

---

# **PRESSING RESET**

**OUR FUTURE WITH THE EU**

---

EDITED BY IGGY WOOD, MATTHEW HARRIES, JOE  
DROMEY AND MILES WARD



FABIAN IDEAS NO.673

Fabian Society  
61 Petty France  
London SW1H 9EU  
[www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)

Fabian Ideas 673

First published March 2026  
ISBN 978-0-7163-0673-3

Edited by Iggy Wood, Matthew Harries, Joe Dromey and  
Miles Ward

This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective views of the society but only the views of the authors. The responsibility of the society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the labour movement. This publication may not be reproduced without express permission of the Fabian Society.

© The Fabian Society 2026

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Designed by Iggy Wood  
Printed and bound by Park Communications Ltd

To find out more about the Fabian Society, the Young Fabians, the Fabian Women's Network and our local societies, please visit our website at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)



# PRESSING RESET

## OUR FUTURE WITH THE EU

EDITED BY IGGY WOOD, MATTHEW HARRIES,  
JOE DROMEY, AND MILEŠ WARD

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>2</b>
Chris Ward MP	
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>4</b>
Patrick English: where the public are	
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>7</b>
Stella Creasy MP: the Swiss model	
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>11</b>
Liam Byrne MP: an economic security union	
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>18</b>
Calvin Bailey MP: defence cooperation	
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>22</b>
Alice Donald: the value of the ECHR	
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>26</b>
Paul Nowak: the shared interests of European workers	
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>29</b>
Naomi Pohl: musicians and red tape	
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>32</b>
Kate Foster and Craig Beaumont: what SMEs need	
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	<b>36</b>
Jannike Wachowiak: the topography of the EU's position	
<b>CHAPTER 10</b>	<b>38</b>
Judith Kirton-Darling: the diversity of European perspectives	
<b>ENDNOTES</b>	<b>40</b>

The Fabian Society has been the future of the left since 1884. As a membership organisation and thinktank, we support debate and discussion on how we can build a more equal and democratic society. Our 6,000 members play a vital role in shaping our work. Members receive our quarterly magazine and regular pamphlets and reports. Members also get access to insightful and engaging events with leading politicians and thinkers on the left. Join today from as little as £2.95/month.

**JOIN THE FABIAN SOCIETY**

# FOREWORD

CHRIS WARD MP

In June, it will be 10 years since the Brexit referendum. At the time, I was a political advisor to the relatively new Labour MP for Holborn & St Pancras.

The day after, as the dust settled and the result became clear, I remember being sat in Keir's garden discussing what this all meant – for Labour, for Britain, and for our place in the world. Suffice to say, neither of us was best pleased with the result. Keir least of all.

After a little rumination on the shortcomings of the Remain campaign, he sketched out what he felt should come next.

First, Keir saw that the referendum had exposed something beyond people's views on the EU. It had shown that for millions of Britons, the country was not working for them – that control had indeed been lost, and that it was the job of politicians to deliver the change the country was crying out for.

Second, he saw that Britain's national interest lay in minimising the economic, culture and diplomatic dislocation that would inevitably follow our exit from the EU: to be outside the EU, but close to it. To protect British businesses, supply

chains and employment standards. To cooperate wherever we could on trade, security, culture and much more, and – as he would emphasise as shadow Brexit secretary – to prevent a hard border in Northern Ireland.

In time, this approach would come to be known as 'making Brexit work'. But it mattered for little as we watched from the irrelevance of opposition as successive Conservative prime ministers struggled to drive through their own visions of the post-Brexit world. Worse still, those governments also saw their domestic ambitions crushed on the altar of "getting Brexit done". That is perhaps the silent tragedy of the last decade – that the big reforms this country was crying out for, and the referendum had exposed, went unaddressed.

And so, when Labour was elected in 2024, it was no surprise to me that Keir set about rebuilding a new, stronger and closer relationship with the EU. Within a few months, the prime minister had hosted the first UK-EU summit, where we agreed a 'common understanding' and a new framework for UK-EU relations. It includes a new security

and defence partnership, because, as the prime minister has said, there is no British security without Europe, and no European security without Britain.

It also includes a mandate to negotiate a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS), or agri-food, agreement. This will materially reduce burdens, barriers and costs for cross-border trade on food, drink and much more. It will also go some way to addressing the absurdity that, since Brexit, agri-food exports to the EU are down 21 per cent.

We are also negotiating access to the EU's internal electricity market, which will cut bills for businesses and consumers, and we are close to agreeing a youth experience scheme, which will allow young people to live, work and train abroad.

I am also delighted that we have agreed associate membership of the Erasmus+ programme from 2027, which will benefit over 100,000 young people from all backgrounds, overturning one of the most short-sighted and self-defeating decisions of the last government's Brexit deal.

The progress this Labour government has made in the last 18 months has its roots in the closer relationship Keir sketched out in our discussion in his garden 10 years ago. So when, last September, he asked me to be a minister in the Cabinet Office and to work alongside Nick Thomas-Symonds on this hugely ambitious EU reset, I knew instinctively the destination he had in mind.

Because the common understanding we are already negotiating – SPS,

electricity sharing and youth experience – is just the start. There will be another UK-EU summit this summer, with new and more ambitious negotiating mandates. And there will be legislation before parliament to deliver this shortly.

Progressives should welcome this – and be under no illusion that we are no longer the Britain of the Brexit years. We want a closer relationship with the EU. We want deeper integration. We want to work with, not against, our EU partners. And we will choose – as is our sovereign right – to align with the single market where it is in our national interest.

This new partnership with the EU will be in line with the manifesto we were elected on – and it help will repair the unnecessary, national self-harm of the deals negotiated in the last decade. Better still, it will come alongside, not instead of, tackling the forgotten issues of the last decade – whether on special educational needs and disabilities, child poverty, workers' rights or planning.

I don't underestimate the scale of the task ahead of us in forging a new relationship with the EU. Those who have shaped Brexit over the last decade will not see it remoulded without a fight. But it is a prize worth fighting for – economically, culturally and diplomatically. And it is a prize the prime minister has had in mind since the day after the referendum result some 10 years ago.

*Chris Ward MP is a Cabinet Office minister with responsibility for the EU reset and the Windsor framework.*

# CHAPTER 1

## QUITE THE REVERSE

*Dr Patrick English, the political research manager at YouGov, examines where the British public are a decade on from the referendum*

The UK's relationship with the EU occupies a fairly rare position in the court of public opinion: the message from the British public is actually quite clear and consistent. Overwhelmingly, British people want to see a stronger, closer, and more interconnected partnership to least some degree. Parties seeking to make deeper ties with Europe part of the political agenda are pushing at an open door as far as the public are concerned.

We need only to look at recent YouGov polling on the topic to see quite how clear this desire is. On the 22 and 23 February, we put six prospective situations involving different levels of ties between the UK and EU to the British public, and asked whether they would support or oppose the government making such a move.

By a margin of 63 per cent to 16 per cent, Brits are in favour of having a closer relationship with the EU in the scenario where we do not rejoin any

of its formal apparatus (whether the single market, the customs union, or the bloc itself). By a margin of 49 per cent to 20 per cent, they would support the government seeking Britain's re-entry into the customs union. The story is much the same for rejoining the single market, which 49 per cent of the public support, while 23 per cent oppose.

Such is the strength of the demand for a closer UK-EU relationship that 55 per cent would support the UK fully rejoining the EU, with only 34 per cent opposed. On the other side, only 17 per cent of Brits would support Britain loosening ties with the EU (with 63 per cent opposed). Just over a quarter (28 per cent) would support leaving things as they currently are, with 47 per cent opposed.

This strength and breadth of desire for a closer relationship with the EU is in no doubt driven by an equally strong perception among the British public that Brexit, as implemented, has been a

failure. According to our latest figures, 63 per cent believe Brexit has been more of a failure than a success, while only 10 per cent believe the opposite. In fact, no fewer than 55 per cent believe that leaving the EU was the wrong decision compared to 32 per cent who believe it was the right thing to do.

The same data demonstrates that this is not simply driven by hardening or crystalising views among 2016 remainers or new entrants into the electorate since then. No less than one-third (33 per cent) of 2016 leavers think Brexit has been a failure; 18 per cent think it was wrong for the UK to leave the EU, and 21 per cent would even support rejoining.

However, while current polling may make for highly encouraging reading for anyone in favour of a significant reset on UK-EU relations, there are some important caveats.

First, it would stand to reason that pessimism around Brexit as a policy outcome and a political decision would be correlated with general public pessimism about politics, politicians, and the direction of the country. If things were to significantly improve – around the cost of living or the border situation, for example – we could well see revision on views of Brexit (particularly among leavers).

It is also important to consider that, while in the abstract many people – including many leavers – are telling us they would support the UK rejoining the EU in a hypothetical referendum, the reality is that initiating such move would not only be extremely tricky to navigate politically, but also create

an entirely different public opinion environment.

Specifically, right now, there is no ‘stay out’ campaign. The messaging and information that the public currently receives around Brexit is almost entirely focused on the problems – including the exacerbation of tricky domestic issues like inflation, immigration, energy prices, and trade. If a campaign was activated, and the case for remaining out of the bloc was made in earnest, we would almost certainly expect that 21-point gap in favour of rejoining to narrow sharply and significantly.

