all the freedom-loving countries, no matter where they dwell or how they vote.*
3. *We shall only save ourselves... by progressively effacing frontiers and barriers which aggravate and congeal our divisions*
4. *In the centre of our movement stands the idea of a Charter of Human Rights, guarded by freedom and sustained by law.*
5. *Mutual aid in the economic field and joint military defence must inevitably be accompanied step by step with a parallel policy of closer political unity.*
6. *It is said with truth that this involves some sacrifice or merger of national sovereignty. But it is also possible and not less agreeable to regard it as the gradual assumption by all the nations concerned of that larger sovereignty which can alone protect their diverse and distinctive customs and characteristics.*
7. *For us the German problem is to restore the economic life of Germany...without thereby exposing their neighbours and ourselves to any rebuilding or reassertion of their military power.... United Europe provides the only solution to this two-sided problem...*
8. *We aim at the eventual participation of all European peoples whose society... are not in disaccord with a Charter of Human Rights and with the sincere expression of free democracy. We welcome any country where the people own the Government, and not the Government the people.*
9. *We must aim at nothing less than the union of Europe as a whole*

10. *...it would not be wise in this critical time to be drawn into laboured attempts to draw rigid structures of constitutions. That is a later stage, and it is one in which the leadership must be taken by the ruling governments.*
11. *We in Britain must move in harmony with our great partners in the Commonwealth, who, I do not doubt... share our aspirations...."*
12. *The task before us at this Congress is not only to raise the voice of United Europe. We must here and now resolve that ... a European Assembly shall be constituted which will enable that voice to make itself continuously heard."*

[NOTE on point 8: In 1993, at the meeting in Copenhagen, the EU Heads of State crystallised the requirements for EU membership "Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union." Four decades on, the Copenhagen Criteria effectively embody Churchill's 1948 political criteria]

May 1948: Israel declared a State after the UN adopted a Resolution to divide the British Protectorate of Palestine after its scheduled ending.

June 1948–May 1949: The Berlin Blockade was the first test of the Cold War.

April 1949: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) set up. Perhaps the ultimate pooling of sovereignty, as Article 5 commits each member state to consider an armed attack against *one* member state, in Europe or North America, to be an armed attack against *them all*.

May 1949: Basic Law of Germany agreed, effectively giving the western part a provisional constitution intended to avoid the constitutional mistakes of the Reich and Weimar constitutions.

5 May 1949: Council of Europe set up to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. The 47 current members include all 28 EU states. (Among its first acts were the drafting of the European Convention on Human Rights. This came into force in 1953 and the European Court of Human Rights came into being in 1959. *The Council and Court are completely separate from the European Union*)

November 1949: Speech to the European Movement at Kingsway Hall. Some key extracts:

1. *"You, my Lord Archbishop, have referred to the progress made by the European Movement since you presided at our Albert Hall meeting in May 1947...Exactly a year later, in May 1948, The Hague Congress demanded the creation of a European Assembly. Exactly a year after that, in May 1949, ten governments signed the Statute of Europe.*
2. *But our friends on the Continent need have no misgivings. Britain is an integral part of Europe.*
3. *But Britain cannot be thought of as a single State in isolation. She is the founder and centre of a world-wide Empire and Commonwealth.*
4. *The British Government have rightly stated that they cannot commit this country to entering any European Union without the agreement of the other members of the British Commonwealth. We all agree with that statement. But no time must be lost in discussing the question with the Dominions and seeking to convince them that their interests as well as ours lie in a United Europe.*
5. *The basic idea underlying the conception of European Union is the desire to preserve and develop the free way of life of the participating nations. This implies the acceptance of collective responsibility for the defence of liberty and the dignity of man. That was the purpose of the proposal put forward by the European Movement and adopted by the Assembly for the conclusion of a European Convention on Human Rights.*

6. To create this body of public interest and public support is one of the main tasks of the European Movement. The union of Europe must be a union not only of governments but of peoples.
7. *The European Movement, an international all-party organization, was the inspiration and motive force which brought the European Assembly into being. It must now build up a vast body of popular support behind the Assembly so that the Assembly's recommendations may be translated by the governments into action.*"

1949: We now know the Soviet Union performed its first successful nuclear bomb test.

1950's

1951-55: Churchill becomes Prime Minister again - but plagued by ill-health. According to Wikipedia, "Churchill was largely a figurehead in this government, and Eden had effective control of British foreign policy for the second time, as the Empire declined and the [Cold War](#) grew more intense."

1950: "The Schuman Declaration" by the French Foreign Minister calling for a pooling of French and German coal and steel production. "*Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity*" – the spirit of the EU ever since, but also echoing Churchill's earlier practical wisdom in his Albert Hall speech about not trying to settle everything at once.

