

LONDON4EUROPE: CAMPAIGNERS' BRIEF: THE EU IS A PEACE PROJECT

London 4
Europe



European
Movement
United Kingdom

Points to make

- EU was founded as a peace project. Still its most important rôle.
- When we joined the EU we knew it was about more than trade. Government leaflets made that clear to individual voters. The names make the point: we left the "European Free Trade Association" and joined the "European Economic Community".
- In addition to helping to prevent full-on war between countries, EU helps smooth over border disputes like in Ireland.
- Conflicts are fought by countries not armies. So the EU acts as a civilian complement to NATO. EU co-ordinated action on sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine and poisonings in Salisbury. EU supports joint defence procurement.

Defensives

[Peace? That's job done. It's inconceivable there could be a war between France and Germany.] I hope you are right. But rising nationalism should be a worry. The civil war in Yugoslavia shows how quickly things can unravel when the structures that bind people together are taken away. The costs of even a small war are huge: Russian annexation of Crimea and Russian-supported civil war in Eastern Ukraine have cost 13,000 dead.

[Countries can just co-operate. It does not require all these EU structures.] Countries are like people. It is when we work together in pursuit of shared objectives that we grow to respect and like each other. EU structures mean that we grow into the habit of co-operation. That builds up trust.

[It's NATO that keeps the peace in Europe.] NATO protects Europe from external attack by the Soviet Union, now Russia. The EU ensures that European countries conduct their relations amicably. The inevitable tensions between neighbours are dissipated in endless committee meetings in Brussels. We have never before had 60+ years of peace between the member states. Think what the previous 60 years looked like.

[If we have NATO we do not need the EU.] NATO sees the EU as an essential partner *. There are over 70 areas of joint co-operation. If we leave the EU we miss out on a key way to support NATO and so we would weaken our own security.

[If EU countries would fight each other without the EU we should leave them to it.] A war in Europe would affect us. We have fought more wars since WWII than other European countries.

[EU does nothing to keep peace in Ireland. That was thanks to British, Irish and George Mitchell (USA).] NI troubles were Europe's longest and deadliest post-WWII terrorist insurgency: a clear example of State failure by the UK. The EU's rôle was (1) enable Irish Republic to come out of shadows of UK and so gain confidence to cease claiming sovereignty over NI (2) help make the Irish border disappear from consciousness (3) promote peace by confidence-building measures. It's what the EU does in other areas with disputed borders.

[EU's interference in Ukraine led to the Russian invasion.] Ukraine is free to decide its destiny. Russia invaded because Ukraine signed association agreement with EU and Russia wished to keep Ukraine under Russian influence. So Russia is using war as act of policy.

[We win wars. So we can look after ourselves.] War is hugely harmful and destructive. Much better to prevent war than to win it. Sure, the EU is not the only reason why its members are not fighting each other. But peace is so important that we should not kick away any of the pillars supporting the roof.

[I don't want an EU army.] I'd quite like one. The world is a dangerous place. Russia has bigger armed forces than any European state. I do not think the USA would have the best army if there were no federal armed forces but each of the 50 states had their own with some sort of co-operation treaty. But for the EU to have the army it would need to become the sovereign state. There is not the public support for that, so there would not be the support for the necessary treaty change.

[We joined the Common Market, not wider politics.] Economic co-operation was always seen as means to an end: peace in Europe.

Useful quote

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, former chief of the defence staff, said about Brexit: "*We would be going backwards, not forwards in what we set out to cure after the terrible tragedies of the Second World War.*" ([The Independent – 9 May 2016](#))

Further information

The [Schumann Declaration 1950](#) led to the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community, designed to make war impossible by the supra-national control of the raw materials essential for armaments. The Declaration is traditionally taken as the foundation of what is now the EU. Opening words: "World peace can best be secured ..."

* NATO have published a Factsheet "[NATO-EU Relations](#)".

London4Europe has published an [Indexed list of Remain blogs](#).