Moreover, as with any hypothetical polling, there is undoubtedly a fair amount of ‘projection’ in the responses. For instance, many folk answering that they would like to rejoin are almost certainly imagining doing so on the UK’s previous membership terms – with the idea that we can ‘get back to how we were before all this’, as it were. There is little indication that the EU would allow for such a generous re-entry.

Indeed, they may be imagining their own version of EU membership, fit with whatever caveats and conditions they would feel comfortable with – just as many of those who voted for Brexit did so imagining different permutations. When the terms of any such rejoining actually get laid out, many who are currently hypothetically in favour may balk at the reality of what’s actually in front of them.

In short, the polling gives us a clear and consistent signal that the public wants the UK to have a closer relationship with the EU. Parties and movements pushing in that direction

will therefore do so with the wind of public opinion in their sails. But the further we move towards integration,

and the more we talk about it, the more that same swell of support is likely to erode.

# CHAPTER 2

## MUTUALLY CONVENIENT

*Stella Creasy, the Labour & Co-operative MP for Walthamstow and chair of Labour Movement for Europe, explores the Swiss model of partnership with the EU*

Ten years on, it is easy to forget doing Brexit this way was a choice. The trade and cooperation agreement (TCA) left us not just out of the single market and the customs union, but out of nearly everything with the word 'Europe' in it. There was no formal cooperation on defence, no access to EU databases on policing and migration, and no deal for our cultural sector.

The folly of this is achingly clear in a world of Trump, Putin and Xi. The OBR predicted a long-term hit of 4 per cent to GDP, and says real-world data now bears that figure out. A recent study puts the damage higher still: 6-8 per cent of GDP, productivity and employment down 3-4 per cent; and 12-18 per cent less investment.<sup>1</sup>

British businesses exporting to the EU know that one 'Brexit benefit' is paperwork. Being out of the single market means proving compliance with EU regulations, new labelling requirements, certificates and demands for

inspections. Little wonder some 16,400 small and medium-sized businesses gave up exporting to the EU altogether because of the red tape.<sup>2</sup> Moving to a UK-only certification for product safety failed when it became clear it would mean businesses paying up to £1.66bn.<sup>3</sup> A similar fiasco is brewing in chemicals, where the industry faces a £2-3bn bill just to resubmit standards data previously held by the EU.<sup>4</sup>

Labour's EU reset will undo some damage. A sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement will remove red tape on agrifood trade, where exports have dropped 21 per cent. Linking the UK and EU emissions trading systems (ETS) will save energy-intensive industries £800m per year. Negotiations are also underway for the UK to rejoin the EU internal electricity market, although this will take longer.

But these are baby steps, albeit hard-won. The government's own figures see the SPS and ETS deals

adding only £9bn to the economy by 2040 – approximately 0.3 per cent of GDP.<sup>5</sup> This is bigger than any of the post-Brexit global trade deals, but still dwarfed by Brexit’s broader impacts.

The prime minister and chancellor have said they want to align further to the single market, perhaps including deals on chemicals, medicines and cars. Other measures could include recognising each other’s systems for testing product safety, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

As of yet, the EU won’t bite, in part because we still seem to say no to everything. Our ‘red lines’ demand no single market or customs union, and no return to free movement of people. Any EU offer of further single market access would contradict the principle that its four freedoms – of goods, services, people and capital – are indivisible.

The goodwill of the reset has allowed for exceptions to that principle on SPS and energy. But the European Commission already says any further participation in the single market – including electricity – will require the UK to pay into the EU levelling up fund. Trade experts also argue that no large-scale deal can be struck without the UK shifting on free movement.<sup>6</sup>

The EU is squeezed by Trump’s tariffs and Chinese exports, divided on how to make the single market more competitive and on AI, and dependent on imports of critical minerals and batteries for electric vehicles. In other words, the UK is not its top priority, and ominously, the EU has been drawing a sharper line between those in and out of the club. This helps to explain the collapse of

talks for UK participation in the €150bn Safe defence fund, looming steel tariffs, and a ‘Made in Europe’ requirement for public procurement which threatens to cut the UK out of contracts. We are running fast just to stand still.

With the EU distracted and unsympathetic to British special pleading, the reset could grind to a halt. There is also a risk of backlash at home. The government is taking on sensitive fights about alignment to EU laws – and potentially paying for market access – with minimal parliamentary scrutiny, and no bigger economic prize to soften the political blow. If this step-by-step approach continues, the UK could face tough negotiations where agreement is more important to the UK than the EU, creating pressure for last-minute concessions.

Jumping to rejoin is also unrealistic. The EU would not want to negotiate without assurance that public support for rejoin was unshakeable – which it isn’t. Even if talks began, they would take several years. During that time, any of the 27 member states could veto the UK bid, leaving British business to continue suffering the status quo – and not automatically entitled to the perks and opt-outs we enjoyed first time around.

The idea of a customs union has been pushed by the Liberal Democrats and some within Labour, with little awareness of what a customs union is and is not. A customs union is an agreement among a group of states to apply common external tariffs on incoming goods. Combined with removal of internal tariffs, this eliminates the need

for exporters to prove the origin of the goods within the customs union zone, as all goods will be treated equally.<sup>7</sup>

The UK in a Changing Europe calculated a net benefit of 0.5 per cent of GDP from a customs union,<sup>8</sup> removing rules-of-origin requirements which make up an estimated 2-8 per cent of the extra cost of exported products.<sup>9</sup> Every option has consequences – a customs union would frustrate our ability to negotiate new trade deals and likely reverse existing ones. If a UK-EU customs union looked like Turkey’s deal, it would also mean the UK giving tariff-free access to EU free-trade partners without those partners having to reciprocate. The Liberal Democrats claim a more ambitious deal, ‘including a bespoke UK-EU customs union’, could raise up to £25bn per year in tax. But this is taken from a research paper that says “deep alignment in both goods and services” could increase GDP by 1.7-2.2 per cent.<sup>10</sup> To achieve this would mean negotiating further participation in the single market.

What, then, is to be done? We should start by looking at the updated agreements Switzerland signed with the EU in March last year.<sup>11</sup> Switzerland is inside the EU single market for industrial goods, SPS and energy, with mutual recognition of conformity assessments. It is out of the customs union and mostly out of the single market for services, but enjoys mutual recognition of professional qualifications and membership of EU programmes including Horizon, Erasmus+ and the Galileo satellite programme. In return, it makes financial contributions to EU

levelling-up funds, agrees to a form of dynamic alignment to EU regulations, and accepts free movement of people with controls.

This compromise, built up over decades, was until recently seen by the EU as complicated and unsatisfactory. It was only last year’s agreements that saw governance mechanisms address these concerns based on an ‘overall balance of rights and obligations’.<sup>12</sup> It is not a model, then, that the UK could easily copy and paste. But echoing it by accepting real trade-offs could offer the game-changing growth the UK currently lacks and address the ways we have diverged from the single market since Brexit, including where realigning could be difficult, such as in financial services. This could make us a partner, able to help the EU confront the challenges it faces on economic security, rather than an outsider asking for favours. It could also be well-timed given the EU’s promise to make Ukraine a member as early as 2027, which will require some creative procedural thinking on new formats of association.

The largest challenge with seeking a Swiss-style deal, however, would be free movement. Brexit has led to an increase in immigration – by around 200,000, according to the Centre for European Reform – and a drastic shift in terms of country of origin away from EU member states. Yet as an open trading nation with an ageing population, towards the end of this parliament, we will likely be talking more about talking more about the economic impacts of falling migration.

Swiss ‘free’ movement comes with

meaningful controls. EU citizens moving to Switzerland need to register with their local authority and secure a residence permit. To get that permit, they need to have an employment contract with a Swiss employer. If they do not intend to work, they have to show they have sufficient financial means not to rely on benefits, and their own health insurance. Furthermore, the Swiss government has a 'safeguard' emergency brake: it can suspend freedom of movement if it is shown to be causing 'serious economic or social problems'.

This is a vision Labour will need to

take to the country in our next manifesto for a clear democratic mandate. But we should start talking about it now, to show both the British public and the EU that there is a future on offer that works for both sides and matches the scale of the challenges we all face.

In January 2020, a certain Nigel Farage told Swiss radio that their country had been a source of inspiration for Brexit, and that Switzerland had reached agreements with the EU while maintaining its 'sovereignty and independence'.<sup>13</sup> Ambitious pro-Europeans should listen to him.

# CHAPTER 3

## BEYOND THE RESET

*Liam Byrne, the Labour MP for Hodge Hill and Solihull North and chair of the House of Commons business and trade committee, makes the case for an 'economic security union'*

The UK-EU reset is bearing fruit. After years of antagonism, the atmospherics are better. There is new trust, cooperation where there was calculation, and a shared recognition that the relationship is critical to our mutual success.

But warmth, as any honest diplomat will tell you, is not strategy – so the question facing Britain is how to move from 'reset', to 'renewal', to 'resilience'. My argument is simple: the moment demands something bolder than the current agenda. What is needed is a UK-EU Economic Security Union.

To understand why, one must hold two things simultaneously in view: what the reset is actually delivering, and how Europe understands its own predicament. Only when both are clear does the logic of deeper union become not merely desirable but strategically necessary.

### **THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM**

All European countries face a predicament that is, at its core, a three-body

problem. Russia, China and America – each in different ways, and for different reasons – are exerting simultaneous and destabilising pressure on the open, rules-based economic order from which both Britain and the EU have prospered.

The Russian threat is most dangerous. The war in Ukraine has ended any serious argument about Moscow's intentions, and the implications for European security are forcing hundreds of billions of euros in new spending. But the US and China are arguably as distortionary for European strategy.

