This will be a very odd meeting tonight, because we are discussing something that doesn’t exist - or so we are told – a European army. And how do we know it doesn’t exist? Because Nick Clegg told us so. He said, “This is a dangerous fantasy. The idea that there’s going to be a European air force, a European army, it is simply not true.” So, Nick Clegg said the EU army is a lie - and Nick Clegg is an honourable man.

What’s wrong with the idea of an EU army? Britain’s armed forces would be part of a joint force, under EU command, wearing EU badges, owing allegiance not to Queen and country but to the European Union. They would be deployed as and when decided not by our elected representatives but by the appointed, not elected, never elected, European Commission.

So, ultimate questions of life and death, war and peace, national defence and security would be decided by a body with zero democratic credibility.

Some believe that keeping the peace is the best argument for the EU. But if the EU has kept the peace until now without needing an army to do so, why does it need an army now?

So, are they creating a European army? What’s the evidence? Are they doing anything that looks like creating a European army?

Well, yes. They now have an EU Military Staff and an EU Military Committee, both part of the ‘Command Structure’ of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. They have created the EU Peace Fund, a military intervention fund of 10.5 billion euros.

The EU now has its Military Planning and Conduct Capability, its Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity, its Defence Intelligence Organisation, its Satellite Centre (its Galileo and Copernicus programmes are both part of its Global Strategy), its European Security and Defence College, its Military Erasmus, to promote a ‘European strategic culture’, its Institute for Security Studies, its European Political Strategy Centre, its European Air Transport and its European Tactical Airlift Centre.

The EU is taking more and more control over member states’ armed forces, defence spending and foreign and defence policy.

In April 2016, at the height of the referendum campaign, newspapers published German government documents which revealed that the EU was about to announce a new military strategy. The EU and the pro-EU campaign furiously denied it.

Just five days after the referendum, the EU announced its new Global Strategy. Many of these EU structures are new since the referendum. In November 2016 the EU released its Security and Defence Implementation Plan. Only a few EU insiders had seen it, yet that same day it went straight to the EU Council meeting for approval. Democratic control in the EU – ha!

Without Britain’s vetoes, France and Germany moved fast. In January 2017, the EU’s foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini declared: “Security a priority. We have hard and soft power. Done more on defence in the last seven months than in decades.”

On 8 June 2017, Reuters reported that the May government had agreed to the new Military Planning and Conduct Capability command centre in Brussels on condition that it was not called a military headquarters.

 ‘EU Defence’ is the phrase the EU uses to describe the military powers it has acquired since summer 2016, to become what it calls a ‘hard power actor in the world’, a ‘Global Actor’. Ursula von der Leyen, the newly appointed (not elected, never elected) European Commission President, tells us the EU is ready to ditch ‘soft power’ and flex its ‘muscles’ to ‘assert itself on the world’.

May proposed that we stay in the European Defence Agency and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund, and promised our participation ‘to the extent possible under EU law’ and ‘subject to the conditions set out in the corresponding EU instruments’. There is no halfway house with the EU, you’re either all in or all out – a single claw ensnared, and the bird is caught - and it requires compliance with the whole EU rulebook, all its directives, policies, finance and structures.

There was no need for us to be involved, no call for us to approve these moves, no mandate, no manifesto commitment and no need for ministers to spend time and money on it when government departments were supposed to be leaving, not joining, EU schemes.

May’s Chequers Plan, published in July 2018, showed that the Cabinet had railroaded a proposal to be involved in EU defence industry projects ‘through PESCO’.

A senior EU planner explained how the European Defence Fund underpinned the EU Defence Union. Arnout Molenaar said, “If you research defence capabilities together, if you fund and develop together, if you build them together and you use them together and these are all done under a framework of policy instruments, then you can call this a Defence Union.”

In November last year the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly for a European Defence Fund. It committed to spending 13 billion euros to researching and developing weapons and military technology.

The government put us into the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence. Just as the Treasury controls the Ministry of Defence’s work, this would control the Ministry of Defence and all the EU defence ministries.

Just like May’s defeated treaty, Johnson’s new Political Declaration commits us to military integration through the European Defence Agency and the European Defence Fund and commits us to ‘collaboration in projects in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation’. We are involved in all the EU’s military integration schemes except PESCO. But Johnson’s proposed treaty would force us to join this too, taking away our defence sovereignty.

The Political Declaration would bind us into ‘associate membership’ of the EU’s Common Foreign Policy. It would permanently stop us taking ‘any action likely to conflict with or impede’ EU foreign policy.

During the transition period, we would be bound by every international agreement the EU concludes, despite having no say in their negotiation, and we would have to ‘refrain, during the transition period, from any action ... likely to be prejudicial’ to EU interests.

We will fund the EU’s military plans during the transition period at least, yet British troops in EU battlegroups would be under EU command. British soldiers of the Parachute Regiment deployed in Bosnia in 2018 wore EU insignia.



Article 129.7 of Johnson’s proposed treaty says, “During the transition period, the United Kingdom shall not provide the head of any operational actions.”

