

Malcolm Rifkind

Former Foreign Secretary and Former Chairman of the Intelligence Committee of the British Parliament

Sir Malcolm Rifkind has an intensive knowledge of Russia, the Middle East, China, the terrorist threat, and of foreign and international affairs, generally. His experience as the Former Foreign Secretary and Former Chairman of the Intelligence Committee of the British Parliament gives him an unrivalled insight into these issues. He has been a regular speaker in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States both at Conferences, special events and as an after dinner main speaker.

Malcolm Rifkind was born in Edinburgh in 1946. He was educated at George Watson's College and Edinburgh University where he studied law before taking a postgraduate degree in political science. While at University he took part in an overland expedition to the Middle East and India. He also appeared on University Challenge. From 1967 to 1969 he lived in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and taught at the local University. He travelled widely around southern Africa and wrote his postgraduate thesis on the Politics of Land in Rhodesia. While in Africa he met his wife, Edith, whose parents had emigrated there when she was a small child.

On return to Britain he was called to the Bar and practiced as an Advocate until 1979. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1985. During his time at the Bar he appeared in both civil and criminal cases. In 1970 he fought his first Parliamentary campaign and from 1970-74 he was a local councillor in Edinburgh. In 1974 he was elected as MP for Pentlands and represented that constituency until 1997. Sir Malcolm was appointed to the Front Bench in 1975 but resigned over devolution in 1977.

In 1979, when the Conservatives were returned to power under Margaret Thatcher, he was appointed a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, at first in the Scottish Office and then, at the time of the Falklands War, he was transferred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, being promoted to Minister of State in 1983. He became a member of the Cabinet in 1986 as Secretary of State for Scotland. In 1990 he became Secretary of State for Transport and in 1992 Secretary of State for Defence. From 1995-97 he was Foreign Secretary. He was one of only four ministers to serve throughout the whole Prime Ministerships of both Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

In 1997 he was knighted in recognition of his public service. He has served on the Court of Edinburgh University and has been an honorary colonel in the Reserve Forces. He is a member of the Queen's Bodyguard, the Royal Company of Archers. Sir Malcolm was re-elected as a Member of Parliament in May 2005 for Kensington and Chelsea. He was elected as Member of Parliament for Kensington in May 2010 and remained in Parliament until 2015.

He served as UK representative on the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group 2010-2011 and as Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, which provides oversight of the UK's intelligence agencies, MI6, MI5 and GCHQ, from 2010 until 2015. He is currently a member of the OSCE's Eminent Persons Group which will report on relations between Russia and the West.

Malcolm and Edith Rifkind have a daughter, Caroline and a son, Hugo, both of whom live and work in London.