China is no longer the fast-growing market once imagined, converging gradually toward recognisable market norms. It has become, instead, an economy systematically organised around geopolitical resilience and export-led overcapacity. Its manufacturing surplus now stands at roughly 10 per cent of GDP – larger than the combined manufacturing surpluses

of Germany and Japan. This is not the outcome of comparative advantage. It reflects a system in which household demand is suppressed, credit is directed by the state, losses are socialised, and excess capacity is deliberately sustained. When domestic demand cannot absorb this output, it is exported. When the US tightens its tariffs, that surplus is redirected toward the most open markets – above all, Europe.

The result is not episodic trade friction but a structural transfer of adjustment costs onto open economies like ours. What Europe is now learning in electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and clean-energy machinery, it may next learn in steel, chemicals and advanced machinery. ‘China Shock 2.0’ is not a metaphor. It is a process already underway.

And then there is America. After the extraordinary spectacle of last year’s Munich security conference speech delivered by JD Vance, the new American vice-president, and a national security strategy that treats European allies as suppliers of capability rather than partners in purpose, the conclusion reached in many European capitals is no longer speculative: Europe must accelerate steps to strengthen its own economic sovereignty. The Greenland episode merely confirmed what thoughtful analysts had long suspected: the US, if it continues in its current direction, will continue to shift the burden of managing the multilateral system from its own shoulders, requiring middle powers to act in concert or accept subordination.

These three forces together are

producing something Europe has not seen since the 1930s: a serious and sustained debate about the relationship between openness, sovereignty and security. The EU is reorganising its economy around scale, industrial policy and what some are beginning to call, with a directness that should concentrate minds in Westminster, ‘Made in Europe’. That process will continue with or without the UK.

### **WHAT THE RESET IS DELIVERING – AND WHAT IT IS NOT**

It would be wrong to understate what the reset has already secured.

- The sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement – which aligns standards and removes agrifood checks – represents the deepest economic integration achievable within the existing political framework. It may save billions of pounds in compliance costs annually and begin to reverse the calamitous decline in UK goods exports since 2021.
- Linking emissions trading systems equalises carbon prices and paves the way for carbon border exemption. Electricity market coupling – technically complex and politically sensitive, but entirely achievable – would reduce costs, improve investment signals and strengthen North Sea energy security.

These are not marginal gains. When the business and trade committee took evidence earlier this year, we heard from a haulier who described what it now takes to move goods across the channel: 26 separate stamps on pieces of paper.

Twenty-six. That theatre of bureaucratic futility is precisely what the reset exists to dismantle.

But the summit that now approaches risks becoming an occasion for modesty, not ambition. And modesty, valuable as it is, does not answer Europe's question – or Britain's. The EU is not merely reforming its trading relationship with the UK. It is reordering its entire economic strategy in response to external shocks. The Industrial Accelerator Act is delayed but coming; the 'anti-coercion instrument', already operational; there is ResourceEU for critical minerals, and a new architecture of supply-chain mapping and investment screening. These are not trade facilitation measures. They are instruments of economic power.

The risk for Britain – and it is a serious risk – is not sudden exclusion from this architecture. It is gradual erosion; death by technical detail; a quiet accumulation of clauses, thresholds and delegated acts that embed 'EU First' not through any single dramatic decision, but through the patient accretion of preference. Without a strategic framework for UK participation in European economic security, British firms will find themselves increasingly exposed as the weak link when supply is disrupted, and increasingly marginalised when European industrial policy is designed.

### **THE LOGIC OF ECONOMIC SECURITY UNION**

This is why an Economic Security Union makes sense. Not as a rebrand of the single market debate, or a proxy

argument for closer political integration, but as a practical, disciplined response to a new strategic environment – one that neither Britain nor the EU can navigate alone.

The concept rests on a simple premise: in a world of weaponised interdependence, resilience is a condition of openness, not a retreat from it. The age of benign interdependence – when trade ties were assumed to breed peace, and globalisation was thought to be its own guarantee – is over. 'Wise openness' in 2026 requires coordination, shared intelligence and combined capacity that no middle power, however well-governed, can achieve unilaterally.

The agenda for such a union flows naturally from the three-body problem, and has ten distinct dimensions.

1. Understanding risk. The first priority is systems to create a shared diagnosis of risk. Economic security is complicated. The threats are often invisible until they become acute, and the information required to understand them is scattered across government departments, intelligence agencies and private firms that do not naturally share what they know. The most effective way to map where the real risks lie – which supply chains are fragile, which dependencies are dangerous, which chokepoints are controlled by adversaries – is to war-game them: to simulate what happens to the economy when conflict begins. But this must be done together. A joint programme of economic security scenario exercises with the EU, drawing on the analytical capacity of

- both sides, would be transformative in its diagnostic power.
2. Sovereign capabilities and industrial policy. The second dimension is a shared view of the sovereign capabilities we need for this new age. No-one wants economic autarky – but where is it wise to become self-reliant? This question requires focus. We cannot unwind 80 years of globalisation, so we must be selective: choosing, with clarity and discipline, where we need sovereign capabilities and where managed interdependence is acceptable. That means a joint exercise with the EU to identify which industrial capacities matter most – where dependence, in a crisis, would be disabling – and building a combined industrial policy to develop those capacities at home and across the partnership.
  3. Precision derisking. Once we know where we must be self-reliant, we can better plan to derisk our supply chains from inputs which, if threatened, disable our economy. This is precision derisking. Firms are rightly wary of sweeping strategies to disengage from global supply chains, not least because much of the world's frontier science is now advanced in both China and the United States simultaneously. What is needed instead is a shared plan for targeted derisking, focused very precisely on where coercion or disruption would be most damaging. Amongst the priorities that should focus us are two: energy independence and critical minerals.
  4. Critical minerals. China's recent restrictions on rare earth exports were a warning shot, applied not as an outright ban but through licensing – drip-feeding supply just sufficient to prevent collapse, never enough to allow scale. It is precisely the kind of leverage that, left unaddressed, will hard-code dependency into the 2030s, regardless of how many strategies are published. Britain should explore how to coordinate with or integrate into the EU's ResourceEU plan for critical minerals. We can add value to this because we are now one of the two largest economies in the Asia-Pacific free trade zone, known as CPTPP. Nations in this alliance hold roughly 40 per cent of global rare earth reserves. But processing capacity is still overwhelmingly concentrated in China. Changing that requires a shared investment architecture – guaranteed offtake agreements, floor-price mechanisms, concessional finance, and coordinated stockpiling. These are not protectionist measures; they are the minimum required to make diversification investable.
  5. Energy independence. The fourth priority is energy independence – and here Britain's position is genuinely remarkable. The North Sea is potentially the world's largest offshore power plant. We have agreed to unlock three hundred gigawatts of offshore power from it. That is an extraordinary asset. But it requires a shared plan to build it,

integrate it, defend it (from Russian sabotage as much as from financial risk), insure it and maintain it. Electricity market integration is the beginning, not the end, of this story. A serious programme of North Sea energy cooperation between Britain and the EU would be among the most consequential acts of economic statecraft this generation could undertake.

6. Defence industrial policy. Defence cooperation is the missing chapter of the reset - and it cannot remain unwritten for much longer. As the US makes unmistakably clear that Europe must now assume primary responsibility for its own conventional defence, the question for Britain is not whether to engage with European defence industrial policy, but how fast and how deep. The answer must begin with Safe. Britain's exclusion from the Security Action for Europe fund is not a mere technical inconvenience; it is a strategic self-injury. We should seek re-entry to Safe negotiations without delay, and use that platform to drive agreement on a new generation of lighthouse projects: the capabilities that Europe most urgently needs and that no single nation can credibly build alone. This includes 'heavy lift', air-to-air refuelling, deep precision strikes, and the positioning, navigation and timing systems – the sinews of modern warfare – that depend, in turn, on sovereign space capability. These are the load-bearing columns

of autonomous European defence. Building them together would not only strengthen our collective security; it would send the clearest possible market signal to a defence industry that has waited too long for the political will to match its potential.