Article 156 says, “Until 31 December 2020, the United Kingdom shall contribute to the financing of the European Defence Agency, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, and the European Union Satellite Centre, as well as to the costs of Common Security and Defence Policy operations …” And we would still have financial obligations after 31 December 2020.

So, Johnson’s so-called ‘exit’ deal would - just like May’s - keep us attached to it via three commitments: the European Defence Agency, the European Defence Fund and PESCO. The EU’s military capabilities are inexorably growing, its intent is clear, its direction is, as ever, towards a single federal EU state. Its aim is Common Defence by 2025, integrated Armed Services by 2027.

Now of course it’s entirely possible that all these new military bodies, all these new military structures, all these new military agencies and funds are just illusions, and that Nick Clegg was telling us the truth. Nick Clegg said the EU army is a lie and Nick Clegg is an honourable man.

Are the EU’s leaders saying anything that looks like they intend to create a European army? What have they said about creating a European army?

In his new book, the European Parliament’s Brexit Coordinator Guy Verhofstadt writes, “We must move toward a single European Defense Union, with European armed forces composed of soldiers wearing the same uniform. … We must turn Eurocorps into a full-scale European army comprising both land troops and air and naval capabilities. In addition to a rapid response team, the conventional army units will include special forces (for chemical warfare, for example), a logistics corps, and medical capability. All twenty-eight member states should run a single joint budget for these and for personnel, military equipment, research, and development. … this will allow us to set up a European army capable of conducting, simultaneously, a single large military operation and three smaller interventions on land, at sea, or in the air. The soldiers of the European army will wear the same uniform with the same EU insignia. …

 “the EU high representative for foreign affairs must cooperate closely with the European Defense Union and should preferably occupy the same building as the European General Staff. European Defense policy must however fit seamlessly into the union’s general security concept and strategic vision for foreign affairs. … This will require an amendment to the European Treaty. Among other things we will have to abolish the unanimity rule so that in the future the European Council can make its decisions with a qualified majority.”

 The European Defense Union “will be financed from general EU resources, supplemented, if necessary, by compulsory contributions from the member states.”

In November last year German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron called for a ‘real, true European army’. Macron said, “we will not protect Europeans unless we have a true European army … to defend itself better alone.” On 1 January this year, Verhofstadt tweeted, “Macron and Merkel now fully back a European Army. That’s great news!”

On 5 May 2017, Verhofstadt said, “Even when a few years ago it was impossible to talk about a European army, everybody said it is a dream. But it’s a necessity … The Americans can do four, five times more military operations than we can do. They are far more effective, because one army, one budget, and we have twenty-eight armies, twenty-eight budgets.” His European People’s Party [called for](http://arc.eppgroup.eu/text/130903_position_paper.pdf#page=2) “an EU strategic civilian and military headquarters” and, in the long run, “European stand-by forces under Union command”.

In September 2016, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen called for a ‘common and permanent’ European military headquarters, the integration of logistics and procurement, and the coordination of financing and military planning. They agreed to activate [Article 44](http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-european-union-and-comments/title-5-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action-and-specific-provisions/chapter-2-specific-provisions-on-the-common-foreign-and-security-policy/section-2-provisions-on-the-common-security-and-defence-policy/131-article-44.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) of the Lisbon Treaty which allows certain EU member states to proceed with military integration, even if other EU member states disapprove.

Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán says, “we should start setting up a common European army.” Czech Prime Minister Sobotka says: “in the long term, we will be unable to do without a joint European army.”

The president of the European People’s Party Joseph Daul [said](http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/epp-leaders-bang-drum-for-european-army/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank): “We are going to move towards an EU army much faster than people believe.”

Michel Barnier, then Special Adviser on European Defence and Security Policy to Commission President Juncker, [wrote](http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/pdf/publications/strategic_note_issue_4.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank): “Member States are slow to accept that they need to go beyond a model where defense is a matter of strict national sovereignty .... traditional methods of cooperation have reached their limits and proved insufficient. European defense needs a paradigm change in line with the exponential increase in global threats and the volatility of our neighbourhood.”

Juncker said that “A joint EU army would … help us to form common foreign and security policies and allow Europe to take on responsibility in the world.” He said a common EU army would have been useful during the Ukraine crisis: “With its own army, Europe could react more credibly to the threat to peace in a member state or in a neighbouring state.” Ursula von der Leyen welcomed Juncker’s proposal: “Our future as Europeans will at some point be with a European army.”

Merkel and her Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier also backed Juncker’s proposal. Steinmeier [added](http://www.zeit.de/politik/2015-03/europa-armee-frank-walter-steinmeier-spd-zustimmung%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank): “The long-term goal of a European army is a major policy objective and has been part of the Social Democratic Party’s party program for many years.”

Ms von der Leyen [said](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/verteidigungsministerin-von-der-leyen-europaeische-armee.868.de.html?dram:article_id=313608" \t "_blank): “I think that the German army is ready, under certain circumstances, to be subordinated to the control of another nation. That is the goal, that in the European Union we step by step more firmly establish our cooperation, especially in security policy. This intertwining of armies with a view to having a European army is the future.”

