

Programme for IV Cambridge Roundtable on European Order

3-5 September 2021

This fourth Roundtable will consider the concept of European order anew, with discussions of various contemporary issues refracted through a historical lens. Front and centre will be a discussion of the momentous impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with particular focus on the geopolitical dimensions of the crisis. Has the pandemic accelerated or hampered China's rise? Has the prestige of western democracies been damaged? Is the European Union weakened by the internal struggles over the slow start of her vaccination campaign?

At this time of exceptional flux, a group of leading historians, politicians, analysts, and businesspeople come together to discuss the European Order under the auspices of the Project for Democratic Union, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Forum on Geopolitics at Cambridge.

DAY 1. Friday 3 September 2019

13:00 Registration and Coffee

13:45 Official Welcome

14:00 Opening Keynote – Plague Year: Europe and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Speaker: David Lidington

Chair: Brendan Simms

14:30 Discussion

15:30 I Panel – “Global Britain” and “Geopolitical Europe” – Compatible Strategic Concepts?

Impulses: Richard Dearlove and Andreas Michaelis

Chair: Ulrich Schlie

After the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, its position in relation to the continental mainland is once again in the spotlight. Since the Second World War, Britain's principal objective has been to underscore – alongside the United States – the defence of Europe, first against German resurgence, then against the Soviet menace, and now against the challenge from Russia. But as it engages with a more global perspective, how should Britain position itself in Europe? And how compatible are the European Union's own geopolitical ambitions with the central tenets of London's vision of “Global Britain”? Ultimately, Europe's success, and by extension the strength of the western alliance, will depend on the successful shaping of a common Anglo-European strategy to tackle the geopolitical challenges of our century.

16:00 Discussion

17:00 Break

17:15 Virtual Keynote – The Jungle Grows Back: Europe and the American Retreat from Power

Speaker: Robert Kagan

Chair: Lukas Paul Schmelter

After World War II, the United States embarked on a series of policies to generate a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic world. With the rise of political partisanship both at home and abroad, and the exhausting role of keeping global instability in check, some Americans are increasingly leaning toward a withdrawal from American global leadership. What will the world look like if the US withdraws from its leadership role? Will an American retreat be followed by a return to international disorder? And how will all this affect Europe, which has been so central to the American post-war order?

17:45 Discussion

18:45 Break

19:00 Reception and Group Photo

20:00 Dinner (Suits) with Keynote – Does Putin have a “Grand Strategy”? Russia’s Challenge to Europe

Speaker: Radosław Sikorski

Chair: Bridget Kendall

DAY 2. Saturday 4 September 2021

08:00 Breakfast

09:00 II Panel –Thinking European Security Post-Brexit

Impulses: Ulrich Schlie and Doug Chalmers

Chair: Suzanne Raine

Following the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union, its strategic posture is once again in the spotlight. Since the Second World War, Britain’s principal objective has been to underscore – alongside the United States – the defence of Europe, first against German resurgence, then against the Soviet menace, and now against the challenge from Russia. But as it engages with a more global perspective, how should Britain position itself regarding Europe? How will Britain’s post-Brexit foreign and security policy interlace with efforts on the continent to build up European defence capabilities? And how can a possible post-Brexit UK-European security framework mesh with the existing structures of NATO and take account of the effects of America’s retreat from power?

09:30 Discussion

10:30 III Panel – Merkel’s Exit and Macron’s Re-election: Prospects for a European Reform Agenda in 2022

Impulses: Mark Speich and Sylvie Bermann (TBC)

Chair: Matthias Barner

The election of Emmanuel Macron in 2017 raised the hopes of many that an ambitious agenda for European reform might finally be implemented. However, following domestic turmoil, epitomised by the violent *Gilets Jaunes* protests that engulfed Paris for months, and a lacklustre response from the German government to the young president's proposals, the prospects for large-scale reform appeared much dimmed. Is the momentum truly spent? How committed will Macron be to European reform as heads into an election year and a possible second term as president? Will the election of a new government in Berlin offer the European reform agenda of Macron a second lease on life? If so, where do the priorities lie and what shape will the concrete steps towards reform take?

11:00 Discussion

12:00 Lunch

13:30 Panel IV – The Geopolitics of the Pandemic: China's "Chernobyl" or the West's "Swansong"?

Impulses: Rana Mitter and William Hurst

Chair: Benjamin Zeeb

There are clear indications that the massive shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has come with a set of considerable geopolitical ramifications, especially in respect to China's power in the world relative to the West. Yet the question stands whether these serve merely to accelerate already existing trends, or whether they have in fact fundamentally tilted the geopolitical playing field in a different direction? Has the pandemic decisively weakened Washington's geopolitical hand? Or has Beijing perhaps overplayed the advantage of its early and swift recovery? And where does Europe stand in the context of the growing Sino-American rift?

14:00 Discussion

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 Panel V – Union Jack Fraying? Strengths and Weaknesses of the United Kingdom's Political Union

Impulses: Fiona Hill and Brendan Simms

Chair: TBC

The re-emergence of the Irish questions in the wake of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, as well as the ongoing agitation for a second independence referendum by Scottish nationalists, has raised questions about the internal stability of the United Kingdom. Yet how likely is a disintegration really? What forces are driving the constituent parts of the United Kingdom together or apart? And what role does continental Europe, specifically the European Union, play in this context?

16:00 Discussion

17:00 Closing Keynote – The Future of Europe

Speaker: Julie Smith

Chair: TBC

17:30 Discussion

18:30 Break

19:00 Reception

20:00 Dinner (Suits)

Sunday 5 September 2021

Breakfast and depart.