7. Joint anti-coercion. The seventh priority is anti-coercion. The EU's anti-coercion instrument is a sophisticated and powerful tool. Britain has no equivalent. The EU has launched 140 competition investigations into Chinese firms; Britain has launched none. Our Trade Remedies Authority, as it currently operates, is not fit for the strategic purpose now required. Nor is our regime for policing foreign subsidies – indeed, it is largely absent in practice, despite years of consultation. These are strategic vulnerabilities. Standing together with the EU in deploying anti-coercion capacity, we have genuine leverage over even the largest powers: both China and the US need access to Europe's €10tn consumer economy, with the latter earning somewhere between a fifth and a quarter of its big tech revenues from European markets. Nevertheless, standing apart, we are a target. If we want to restore strategic stability in global trade and encourage others to desist from weaponising interdependence, then we are going to have to get better organised at denying market access to Europe for those who think they

- can threaten us.
8. Scale-up finance for improved competitiveness. The eighth priority is the mobilisation of capital. The UK and Europe are not short of savings or long-term capital. What we both lack is the infrastructure to convert savings into productive investment at scale. The Kukies-Noyer analysis, now circulating seriously in European finance ministries, sets out the problem with forensic clarity: Europe has produced no companies valued above €100bn in 50 years. Seven American technology companies now generate close to a quarter of global economic profit and spend almost as much on research and development as the entire EU business sector combined. The scale-up gap has become a sovereignty risk. Britain, with its deep capital markets and capacity to intermediate large, risk-tolerant pools of investment, has a genuine contribution to make here. We should take the Kukies-Noyer conclusions and propose to the EU a joint review of how our respective capital systems can be connected.
  9. Youth mobility. The ninth priority is youth mobility and the free movement of scientists and students. These are sometimes treated as politically difficult concessions, to be negotiated reluctantly. They should instead be understood as engines of competitiveness. The firms that will lead the economies of 2040 are being founded now, in university laboratories and early-stage start-ups. Their founders need access to talent, collaboration and ideas that do not stop at national borders. An ambitious youth mobility scheme – one that gives young British and European citizens genuine freedom of movement for study and early work – would be among the most productive investments we could make in long-run growth. The prime minister is right to be open to it.
  10. Dynamic alignment. The tenth priority is dynamic alignment across a much wider range of sectors than the current agenda contemplates. The principle is simple: where regulatory divergence creates costs without benefits – where the UK gains nothing strategically or commercially from having different rules – alignment is the rational choice. Chemicals is the obvious starting point. But the logic applies across advanced manufacturing, green technologies and many others. This is not single market membership by another name. It is a set of pragmatic sector-by-sector agreements, each evaluated on its merits, collectively constituting something closer to a range of ‘single markets’ defined by industrial logic rather than political architecture.

#### **THE OBSTACLES ARE REAL - AND SURMOUNTABLE**

In Brussels, arguments about shared supply-chain resilience, combined competitiveness and collective deterrence of coercion resonate more powerfully in Brussels and Berlin

than pleas for carve-outs and special treatment. The UK is not asking for favours. It is offering partnership.

Meanwhile, here in Britain, there is a school of thought – still influential in some quarters, though declining – which holds that the choice facing Britain is between alignment and autonomy. Yet the real choice is between influence and drift. Drift, as any honest assessment of the last decade will confirm, is never cost-free. And 10 years on from Brexit, the price and prize of leaving is now much clearer. On the one hand, we have the freedom to strike our own trade agreements. We will finish this year signing pretty much most of the deals available. They are forecast to add £14bn to GDP in the long run. That is dwarfed by the price we have paid for leaving: a £180bn hit to our economic growth. The gap between those numbers is not an argument for

relitigating the referendum. It is an argument for maximum ambition in what comes next.

The Economic Security Union is not a grand political declaration. It is a practical programme: energy independence; critical minerals; anti-coercion capacity; capital markets integration; youth mobility; dynamic alignment. Each element is defensible on its own merits. Together, they constitute something larger: a strategy for an open country in a world where openness without defence equates to exposure.

Trusted trade is not a retreat from globalisation but the condition for making globalisation work again – for Britain, and for the wider system on which our future depends. That is the next stage of the reset. It is also, if we choose to grasp it, our opportunity.

*Liam Byrne's new book, Why Populists Are Winning, is published by Bloomsbury*

# CHAPTER 4

## STANDING TOGETHER

*Calvin Bailey, the Labour MP for Leyton and Wanstead and a former RAF wing commander, assesses what the UK can contribute to the defence of Europe*

Europe is entering its most dangerous period since the end of the cold war. The threat is immediate, persistent and growing. Across the continent, leaders are beginning to share an understanding of the challenge: dependence on an increasingly unreliable US set against the urgent need to collectively rearm to match Russia's growing threat. The government's reset with the EU last May is only a foundation, one that must be strengthened through maximal participation in EU initiatives and wider, more ambitious, practical collaboration with our European and NATO allies.

Security partnerships are built on hard exchanges of value, and Europe collaborates most deeply with those who contribute most credibly. The UK's historic role has been leadership in defence, yet our rhetoric has outpaced our readiness, investment, and industrial commitment. Since 2020, the UK has been excluded from the European Defence Fund and has struggled to join

the Security Action for Europe (Safe) programme. While the proposed price tag of €6.5bn was unreasonably high, our allies can point to the lack of a credible UK counteroffer.

After more than a year of slow progress, the UK must connect its defence and security initiatives into a single vision which defines not only what we contribute to Europe's security, but how we will integrate as we prepare, clear-eyed, for major war on our continent. Without this, the disparate parts of our offer, including the Joint Expeditionary Force, our growing bilateral partnerships, and our NATO commitments, will neither form a coherent prospectus for our own rearmament, nor a sound basis for negotiating our participation in EU mechanisms of burgeoning importance.

The scope of this vision depends on recognising our strategic place in Europe. In any major conflict, it will be Poland, Germany, and our eastern

allies who bear the burden of front-line troop deployments. The UK is not, and will not become, a hard-power land player on that scale. Our strengths lie elsewhere.

As the prime minister outlined at the Munich Security Conference, Britain's contribution should focus on maritime power and support; the Royal Navy remains one of Europe's most capable forces. On land, our comparative advantages lie in medical capability, logistics, and transport. These 'enablers' are both militarily important and politically uniting, forming a symbolic resilience offer that Europe urgently needs. Below, I highlight two enablers that are less well discussed, but no less essential, than the likes of space infrastructure, complex weapons or the energetics needed to secure European ammunition and missile supply chains. It is this joined-up and practical thinking that is needed to ensure UK-EU defence cooperation is a near-term success.

### **MEDICAL CAPACITY**

Across NATO, there is growing recognition that medical provision is a significant deficit in the alliance's preparations for war. This is made worse by the reality that Europe must prepare for medical facilities and health personnel to be targets. Russia has deliberately targeted them in both Ukraine and Syria. The most urgent need is to rebuild capacity and strengthen interoperability between member nations, as well as between military and civilian healthcare systems. One notable area of deficiency is in "Role 4" medical support.

In NATO jargon, Role 4 refers to

the full spectrum of medical care provided outside the theatre of military operations. It includes highly specialised treatment, such as plastic surgery and rehabilitation, which cannot be deployed into a war zone. During the cold war, Role 4 functions were delivered through dedicated military hospitals. Today, however, most of these facilities have been closed, with care now integrated through MoD Units embedded within NHS hospitals.

NATO's new commitment to invest up to 5 per cent of GDP on core defence – of which up to 1.5 per cent of GDP can be allocated to resilience efforts – creates an opportunity not only to rebuild defence medical capacity in the UK, but to offer it as Role 4 medical support to the alliance.

In the event of a full-scale war on Nato's eastern flank, the UK's distance from the front line makes it less likely to be a regular target for Russian bombing. Combined with our world-leading expertise in military medical care and an NHS that can coordinate large-scale medical activity and bring purchasing power that no other national system can match, the UK is uniquely positioned to lead on Role 4.

This will mean building surge capacity in the UK, something we must do if we are serious about preparing for war, mass-casualty events and pandemics, all of which are made more likely by a warming world. In my view, this will require building new military hospitals. The current combined model is unlikely to be enough in the event of a full-scale war.

This could be an opportunity to build

additional medical facilities in areas where military communities are concentrated, such as Barrow-in-Furness, Aldershot and Brize Norton – as well as Kent, which benefits from strong rail capacity and would enable rapid patient transport out of a war-torn Europe and into our island of support.

### **MILITARY MOBILITY**

To ensure this vision is possible, we must think about transport. The Channel tunnel was included in the original Trans-European Transport Networks designed to bind the EU together. Despite this, it is not currently integrated into NATO military-mobility planning, and is excluded from the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework and its 'military Schengen' transport scheme. This is the result of the lingering UK-Spain diplomatic disagreement over Gibraltar.

At present, should war come, the plan is to land US brigades in the Netherlands by sea, mostly at Rotterdam, and then move them by train. Meanwhile, a UK brigade would sail to Denmark and then travel by train. All of this ignores the fact that the Channel tunnel offers a direct rail route to Rotterdam, currently running at roughly half capacity, and does not yet carry freight.

Better yet, UK rail can ultimately connect to Rail Baltica, an EU initiative to bridge the Kaliningrad gap, which would dramatically simplify the movement of troops and equipment. Under current plans, it would take days to get allied troops and materiel to the front lines, while the Channel tunnel could, in principle, move them far faster

if properly integrated into NATO and EU military mobility frameworks.

### **DETTERRING WAR IN EUROPE**

The UK is a gateway to Europe for the rest of the world – a role we have long recognised diplomatically, though one that some have, sadly, seen as a burden. While we cannot realistically provide the massive manpower that Poland and Germany can, we can play to our strengths, and these are Labour strengths. We built the NHS, and it was our unions that supported the war efforts during the last world wars. Today, we are investing in renewing our rail infrastructure and our NHS. But we can also invest in our relations with Europe in this spirit of service and connection.

If one thing is to be learnt from some of our diplomatic failures, it is that success will mean not only national but also diplomatic and strategic renewal. We need to renew our official secondments between the civil service and European institutions and establish an administrative arrangement with the European Defence Agency to ensure our place in medical and mobility PESCO projects.

Likewise, if we are serious about shaping Europe's security architecture, rather than reacting to it, we must restore defence credibility. This means committing to 3 per cent of GDP by 2029 and directing this investment towards the capabilities where the UK adds decisive value to collective European defence. This requires focus from the very top and investment in rebuilding and championing our expertise.

Populist parties on both ends of the political spectrum have no credible vision for European cooperation on defence and security. Labour is uniquely placed to seize this moment and drive

deeper collaboration, but we must act now. We cannot continue to offer bureaucratic tinkering. The hard work must begin: preparing for, and therefore deterring, war in Europe.