In 2009 Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini [said](http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/2009/11/20091116_postlisbonatimesonline.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) it is a “necessary objective to have a European army.” He added: “Every country duplicates its forces, each of us puts armoured cars, men, tanks, planes, into Afghanistan. If there were a European army, Italy could send planes, France could send tanks, Britain could send armoured cars, and in this way, we would optimize the use of our resources. Perhaps we won’t get there immediately, but that is the idea of a European army.”

In 1950 French Foreign Minister René Pleven was the first to propose a unified European army: the “immediate creation of a European army tied to the political institutions of a united Europe.” He [stated](http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1997/10/13/4a3f4499-daf1-44c1-b313-212b31cad878/publishable_en.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank): “A European army cannot be created simply by placing national military units side by side, since, in practice, this would merely mask a coalition of the old sort. Tasks that can be tackled only in common must be matched by common institutions. A united European army, made up of forces from the various European nations must, as far as possible, pool all of its human and material components under a single political and military European authority.”

Now of course it’s entirely possible that all these worthy EU leaders were just having us on, and that Nick Clegg was telling us the truth … Nick Clegg said a European army is a lie and Nick Clegg is an honourable man.

Guy Verhofstadt told the NeoLibAntiDem conference on 15 September 2019, “the world order of tomorrow is not a world order based on nation states or countries, it’s a world order that is based on empires … The world of tomorrow is a world of empires, in which we Europeans and you British can only defend your interests, your way of life, by doing it together in a European framework and a European Union.” The conference rapturously applauded his call for a European Empire. Is that what pro-EU voters knew they were voting for?

Verhofstadt said in 2016, “Let’s create a European defence union, let’s take on our responsibilities ... Let’s become an empire, an empire of the good and not of the bad.”

Josep Borrell, the newly appointed (not elected, never elected) High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, set the goal of an EU force of 60,000. He recently told MEPs, “We have the instruments to play power politics. The EU has to learn to use the language of power.”

The EU empire has a centre and a periphery, with Germany and France far more powerful than the rest. They enforce their order on the rest and reward compliance with the structural and social funds.

They punish those who do not obey. They evict wayward governments and impose imperial proconsuls in Italy and Greece. They make leaving the empire as difficult as possible, to stop others leaving.

The empire has its allies here, in Parliament, in the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence, the media, the trade unions. The pro-EU people in the trade unions are thoroughly defeatist. They fear that without the EU to save us the working class will be too feeble to survive. Admittedly, inside the EU, unions have relied overmuch on the EU to protect them and have therefore got weaker. But outside the EU, workers might get organised again and struggle for better wages and conditions. That would really be taking control.

Some pro-EU trade union members object to ‘Tory austerity’, yet want us to stay in the EU which enforces austerity by its unreformable treaties, and which has inflicted on the people of Greece deprivation unheard of outside the Third World. Outside the EU, we can vote out any pro-austerity government.

The capitalism and lack of democracy of the EU cannot generate popular support. So, all sorts of sentimental narratives have been invented. The EU has hijacked the ideal of internationalism, of international peace and friendship, and identified international solidarity with free markets – a Thatcherite, Blairite vision.

The ultra-left agrees with the League of Empire Loyalists that Britain means only the Empire. Forget the industrial revolution, forget all our civilizational achievements. The ultra-left endorses the reactionary line that most British people gained from empire and that we embraced it

Some falsely accuse leave voters of nostalgia for empire. Some see empire everywhere, except in the EU. They want to be ‘Europeans’ rather than ‘little Englanders’. Didn’t ‘Europe’ ever have colonies? Didn’t France ever have colonies? Or Italy? Or Belgium? Didn’t Spain ever have colonies? Or Portugal?

For example, the lovely Donald Tusk said last week, “One of my English friends is probably right when he says with melancholy that Brexit is the real end of the British Empire.” The irony is that it is Mr Tusk’s pro-EU friend – not a Brexiteer – who mourns for empire. The EU thinks Britain wants an empire because that is exactly what the European federalists want. They want an empire of their own.

They claim to uphold internationalism yet back an EU which impoverishes millions of African farmers by denying them the right to trade fairly with EU member countries; an EU which imports cheap food, cheap raw materials and cheap labour from former colonies; an EU which wages trade wars; an EU which – by interfering in the Balkans and Ukraine and by backing airstrikes in Libya – has fuelled wars on two continents.

What should Britain’s defence policy be? Well, not to defend an EU empire, for one thing! We should defend our people, secure our borders and our fishing waters, defend trade routes, defend against terrorists like ISIS, stop the people-traffickers (stop the boats and you stop the deaths); deter any who threaten our independence.

We should unite on our common commitment to democratic values, to national unity and to national independence. No to empire, no to a European army. Yes to national unity, yes to national independence.

3036 words

@ 160 words a minute = 19 minutes