

## **Club of Three:**

**A Franco-British-German leadership network for a strategic Europe 2015**

## **‘Fireside Chat’ lunch with NORBERT RÖTTGEN**

**London, 05 June 2015**

The Garrick Club  
15 Garrick Street, London WC2E 9AY

---



(Picture: Norbert Röttgen. Credit: Martyn Hicks)

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, Germany has emerged as a key power broker in the major crises that Europe is facing. Urged by its EU neighbours to play a bigger part in European affairs, it has assumed a leadership role on several fronts including Greek debt talks and the Ukrainian crisis, and is now being pressed by many, including in the UK, to act as a go-between in the negotiations over Britain’s membership of the EU.

Reflecting this new context, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)'s Club of Three team – in collaboration with Robert Bosch Stiftung – decided to hold a 'fireside chat' on the topic of German leadership in Europe with a prominent keynote speaker. Norbert Röttgen, chairman of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee, was an obvious choice.

Mr Röttgen, who made an impressive presentation on German foreign policy at the Club of Three's fireside chat on China in Berlin in September 2014, is an influential figure in German politics. Between October 2009 and May 2012, he was Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety in Angela Merkel's second cabinet. During this period, he played a central role in Germany's decision to shut down its nuclear power plants by 2022.



(Picture: George Weidenfeld)

As chairman of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee, Norbert Röttgen has been a strong advocate of a robust European response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the conflict that sparked in eastern Ukraine.

The Garrick Club fireside chat in London was an opportunity for the Club of Three network – particularly members from France and the UK – to gain an insight into Germany's approach to key issues including the Ukrainian crisis and Britain's membership of the EU, the two topics that dominated Mr Röttgen's address.

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

### **German leadership in Europe**

During his introductory remarks, Lord George Weidenfeld, founder of the Club of Three, thanked Robert Bosch Stiftung for supporting this event and stressed Helmut Kohl's crucial role in the creation of modern Germany. He was convinced that the former German leader's successful drive to build important alliances with neighbouring countries had been decisive in ensuring long and lasting peace in Europe.

Michael Maclay, chairman of the Club of Three's steering group, underlined the importance of strong Franco-British-German partnership in tackling the challenges which face Europe.

Norbert Röttgen said that German people were having to adjust to the fact that Germany is expected to play a leadership role in Europe. They had long been comfortable with a Switzerland-type posture out of the international spotlight, he explained. After the Cold War, Germany had fully embraced the long period of peace that followed, focusing on the development of a global governance system with the creation of international institutions through bodies such as the EU, the UN and the G8. But there was now a growing sense among political parties that Germany had interests and aspirations of its own and that its place was at the forefront of European and international affairs.



(Picture, left to right: Maurice Fraser, Philippe Bernard, Hans-Hartwig Blomeier and Vijay Rangarajan)

During the discussion that followed under the Chatham House Rule, one of the participants said that if Germany was reluctant to play a bigger role in the standoff with Russia over Ukraine, military powers such as the UK and France would be of crucial importance. France has already committed a significant number of troops in West Africa, he noted.

Another participant said that the German people should stop being inward-looking. Germany was an important international player and it should act accordingly, he added. Mr Röttgen agreed but stressed that changing the collective psyche would take time.

### **Ukrainian crisis**

Of all the crises that Europe is facing today (Greek debt, Ebola, etc.), the conflict in Ukraine was the most important one, according to Norbert Röttgen. The annexation of Crimea has torn down the European peace order that had been in place for the past 25 years, he said. Russia, which used to be part of this peace order, had plunged Europe into a new era of uncertainty. Mr Röttgen said that Europe must remain firmly opposed to Russia's actions in Ukraine. Any sign of détente would be interpreted by Moscow as weakness on the part of Europeans.

The stakes were high because a collapse of Ukraine's economy would mean that Vladimir Putin had prevailed, he added, and that he could force his will on the region. This would pose a major threat to Europe's security.

One of the participants agreed that the Ukraine crisis was a major test for Europe but she asked whether it could cope with the significant financial investments needed to put the country's economy on a sound footing. Some €40-50bn would have to be invested in coming years. The high level of corruption was making this task even more difficult, another participant said. Mr Röttgen acknowledged the difficulties awaiting Europe in Ukraine and added that in his own German constituency people were far from convinced about the necessity of supporting the country so heavily. But the cost of no action would be even greater.



(Picture: Oksana Antonenko)

In a world of global economic interdependence, the winners and losers in this conflict would be determined by their level of reliance on specific markets and resources, Mr Röttgen continued. Some participants said that Russia was highly dependent on energy as a strategic asset. Europe on the other hand was already on a path to greater energy diversification, potentially a valuable weapon against Vladimir Putin.