# CHAPTER 5

## A DANGEROUS TURN

*Dr Alice Donald, professor of human rights law at Middlesex University, highlights the perils of leaving – or weakening – the ECHR*

The UK's 75 year founding commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights is in peril. As a result, so too is British membership of the 46-nation Council of Europe, a vital arena, separate from the EU, for multilateral cooperation on issues such as border control, security, data transfer, and combatting crime and corruption. Moreover, there is now palpable concern in Strasbourg that the threat of UK exit could cause a negative contagion, eroding respect for human rights and the rule of law across the continent.

The danger derives from the policy of Reform UK and the Conservatives to pull the UK out of the convention, a reckless step that no democracy has ever taken or is presently contemplating (elsewhere, only a few far-right parties have called for withdrawal).

For the UK to have become such an outlier is remarkable given how rarely the European Court of Human Rights finds violations against it – on average, just three times per year over the past decade.

Beneath the vituperative rhetoric against the court is a well-functioning relationship, grounded in dialogue and a healthy degree of deference to the decisions of the UK's elected politicians and courts.

So, how did we get here?

### **PHONEY WAR**

The answer is immigration and a distorted narrative, driven by politicians and commentators on the right (and echoed by a few Labour voices), that blames the convention and the court for everything from small boat arrivals to the failure to deport foreign national offenders. In the first half of 2025, three-quarters of UK media reports that referred to the ECHR were about immigration, mostly negative in tone and frequently erroneous.<sup>14</sup> Such hostility to the convention is not new – recall the furore over prisoner voting rights – but the UK has never been so close to the precipice of withdrawal. Calls for an exit have become a kind of virility test for politicians who want to signal their intent

to control irregular migration and flex their populist credentials.

I want to state in the starkest terms that this is a false prospectus – one that could lead the UK to sleepwalk out of the convention without an informed public debate about the consequences. It is also an insular position that privileges narrow –and misconceived – concepts of the national interest over the survival of the European system of human rights protection.

For one thing, calls for withdrawal vastly overestimate the effect that the convention has on migration. The ECHR does not give anyone the right to live in a country of which they are not a national; nor does it provide a right to asylum or citizenship. To give a sense of scale, the number of foreign-national offenders (FNOs) who successfully appeal against deportation on human rights grounds alone is tiny compared to the number of FNOs overall: around 0.7 per cent, or 180 people per year, according to the latest Home Office data.<sup>15</sup>

Research shows that restrictive asylum policies have scant and uncertain deterrent effects: leaving the ECHR would not “stop the boats”. Nor would it remove other impediments to immigration control, such as the cost and logistical burden of removals or problems of securing cooperation from receiving states. In fact, a go-it-alone approach would make matters worse by compromising cross-border cooperation on irregular migration.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF WITHDRAWAL**

The consequences do not end there. Leaving the convention would also dest-

abilise the peace settlement in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday agreement requires the ECHR and the jurisdiction of the court to apply to Northern Ireland; a ‘British bill of rights’ disconnected from the regional system would not fulfil this obligation. Withdrawal would not only breach the agreement, but would also undermine the Windsor framework agreed with the EU, under which the UK committed to “no diminution of rights, safeguards or equality of opportunity” in Northern Ireland.

Leaving the ECHR would also imperil the UK-EU trade and cooperation agreement, which states that the UK and EU’s shared commitment to human rights treaties is an “essential element” of the partnership. A decision by the UK to leave the convention would enable the EU to terminate or suspend the operation of TCA in whole or in part.

Most at risk of termination is part three of the TCA, which governs criminal law cooperation, data exchange, extradition of criminal suspects and mutual legal assistance. As the Bar Council for England and Wales put it, quitting the ECHR would mean that “the UK’s multilateral law enforcement and criminal cooperation capabilities would be set back 30 years to the time of the Berlin Wall.”<sup>16</sup>

Another casualty could be the recently renewed data adequacy decision that allows personal data to flow freely between the UK and European Economic Area for law enforcement and commercial purposes. The decision is conditional on the UK’s continued adherence to the ECHR and acceptance of the court’s jurisdiction—conditions a homegrown bill of rights would not meet.

## **PUSHING BACK, NOT PULLING OUT**

While withdrawal is not on the agenda elsewhere, in December, 27 states including the UK signed a joint statement calling on the court to rebalance “migrants’ individual rights ... and the weighty public interests of defending freedom and security”. An intergovernmental process is underway that will culminate in a political declaration in Chisinau, Moldova, in May 2026.

Several governments did not sign the joint statement—including those of France, Germany, Spain and Turkey, which host more than half Europe’s refugees. In search of unanimity, the declaration is likely to be more muted. It may legitimately seek clarity from the court in certain areas of its case law but will not change the text of the convention or dictate how judges in Strasbourg should revise their already highly deferential approach to national authorities in migration cases.

Nevertheless, it is concerning that, for the first time, Council of Europe governments are contemplating a regressive declaration that seeks to permanently restrict rights protection for certain (still ill-defined) categories of people.

Another danger lurks: that Brexit history repeats itself. Just as David Cameron’s “new settlement” with the EU in February 2016 proved insufficient to stop the momentum towards leave, there is a risk that talk of the need for “reform of the ECHR” to tackle irregular migration will raise unrealistic public expectations, and shift blame onto Strasbourg for problems it did not cause.

## **WHAT SHOULD LABOUR DO?**

The government does not speak with one voice on the ECHR. Shabana Mahmood’s

tough rhetoric that human rights appear “out of step with common sense” stands in contrast to the attorney general’s observation that convention rights do not preclude “a very robust, quick and efficient, but fair, asylum and immigration process”. Hermer has pointed to the need to ensure, through legislation and guidance, that decision makers – from frontline case workers upwards – understand the wide discretion states enjoy when assessing cases under the Article 8 right to family life and the high threshold required to prevent removals under Article 3, which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

More than ever, we need political leadership to defend and promote the ECHR, transforming public understanding of its positive impact in the UK.<sup>17</sup> It is only thanks to the convention – enshrined in UK law through the Human Rights Act – that the Hillsborough families and victims of the ‘black cab rapist’ John Worboys obtained truth and justice. Furthermore, the decriminalisation of gay sex in Northern Ireland, the abolition of corporal punishment, and the strengthening of privacy safeguards in the face of mass surveillance and excessive police powers all came about in the UK due to human rights rulings.

This is not a call to preserve the status quo in aspic. The convention is interpreted dynamically and will help the UK to navigate emerging threats, including intrusive digital technologies, while enabling it to project national interests from its seat at the Council of Europe.

In terms of public opinion, there is all to play for. Despite relentless negative commentary, polls consistently show greater support for remaining in the ECHR

than for leaving, especially in the devolved nations. Labour should seize the moment and take the fight to Reform and the Tories, championing the many, but rarely

discussed, achievements of the convention, and raising the alarm about the damaging consequences withdrawal would unleash at home and abroad.

# CHAPTER 6

## ACROSS BORDERS

*Paul Nowak, the general secretary of the TUC, highlights the shared interests of workers on both sides of the channel*

For years, workers, along with their families and communities, have borne the brunt of the Tories' botched Brexit deal. Jobs have been lost or put at risk. Supermarket prices and energy bills are higher, and workers have lost important protections.

Fortunately, last year the government took the initiative to start to improve the terms of trade with the EU and rebuild a closer relationship. We have already seen welcome, small shifts, including the UK rejoining Erasmus+ at the end of last year – a scheme that will provide valuable vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities for UK workers.

We hope that the government will soon also be able to conclude wider agreements which will help to improve living standards. For instance, the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU should help bring down food prices, while rejoining the EU electricity market will help lower energy bills. Closer trade can also help UK business, and aligning

the UK and EU emissions trading schemes will remove costly tariffs on UK steel.

While these moves are welcome, we need the government to go further. In an increasingly volatile world, and with the unpredictability of President Trump, it has never been more important for the UK to build a closer political and economic relationship with the EU – our closest, most significant and most stable partner. A closer relationship would bring down prices for workers, boost good jobs and improve protections for rights.

We want the government to be ambitious and open-minded in negotiations. The TUC is not wedded to one model to build a closer relationship; we want the government to consider a number of options.

As a starting point, we need ambitious sectoral agreements. Workers in the chemicals, pharmaceuticals and automotive sectors continue to see their jobs and pay put at risk because the businesses they work for face high costs from paperwork

to demonstrate their products meet EU standards. In chemicals, for example, the government estimates that UK chemicals companies having to register chemicals both with the UK regulator and the EU regulators is adding up to £2bn in costs to UK companies.<sup>18</sup>

Agreements to align UK and EU standards in chemicals, pharmaceuticals and automotive would lift these costs at a stroke – boosting competitiveness and safeguarding jobs.

The second option worth exploring is a bespoke customs union with influence over trade agreements. Outside of a customs union with the EU, UK exporters need to complete customs certificates to prove the origin of goods, adding almost £2bn in additional costs to businesses.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, delays at the borders caused by these customs checks add costs to businesses which are then passed on to workers, putting jobs, pay and conditions at risk.

A customs union would also bring particular advantages for the automotive industry, since it would remove the costly ‘rules of origin’ requirement being introduced in January 2027. This will mean EU tariffs on UK cars being exported to the EU with less than 60 per cent of the value of battery packs originating in the EU and UK – which is a significant part of UK exports.