1951: The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) set up – with Jean Monnet as the first President of the High Authority. Its Common Assembly was the precursor to the European Parliament. (Britain did not join the ECSC as then-Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden ruled it out - despite Churchill and MacMillan supporting it, and Churchill would not over-rule Eden.)

[1952: Foreign Secretary Eden addressed Columbia University, New York "*You will realise that I am speaking of the frequent suggestion that the United Kingdom should join a federation on the continent of Europe. This is something which we know, in our bones, we cannot do...*" As The Times put it in his 1977 obituary, Eden was "the last prime minister to believe Britain was a great power and the first to confront a crisis which proved she was not." The belief under-pinned his euro-scepticism. **Cripplingly deep splits in the Conservative party and Government about Europe are not new.**]

June 1953: **Churchill suffers major stroke but recovers sufficiently to carry on**

1954: France refused to ratify the European Defence Community as a substitute for the national armies of the six, causing the collapse of ideas of political integration.

April 1955: **Churchill resigns as PM as health failed** and succeeded by Sir Anthony Eden. Though he remained an MP, he never spoke again in the House of Commons, so there is no Hansard record of his views about the developments in Europe.

(Even Eden's [official Prime Ministerial biography](#) paints a picture of an ill man who was pre-occupied with maintaining the UK's Great Power status even as it crumbled away, thus missing the significance of the Messina Conference a few weeks into his premiership.)

1-3 June, 1955: Messina Conference to re-launch European integration. It proposed a common market. (Historical note: Bretherton was not at Messina and so did not actually make the celebrated quote attributed to him by Deniau "*Gentleman, you are trying to negotiate something you will never be able to negotiate. But, if negotiated, it will not be ratified. And if ratified, it will not work. Au revoir et bonne chance.*")

[August 1955: Bretherton wrote about the subsequent meetings of the Spaak Committee that he 'observed' in Brussels at Val Duchesse "We have, in fact, the power to guide the conclusions of this conference in almost any direction we like, but beyond a certain point we cannot exercise that power without ourselves becoming, in some measure, responsible for the results". He subsequently said "If we had been able to say that we agreed in principle, we could have got whatever kind of common Market we wanted. I have no doubt of that at all."]

1956: Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal – the vital waterway to the Empire in the east. British influence in the region marginalised after a humiliating climb-down in the face of strong US pressure – greatly diminishing trust in the “special relationship”.

January 1957: Eden resigned – effectively in disgrace - as Prime Minister. Harold MacMillan succeeded him but it was far too late to engage in the developments 'across the Channel'

March 1957: Treaty of Rome signed between six states – France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg to create the European Economic Community.

The Preamble (right) makes quite clear to any reader the breadth of an ambition that runs well beyond mere economics.

It lays the foundation for an 'ever-closer union amongst the peoples of Europe' not their governments. **The political aspirations are quite clear in the first substantive sentence of the Treaty.**

DETERMINED to lay the foundations of an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe,

RESOLVED to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe,

AFFIRMING as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples,

RECOGNISING that the removal of existing obstacles calls for concerted action in order to guarantee steady expansion, balanced trade and fair competition,

ANXIOUS to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions,

DESIRING to contribute, by means of a common commercial policy, to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade,

INTENDING to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries and desiring to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

RESOLVED by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts,

1959: European Court of Human Rights comes into operation – under the aegis of the Council of Europe (as opposed to the European Economic Community, as it was still known at the time).

1960's

February 1960: Prime Minister MacMillan's speech in South Africa "A wind of change is blowing through this continent" – signalling the beginning of the end of the British Empire in Africa. By the end of the decade, most African and Caribbean colonies had achieved independence.

1960: The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is founded by Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, to promote closer economic cooperation and free trade in Europe. NOTE: it is not intended to have common tariffs or any supra-national institutions – in sharp contrast to the EEC.

1 August 1961: Prime Minister Macmillan applies to join EEC

August 1961: According to his last private secretary (Anthony Montague Browne) Churchill wrote to his constituency chairman **"I think that the Government are right to apply to join the European Economic Community."** (Cited by Edward Heath in his article denying that Churchill was a eurosceptic).

1962: US Secretary of State Dean Acheson "Great Britain has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role."

1963 French President de Gaulle says "Non" to UK membership

1964 Churchill retires from Parliament

1965 CHURCHILL DIES

1967 Completion of EEC's Customs Union (But disappointment that trade does not flourish as expected. It turns out that the key obstructions are actually the "non-tariff" barriers, and these were not tackled comprehensively until, in 1985, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher aggressively pushed forward plans for the Single Market.)

1970's

1971: Withdrawal of British forces "East of Aden" announced – effectively ending the British Empire

1972: Newly-elected Prime Minister Heath opens negotiations to join EEC

1 January 1973: United Kingdom joins the EEC

1975: First referendum on staying in the EEC: YES - 17.4m (67%); NO - 8.5m (33%)