From a military point of view, although there was some agreement that Europe needed to take more responsibility for protecting its own borders, a number of participants asked whether it would be able to respond to the threat posed by Russia given the large cuts made in defence budgets in many European countries.

Other participants added that the US was the ultimate guarantor of European peace and deplored that Barack Obama had failed to show leadership in this area.



## Britain and Europe

The last topic addressed by Norbert Röttgen was Britain's membership of the EU and the forthcoming referendum on this issue. Although he believed that the country would not leave the EU, Mr Röttgen said that referendums always contained an element of risk.

European unity was an important asset as it enabled EU member states collectively to play an influential role internationally, he said. No European country on its own was any longer powerful enough to have a major role in the global community. This is why every effort must be made to keep the UK in the EU.

However, Mr Röttgen warned that he did not think changes could be made to EU treaties by the end of 2017, the deadline set by the UK prime minister for holding a referendum. While adjustments were needed to improve the functioning of the EU, he said that there could be no compromise on freedom of movement, and EU workers must also retain equal rights.



(Picture: Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Eberhard von Koerber)

Mr Röttgen recognised that there were problems in areas such as immigration and welfare, but stressed that these could not be used as a justification for questioning Britain's membership of the EU. Germany faced similar issues and was resolving them through appropriate channels. One recent example was a 2014 European court judgment which concluded that the country could refuse welfare benefits to EU migrants in certain circumstances.

One of the UK participants said that other EU countries should focus on what Britain and the rest of Europe could achieve in terms of reforms rather than highlighting what it could not do.

Mr Röttgen concluded that, despite current difficulties within Europe, the strong ties between EU countries meant that they would have to adapt in order to remain united.



**CLUB OF THREE**  
**FIRESIDE CHAT WITH NORBERT RÖTTGEN**  
**London: 5th June 2015**

---

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

|              |            |   |
|--------------|------------|---|
| Edmond       | ALPHANDÉRY | Senior European Adviser, Nomura Securities; Chairman, Euro50 Group; former French Economy Minister                              |
| Oksana       | ANTONENKO  | Senior Political Counsellor, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development   |
| Philippe     | BERNARD    | UK and Ireland Correspondent, Le Monde  |
| Hans-Hartwig | BLOMEIER   | Head of UK Office, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung   |
| Dan          | FITZ       | Group General Counsel and Company Secretary, BT   |
| Prof Maurice | FRASER     | Head of the European Institute, London School of Economics  |
| Martin       | GREEN      | Financier and philanthropist  |
| Dr August    | HANNING    | Senior Adviser, ISD ; former President, Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND); former State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Interior |
| Alexandra    | HENDERSON  | Director and CEO, Weidenfeld-Hoffmann Trust   |
| Lord         | HOWELL     | Chairman, British Institute of Energy Economics   |
| Sarah        | KENNEDY    | Head of Operations, Institute for Strategic Dialogue  |
| Thomas       | KIELINGER  | UK Correspondent, Die Welt  |
| Eberhard von | KOERBER    | Chairman and CEO, Eberhard von Koerber AG   |
| Jürgen       | KRÖNIG     | UK Political Correspondent, Die Zeit; Vice President, Foreign Press Association   |

|                |                 |   |
|----------------|-----------------|---|
| Jonathan       | LACÔTE          | Deputy Head of Mission, French Embassy in the UK  |
| Mark           | LEONARD         | Co-Founder and Director, European Council on Foreign Relations  |
| Michael        | MACLAY          | Chairman of the Steering Board, Club of Three; Executive Chairman, Montrose Associates  |
| Eman           | MARTIN-VIGNERTE | Director of Political Affairs and Government Relations, Robert Bosch UK Holdings Ltd  |
| Kateryna       | MELNIK          | Weidenfeld-Roland Berger Scholar  |
| Felix von      | MOREAU          | Journalist and film producer  |
| Anne-Elisabeth | MOUTET          | Columnist and features writer, Daily and Sunday Telegraph; Executive Director, Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute                            |
| Hella          | PICK            | Director of the Arts and Culture Programme, Institute for Strategic Dialogue  |
| Vijay          | RANGARAJAN      | Europe Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office  |
| Nick           | REDMAN          | Director of Editorial, Senior Fellow for Geopolitical Risk and Editor of Adelphi Books, International Institute for Strategic Studies     |
| Sir Malcolm    | RIFKIND         | Former Chair, Intelligence and Security Committee; former Foreign Secretary   |
| Norbert        | RÖTTGEN         | Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag; former Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety |
| Roland         | RUDD            | Chairman, Business for New Europe; Co-Founder and Senior Partner, Finsbury Ltd  |
| Tania von      | USLAR-GLEICHEN  | Deputy Head of Mission, German Embassy in the UK  |
| Lord           | WEIDENFELD      | Founder, Club of Three and Institute for Strategic Dialogue   |

With the generous support of: **Robert Bosch Stiftung**