Although a customs union with the EU would require the UK to adopt the same tariff policy towards third countries as the EU, the UK would need to retain influence over EU trade policy. This process, however, has already begun, with the UK taking part in EU Foreign Affairs Council meetings to

coordinate foreign policy. The UK also maintains a regular dialogue with the EU Commissioner for trade Maros Sefcovic, as the UK-EU relationship falls under his portfolio. It is therefore reasonable for the UK to propose a formal role in coordinating EU trade policy.

It is important to note that trade agreements with other countries do not add nearly as much to the economy as a closer relationship with the EU would do. The UK-India trade agreement has been forecast to add just 0.13 per cent<sup>20</sup> to GDP, while estimates suggest a comprehensive agreement with the EU would increase GDP by over 2 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

Next, the UK could look at joining the Pan Euro Mediterranean convention, which allows components from members of the convention to count as ‘local content’ and enter tariff-free into each other’s markets. Companies with long supply chains, such as the car industry, would benefit from the UK joining PEM, since it would allow components from any PEM country to benefit from tariff-free trade under the UK-EU trade and cooperation agreement.

The UK should also be part of EU procurement schemes, as the government has been calling for. Joining the Security Action for Europe (Safe) scheme would allow UK companies to bid for EU defence contracts. Similarly, securing full access to ‘Made in Europe’ would allow UK companies to bid for EU public procurement contracts. This would bring investment to UK businesses and boost jobs in sectors such as manufacturing and defence.

While exploring these options, we need to make sure workers' rights are at the forefront. We would therefore want to see a requirement in the UK-EU agreement that any improvements made to rights in the EU are also introduced in the UK. The government would be fully able to improve on these rights – and we would urge them to – but it is imperative for fair competition and workers' living standards that we have at least the same floor as workers in the EU.

Last year, trade unions were proud to see the government adopt world-class standards on workers' rights with the Employment Rights Act passing into law. But there have also been key EU protections for workers' rights introduced since Brexit, which have not yet been introduced in the UK, such as rights for platform workers and stronger requirements on gender pay transparency.

We should build on the 'level playing field' clause in the current UK-EU trade and cooperation agreement (TCA), which requires the UK to not lower workers' rights from the level they were at in December 2020, when the

agreement was signed. This could be achieved through the UK adding an agreement on dynamic alignment on employment rights to the TCA. There should be close engagement with trade unions in the UK and EU on how this should be achieved.

Whatever options the government pursues, the TUC is clear: we need a relationship that delivers for working people on both sides of the Channel. As a proud member of the European TUC, the TUC shares objectives with trade unions across Europe for a closer UK-EU relationship.<sup>22</sup> Workers in the EU and UK both want to protect rights and good jobs in the UK; workers in the EU do not want lower standards in the UK, which will drive down standards in the EU. The TUC and ETUC are clear it is in the interest of all workers to continue to make progress building a closer relationship, leading the way on mutual high standards on workers' rights and promoting good jobs – giving a boost to workers across the UK and helping to repair the damage of a bad Brexit, while improving jobs and living standards into the future.

# CHAPTER 7

## ACCESS DENIED

*Naomi Pohl, the general secretary of the Musician's Union, details the trials of British musicians touring in Europe*

Prior to the Brexit referendum, the Musicians' Union campaigned hard to remain. Our rationale was simple: we knew the importance of working in Europe to our members and the wider music industry. The EU market is worth four times the US market to British music, and when musicians could tour freely, Europe provided an important opportunity to pick up gigs, grow an audience and collaborate with international talent. The music industry is worth £8bn to the UK economy, but since Brexit, growth has halved, and rising costs associated with both international and domestic touring are a key factor.

However, back then – campaigning under a Tory government who assured us they understood a musician's need to tour freely – we had no idea what barriers our members would face if the public voted to leave. When the trade and cooperation agreement was published, our head of government relations and I stayed up scouring it

together, looking for the provisions that would enable musicians to keep performing. After quite a lot of head scratching, we realised – there was nothing.

So, what did this mean for EU touring? We asked the then-government to provide us with guidance on what our members needed to do to access the EU market. They said it was not their role to provide information on rules and regulations set by other territories and so, effectively, we were on our own. However, the music industry was absolutely aligned on the importance of the EU market – not just for musicians but for record labels, haulage companies and backstage crew – so we set about the long, and on-going, process of compiling guidance.

The Musicians' Union was determined to play a leading role and ensure the best possible guidance for members, and over time, we were able to create resources that would

help musicians navigate the new red tape and stay on the road. When I was elected general secretary in 2022, one of my first acts was to create a ‘head of international’ post, with a primary focus on international touring; he has become a crucial resource for our members, the government and wider music industry.

Below is a whistlestop tour of the Brexit red tape affecting musicians.

### **VISAS AND WORK PERMITS**

The Schengen area has a visa system which allows 90 days of work within a 180-day period. This is problematic for longer tours – at the extreme end, Robbie Williams recently had to ship his whole crew home after 90 days and bring in a second back-up crew. Just think about the costs and bureaucracy! Not to mention the environmental impact. The Schengen visa, however, isn’t the only applicable system, and many territories require additional work permits or visa, or have extra restrictions in place. There is no single source of information for the EU, so the patchwork of member states’ individual regulations must be navigated by those touring, or by organisations like the MU who want to provide reliable advice to members.

### **THE ATA CARNET**

When I started working for the Musicians’ Union in 2009, the carnet (otherwise colloquially known as the passport for goods) was music industry folklore. Colleagues recalled having to list all their equipment and instruments for a tour, and if a drumstick broke, bringing the two halves back to the UK so everything on the carnet could be

checked back in at the border. Well, the carnet is back, ladies and gentleman. For the princely sum of £400+ (and in some cases thousands or even tens of thousands on a big tour), a carnet provider will rubber-stamp your list of equipment and take a security deposit as insurance. The deposit is 30-40 per cent of the value of the equipment. Essentially, the carnet is a declaration of equipment you need to tour but which you don’t intend to sell.

### **MERCHANDISE**

For the gear you do want to sell on tour, like t-shirts and CDs, you can only take up to €1000 in value into the EU, and then register for VAT in each territory. You will also need an EORI (Economic Operators Registration and Identification) number. If your merchandise originated outside the EU – for example, if you source t-shirts from China – They fall outside of the ‘Rules of Origin’, meaning that an additional duty will be added.

### **CITES**

This stands for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. If your instrument contains rosewood, ivory or another protected or restricted material, then you will need a Musical Instrument Certificate. These are currently free, and last for 3 years, but the British government is thinking of introducing a charge. You have to get your MIC stamped at designated ports in the EU and the UK. To add to this frustration, the Eurostar St Pancras is not a designated port – it would be helpful if it was.

**CABOTAGE**

I had never heard this term used in the music industry to my knowledge prior to Brexit; however, cabotage and cross trade rules emerged as a problem shortly after. Trucks carrying equipment are restricted to making three stops in the EU before returning to the UK; no good on a long theatre, pop or orchestral tour. The workaround is to hire trucks in the EU, but this is costly for companies, and a real pain for those who own trucks, such as the English National Opera or our world-famous orchestras

All of this gives you a flavour of what musicians are dealing with, and why 59 per cent of musicians told us in a survey that tours in the EU are no longer viable. When you look at those who are persevering, 75 per cent had seen a decline in their income from EU-based tours and work opportunities.

A key point of frustration is that, just when we think we have nailed down the requirements and our advice is up to date, a musician will ring to say they've been stopped at the border because they're missing some piece of paperwork we never knew they needed. Recently,

for instance, a musician was stopped and asked for proof of ownership of their instrument – sometimes, it seems, customs officials at the border just go a bit rogue.

When I spoke to the culture, media and sport select committee in February, I was keen to stress that the government can make some improvements unilaterally as well as renegotiating terms with the EU Commission. They could work with Chambers of Commerce to bring down the costs of carnets, for example.

We believe there is genuine will from Labour to address the barriers our members face post-Brexit, but we have a long way to go to convince the EU that this is not a one-sided issue. In fact, there is evidence of a decline in EU artists appearing at UK independent festivals, as well as a decline in UK artists performing in Europe. Reaching a deal would benefit both sides. Labour must deliver on its manifesto commitment to help touring artists before our great British music business sees a further decline in growth. If it does not, the major artists of the future may simply fail to materialise.

# CHAPTER 8

## AT THE SHARP END

*Kate Foster, deputy head of international affairs at FSB, and Craig Beaumont, FSB's head of public affairs and EU, observe the 'long tail of the Brexit comet' for SMEs*

While the trade and cooperation agreement (TCA) signed on 24 December 2020 was preferable to a no-deal outcome for UK small businesses, firms that had never considered themselves exporters or importers were nevertheless suddenly thrust into a world of customs paperwork, physical inspections of goods, work permits, cross-border VAT rules and more. Customs formalities and other non-tariff barriers are an intrinsic part of being an EU non-member, but the financial and administrative costs of navigating them are disproportionate for micro, small and medium-sized businesses, most of which operate on tight margins and cannot afford to have dedicated staff to handle trade paperwork.

On top of this, the Windsor framework has had a far-reaching impact on small businesses in Northern Ireland and those trading with NI from Great Britain. FSB Northern Ireland's 2025 report, Windsor Framework Realities,

explored the effects of additional frictions such as 'not for EU' labelling rules and EU Responsible Person requirements on the smooth functioning of the UK's own internal market.

When observing the impact of leaving the EU on all SME trade activity, we observed three broad trends: a minority of businesses stopped trading with the EU immediately or soon after January 1 2021; a larger group continued to trade with the EU and intends to keep doing so; and a third group have continued to trade up until now, but anticipate reducing or stopping in the future if nothing changes – or the moment they encounter a new barrier.

This group is the focus of new FSB UK research to be published in spring 2026, which finds that just under a third (29 per cent) of small businesses engaged in EU trade expect to reduce or stop trade activity if there is no change to current arrangements. This is a clear warning sign. The cumulative

administrative and financial burdens of EU trade, amid rising operational costs and tax burdens at home, are sapping SMEs' appetite and confidence to do business with our largest and closest regional trade partner.

There is, however, reason for optimism. The 'common understanding' and new strategic partnership, both agreed at the first UK-EU joint summit in May 2025, set the foundation for a mutually more constructive and collaborative relationship.

### **PLANETS ALIGNING? PROGRESS TOWARDS TACKLING TRADE FRICTIONS**

The 'reset summit' in May 2025 was an important milestone in relations between the UK and EU. Politically speaking, the scale and scope of the commitments indicated a genuine willingness from both sides to engage constructively, and the ambition to ease trade frictions was welcome for small businesses struggling to meet the costs of trade and eager to see progress.

For SMEs across the agrifood sector, from farmers and fishers to high street delis and garden centres, the 9 March announcement confirming the removal of export health certificates for many goods, as well as reduced border checks and other controls, will save time and money. It is also positive that the benefits of a new sanitary and phytosanitary goods (SPS) agreement will extend to GB-NI movements, reducing frictions within the UK's internal market.

In practical terms, some commitments will take a while to have real-world impact for SMEs. For instance, negotiations for the SPS agreement

commenced in 2025 with the ambition that businesses will begin to benefit in 2027. Commitments to create dedicated dialogues on business mobility, including the recognition of professional qualifications, and to continue efforts to support cultural and artistic exchanges are welcome, but do not currently have a defined outcome or timeline. At FSB, we are focused on identifying practical changes that will unlock trade and create economic growth, which we hope aligns with the post-Brexit work undertaken by the Fabians. The 'reset' needs to morph from a diplomatic exercise to a growth-centred drive – and that needs political buy-in and urgency from the EU side as well as the British. We therefore welcomed Defra's commitment to engage industry stakeholders early and raise awareness of the forthcoming SPS changes via the recent public Call for Information.

But progress must not be confined to annual summits. For businesses that process the personal data of EU citizens, for example, there will have been relief at the European Data Protection Board's decision in late 2025 to extend the UK's 'data adequacy' status until 2031. Perhaps one of the most important developments of the past year is the shift towards a relationship characterised by an ongoing series of conversations and negotiations.

### **STARGAZING: WHAT SMES NEED TO SEE**

The value to SMEs of building a new, predictable policy environment in which to operate should not be underestimated. Providing a stable foundation for

cross-border trade is vital for businesses to plan and invest with confidence. The British government and EU should therefore prioritise a partnership that will minimise the disruption for small businesses. Outside of the TCA, there are a number of areas where changes to the current arrangements would make a tangible difference to SMEs.

Firstly, the UK is a services super-power, but the conditions for business mobility set out in the TCA are relatively narrow, prohibiting short-term business visitors from selling services to the general public or receiving payment within a member state. Furthermore, 80 per cent of SMEs have no employees; self-employed professionals or owner-directors of such companies are more likely to travel via the ‘contractual service supplier’ or ‘independent professional’ routes – both of which are subject to more restrictive provisions. Negotiating an increase in the range of activities permitted on a short-term basis without a visa should be a priority.

Secondly, some EU regulations require a non-EU business to appoint a ‘responsible person’ in a member state to act as a point of contact with relevant EU authorities. Others demand that products placed on the single market conform with EU standards, meaning that UK businesses may need to have their products certified by not just one but two different accredited bodies. The

cost of meeting these requirements is prohibitive for many SMEs, particularly those engaged in relatively low-value, low-volume trade, creating a chilling effect on trade activity.

Finally, the EU is pursuing a ‘Made in Europe’ strategy through the Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA), an answer to both the US’s ‘Buy American’ approach and competition from other overseas manufacturers. Although the UK’s inclusion by default in the IAA’s definition of ‘European’ content is positive, proposed carve-outs present serious risks to critical sectors such as automotive, and the government must continue to engage with the EU and individual member states like France and Germany to push for the full inclusion of neighbouring countries with which the EU shares common standards and comprehensive agreements.

### **SHOOTING FOR THE STARS?**

Sometimes people view the complexities of trade and the EU-UK relationship as simply too difficult to sort out, and choose instead to focus on simplistic slogans. We do not agree. Small businesses have borne the brunt of trade barriers. Removing them is one of the simplest ways politicians can help them create wealth. We do not need to shoot for the moon – but over the arc of the rest of this parliament, we need a clear a flight path towards economic growth.

# **THE VIEW FROM EUROPE**

HOW THE EU IS APPROACHING THE RESET

# CHAPTER 9

## RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

*Jannike Wachowiak, a researcher at UK in a Changing Europe, discusses where the UK and EU may have shared interests – and where they may not*

Brits spend an inordinate amount of time discussing what they want from the EU. They spend far less, however, pondering what the EU and its member states might want from them. This is perhaps understandable. Brexit has been a central fault line in British politics and has divided our political parties for more than a decade. Consequently, from the Malthouse compromise to more recent calls for a customs union, the intended audience is often domestic. That said, this is hardly a recipe for a successful negotiation between the two sides.

So, where does the EU stand on all this? Perhaps the first thing to note is that the UK no longer features prominently on the EU's list of priorities. European leaders simply don't spend much time thinking about relations with the UK. The war in Ukraine, relations with the US and China, and the competitiveness of the single market have long replaced Brexit at the top of the council's agenda.

A window of opportunity opened

when Labour came to power in July 2024. There was genuine curiosity about the promised reset. However, European leaders quickly grew impatient over the perceived lack of clarity and drive from London. As ever, they felt the ball was in the UK's court. That it was up to London to decide what it wanted and communicate this. This view still holds. As the commission's chief spokesperson put it as recently as February, the forthcoming summit (presumably in July 2026) would be "the occasion to discuss with UK what, exactly they, have in mind, and how they propose to go about it."

Partly, this is due to a sense that it should not be the EU's responsibility to fix what the UK broke; partly, the EU's institutions still remember past attempts at closer cooperation being rebuffed by the UK. Most significantly, the EU remains wary of offering a 'privileged' relationship to the UK which could then unravel established relationships with other third countries,

such as Norway or Switzerland.

None of which is to say that the EU is not interested in closer relations with the UK. There is a recognition that times have changed since the TCA negotiations of 2020, and that the UK is an important partner in a more dangerous world. The commission's 2024-29 political guidelines make it clear that the EU wants to strengthen relations 'on issues of shared interest, such as energy, security, resilience and people-to-people contacts'.

The UK government might be well advised to focus on these areas. While talks are already underway on UK participation in the EU's electricity market and youth mobility, cooperation on security and resilience remains, at present, underexplored. However, as in the case of the failed Safe negotiations, there is no guarantee of success even in areas of mutual interest. Nevertheless, both sides appreciate the need for cooperation. Importantly, the EU recently decided to leave the door ajar for UK companies to benefit from the €90bn loan for Ukraine.

Conspicuously absent from the Commission's list of 'shared interests' is trade. More than five years into the application of the trade and cooperation agreement, its most recent assessment maintains that it is a 'very good' agreement for the EU. This indicates a high threshold for reviewing the economic elements of the deal. What is more, the British prime minister's expressed interest in exploring alignment in certain areas of the single market comes up against the EU's red lines: no cherry-picking, and the

need to maintain the balance of rights and obligations in agreements with other third countries. While the EU's willingness to negotiate agreements on food and drinks and electricity shows some flexibility, it is unlikely that this will extend to further areas of the single market unless there is a wider discussion around freedom of movement and significant cohesion payments.

An additional difficulty is that the EU is currently discussing 'Made in EU' targets which might shut out certain British products and technologies from European supply chains. It will be up to member states (and the European parliament) to define whether 'Made in EU' extends to trusted partners outside the single market.

While excluding the UK would be bad news for Europe's resilience, there is no unified EU view. Some, like Germany, advocate more permissive conditions for a partner which they deem strategically important ('Made with Europe' rather than 'Made in Europe'). However, others, like France, are pushing back – wanting to favour their own industries – or are simply less concerned by how a third country like the UK may be impacted.

All of which means the UK must invest time and resources in understanding the evolving priorities in Brussels and in member states. London needs to consider what contribution the UK can usefully make to strengthening Europe's resilience and security. This would also make it easier to test British proposals in other areas, in dialogue with the EU and member states, ultimately increasing their chances of success.

# CHAPTER 10

## EUROPEAN UNIONS

*Judith Kirton-Darling, general secretary of IndustriAll Europe, explores the differing perspectives of EU countries*

Since the UK's withdrawal from the EU, relations between Brussels and London have travelled a long, uneven path. The early post Brexit years were dominated by disputes over the implementation of the withdrawal agreement, legal action over the Northern Ireland protocol, and a climate of political mistrust. The bilateral architecture did exist – the withdrawal agreement for separation issues, and the trade and cooperation agreement (TCA) for future relations – but the broader political environment never fully stabilised.

Yet Europe has changed; indeed, the world has changed. And in this new reality, the EU27 increasingly see the UK not as a former member to be kept at arm's length, but as a strategic European partner with whom cooperation is both natural and necessary.

### **GEOPOLITICS AS THE TURNING POINT**

The decisive shift did not come from London or Brussels, but from Moscow,

Beijing and Washington. Russia's invasion of Ukraine reset Europe's strategic priorities almost overnight. Suddenly, defence coordination, energy security and supply chain resilience were not abstract policy areas but urgent collective challenges. China's growing assertiveness, and renewed US tariffs across multiple sectors, further underlined that the EU's security and prosperity are deeply intertwined with those of its closest democratic neighbours – including the UK.

It is within this geopolitical moment that the EU-UK "reset" has taken shape. The first EU-UK summit in May 2025 symbolised not just political reconciliation but the beginning of a more structured phase in the relationship. Leaders launched new cooperation tracks on energy, security, youth mobility and regulatory cooperation. The UK's expected return to the Erasmus programme from 2027 is more than symbolic: it signals a broader

willingness on both sides to rebuild social, cultural and educational ties.

For the EU 27, the reset represents a sober recognition: political separation did not eliminate strategic interdependence.

### WHAT THE EU HOPES TO GAIN

From the EU's perspective, the reset is not about reopening the TCA or recreating pre Brexit dynamics. It is about reducing friction, increasing predictability and building structured channels of cooperation in areas where interests clearly converge.

Broadly, EU governments share several ambitions:

- Stable implementation of existing agreements, especially around Northern Ireland, where predictability benefits both Ireland and the wider single market.
- Closer security and defence coordination, particularly around support for Ukraine, sanctions enforcement, cybersecurity and intelligence sharing.
- Stronger energy cooperation, including interconnectors, North Sea offshore development and resilience in critical supply chains.
- Reduced trade frictions through technical solutions, especially on sanitary and phytosanitary barriers, customs processes and data exchange.
- A more constructive regulatory dialogue, limiting unnecessary divergence that affects EU businesses exporting to or operating in the UK.
- People to people links – especially

for young people, researchers and students, mobility for whom is seen as mutually beneficial.

Yet behind this broad consensus lie important national differences.

### DIVERGING PERSPECTIVES ACROSS THE EU 27

#### France: Strategic autonomy first

France is the member state least inclined toward flexibility. Paris sees Brexit as a choice with structural consequences, and therefore insists that any preferential access for the UK must be linked to the obligations of the single market. This position is most visible in debates around the EU's emerging "Made in Europe" industrial policy, which aims to use state aid and public procurement to strengthen European production. For France, extending these benefits to the UK risks undermining EU cohesion and diluting strategic autonomy. Cooperation with the UK is welcome, but not if it blurs the line between member states and third countries.

#### Germany: Pragmatic cooperation

Berlin takes a more flexible approach. Germany values regulatory predictability, industrial supply chain stability and open trade. From the automotive sector to chemicals and machinery, German businesses see the UK as a valuable export market and production partner. While Germany is cautious about extending industrial preferences too widely, it favours a model that can include "like minded partners" where reciprocal commitments are clear. In

the reset, Berlin's priority is to reduce friction, not to reopen fundamental debates about membership vs non membership.

### **Ireland: Stability above all**

For Dublin, the EU-UK relationship is inseparable from the peace and economic stability of the island of Ireland. Ireland strongly supports deeper cooperation, smoother east-west trade flows and mechanisms that minimise political tension around Northern Ireland. For Ireland's leaders, therefore, the reset is not just geopolitically welcome, but essential.

### **Nordics and Baltics: Security and competitiveness**

The Nordic and Baltic states view the UK primarily through a security lens. As highly open economies with strong Atlanticist instincts, they appreciate UK leadership in European defence and support structured cooperation on Ukraine, cybersecurity and hybrid threats. Economically, they are wary of overly restrictive industrial policies: a rigid "EU only" approach to procurement or state aid, in their view, could deter foreign investment and undermine competitiveness.

### **Southern Europe: Mobility and market access**

Countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece place high value on services, mobility and tourism. They want practical arrangements for short term workers, creative industries, student

exchanges and business travel – areas where Brexit has had a disproportionate impact on their economies. They are generally supportive of the reset if it rebuilds mobility and reduces barriers for their service providers.

### **Central and Eastern Europe: Security alignment with caution**

Central and eastern European states prioritise robust cooperation with the UK on Ukraine, sanctions, NATO-EU coordination and defence industrial development. They are open to the reset provided the UK maintains alignment with EU strategic objectives. However, they remain cautious about extending industrial benefits without clear commitments.

### **A SHIFT FROM CONFRONTATION TO FUNCTIONAL COEXISTENCE**

For the EU 27, the reset is not about nostalgia for the UK's membership or illusions about recreating the past. It is about constructing a functional, stable, mutually beneficial coexistence with a major European power. In an era of geopolitical instability, Europe benefits when its democratic neighbours work together. The European trade union movement is keen to play a role in facilitating and bridge-building in the interests of workers on both sides of the channel.

The EU-UK relationship will never return to 'the way we were,' but it can evolve into something more mature: a partnership grounded not in shared institutions, but in shared interests.

# ENDNOTES

- 1 Bloom, N, Bunn, P, Mizen, P, Smietanka, P, and Thwaites, G, The Economic Impact of Brexit, NBER, 2025
- 2 Freeman, R, et al, Deep Integration and Trade: UK firms in the wake of Brexit, CEP, 2024
- 3 Department for Business and Trade, Impact Assessment for the Product Safety and Metrology etc. (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- 4 Segna, S, UK REACH: What's Happening and What the Chemical Industry Needs Now, Chemical Industries Association, 2025
- 5 HM Government, News Story: PM secures new agreement with EU to benefit British people, 19 May 2025
- 6 Henig, D, Everything Brussels Really Thinks About the UK, Encompass, 2025
- 7 Lowe, S, Customs Union, Most Favoured Nation via Substack, 7 December 2025
- 8 Reland, J, Is a Customs Union Worth It?, UK in a Changing Europe, 10 December 2025
- 9 Lowe, S, Customs Union, Most Favoured Nation via Substack, 7 December 2025
- 10 Frontier Economics, Modelling the Effects of Closer UK-EU Cooperation and of US Tariffs, 2025
- 11 Harries, M, Thinking Swiss on the UK-EU Reset, UK in a Changing Europe, 17 December 2025
- 12 Spisak, A, The New EU-Swiss Deal: What it Means and the Lessons it Holds for the UK-EU 'Reset', 2025
- 13 swissinfo.ch, Switzerland was 'Inspiration' for Brexit, Says Farage, 17 January 2020
- 14 Adelmant, V, Donald, A, and Çalı, B, The European Convention on Human Rights and Immigration Control in the UK: Informing the Public Debate, Bonavero Report 3/2025, 2025
- 15 IBID
- 16 House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee, Correspondence with Home Secretary Suella Braverman, 25 July 2023, para 107
- 17 Adelmant, V, Donald, A, and Çalı, B, The European Convention on Human Rights and Immigration Control in the UK: Informing the Public Debate, Bonavero Report 3/2025, 2025
- 18 Parker, G, and Foster, P, UK Chemicals Sector hit by £2bn Brexit Red Tape Bill, Financial Times, 25 July 2022
- 19 HM Revenue & Customs, Estimating the administrative burden of 2022 import and export customs declarations for trade between Great Britain and the European Union: Executive summary, 2025

PRESSING RESET

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 20 Department for Business and Trade,<br>Impact assessment of the free trade<br>agreement between the UK and India:<br>Executive summary, 2026 | 22 ETUC, UK-EU Reset Must Benefit<br>Workers, say Unions, 2025 |
| 21 Best for Britain, 2.2% boost to GDP on<br>offer from UK-EU goods and services<br>alignment, 9 February 2025                                 |  |

## **ABOUT THE SOCIETY**

The Fabian Society is an independent left-leaning think tank and a democratic membership society with over 6,000 members. We influence political and public thinking and provide a space for broad and open-minded debate. We publish insight, analysis and opinion; conduct research and undertake major policy inquiries; convene conferences, speaker meetings and roundtables; and facilitate member debate and activism across the UK.

## **ABOUT LABOUR MOVEMENT FOR EUROPE**

Founded in its present form in 1981, The Labour Movement for Europe is Labour's only affiliated socialist society dedicated to building strong working links with our European neighbours. Its aim is to deepen the understanding of the European Union within the Labour party and show that working in partnership with our neighbours is the best way to advance and secure outcomes that are consistent with our Labour values and purposes. Join below:





## PRESSING RESET

EDITED BY IGGY WOOD, MATTHEW HARRIES, JOE DROMEY, AND MILES WARD

A decade ago, the British electorate narrowly voted to leave the EU. It was a decision of generational significance, predicated, in large part, on a picture of splendid isolation that has turned out to be false: it is now clear that Britain is less prosperous than it would otherwise have been. To make matters worse, in the intervening period, the UK has been wracked by both internal and external disruption, from the unabated rise of populism to a global pandemic.

Rejoining the EU is not an immediate prospect. But in an increasingly uncertain world – and with public opinion in favour of greater cooperation – now is the time to revisit our relationship with our European allies. This collection brings together experts and policymakers from the UK and Europe to explore what a new relationship might look like.

**FABIAN IDEAS NO. 673**

ISBN 978-0-7163-0673-3

£5.95