The European Foundation

UK Advisory Board

Robin Birley
Graham Brady, MP
Roger Brooke
Angela Browning, MP
David Caldow
The Rt Hon. David Davis, MP
Jessica Douglas-Home
The Rt Hon. Iain Duncan Smith, MP
Matthew Elliott
Howard Flight
Frederick Forsyth
Dr Nile Gardiner
Robin Harris
David Heathcoat-Amory
Roger Helmer, MEP
Martin Howe, QC
The Hon. Bernard Jenkin, MP
Richard King
Barry Legg
The Rt Hon. Oliver Letwin, MP
Russell Lewis
Lord McAlpine of West Green
John Grimley
Lord Kilclooney of Armagh, MLA
Jeremy Nieboer
Owen Paterson, MP
Lord Pearson of Rannoch
Andrew Roberts
Richard Shepherd, MP
Richard Smith
Professor Norman Stone
Professor Kenneth Minogue
Austin Mitchell, MP
Sir Peter Tapsell, MP
The Hon. Denis Walker
Howard Wheeldon
John Whittingdale, OBE, MP

International Advisory Board

Ulla Klötzer (FIN)
Margit Gennser (SE)
Prof. Ivar Raig (EE)
Claus Bunk Pedersen (DK)
Frank Dahlgaard, MP (DK)
Jens-Peter Bonde, MEP (DK)
Wilhelm Hinkel (DE)
Anthony Coughlan (IR)
Jan Zahradil, MEP (CZ)
Keith Marsden (CH)
Manuel Monteiro (PT)
Georges Berthu (FR)
Philippe de Villiers, MP (FR)
Professor Roberto de Mattei (IT)
Paulo Portas (PT)
Clement Brown (US)
John O’Sullivan (US)

Patron
The Right Honourable the Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, LG, OM, FRS

Chairman
Bill Cash, MP for Stone,
Shadow Attorney General 2001-03

www.europeanfoundation.org
“The European Commission called it ‘a budget for EU citizens’ but it has proposed to spend more taxpayer money. It proposed over one trillion euros for EU spending between 2014 and 2020, which is a considerable amount of money to be earmarked for the purpose of running a failing project. The Commission proposed for the next seven years €1,025 billion in commitment appropriations, which will increase from €975.8bn (an increase of 5%), and payment appropriations would increase to €972.2bn from €925.6bn in 2007-13.”

Margarida Vasconcelos, page 5
Counting the cost

Francis Warren

The Murdoch phone hacking has been universally execrated not only for the appalling personal sorrow it has caused but also because of the continuing echoing ramifications exposing an illegitimate power—play within the British establishment.

Consequently, there has rightly been a universal ever-increasing demand for greater openness in government and a recognition that the public has been right to be sceptical about its rulers. But in all this horror of secrecy there has not been a single mention of that epitome of byzantine secrecy, the European Union, with its ever increasing inquisition into all aspects of British life, thereby reducing a sovereign state into a mere region in a Europe of regions. Compared with this treachery, the hacking is a parochial blip which could be healed in a healthy democracy. But our democracy is diseased by a secrecy which is profound, organised by an unelected Commission and a Council of supposed representative ministers acting in secrecy with no minutes published. Indeed the real negotiations are conducted at another depth of secrecy by unelected civil servants led by the sheer self interested professionalism of the French enarques. Alan Clark summarised this appalling situation: “Ministers read out their piece and depart while everything is decided and horse–traded at Coreper, the unelected Council of Permanent Representatives” (‘Behind closed doors in Brussels’, European Journal, March 1996). This scandal of non-democracy was summarised by EU former commissioner, Chris Pattern himself, as “…second only to Cuba and North Korea in the secrecy of its operation: backroom deals, away from the glare of parliamentary scrutiny.” (‘Let’s get emotional’, Spectator, May, 2002).

Indeed so extreme is this outrageous lack of democracy that even Jacques Delors, normally so impervious to everything except his own ambitions for a federal state: exclaimed: “There has been no realisation that within 10 years 80% of our laws will originate from the Community. There has been no realisation of this. What I am afraid of is some of these parliaments will wake up with an outraged shock one day.” (Strasbourg, 6 July 1988).

That such outcry has not yet occurred shows the degree of deceit perpetrated by the politicians of all parties, together with sections of the media who purvey the EU as a distant, insignificant, boring entity. Therefore, as Delors said, the public have no real concept of the haemorrhaging of British money and power to Brussels.

Brussels always uses crises to accelerate its powers. The concept of a single political unity of Europe is now, therefore, more openly referred to because, as we have always said, a single currency requires political union – and this, despite all parties denials, was always intended. The real devastating danger of this blanket covering of the hacking story and its follow-up of continuing investigations would be its use to cover up and deeper entomb the EU’s continuing and increasing destruction of the sovereignty state.

This time of massive cuts in our standard of living requires authoritative statistics concerning our increasing loss of revenue and increase in fiscal commitments. As various governments have refused to give comprehensive figures the following have had to be gleaned from a variety of sources.

We need clarity to engage the attention of the people to enable them to react with both knowledge and controlled outrage at the greatest political confidence trick perpetrated in modern history.

Basically:

(1) Our annual net subscription to the EU. This is ever increasing. Thus in 2009/10 it was £4.7bn. Now in 2010/11 it is £7.6bn (Treasury Blue Book – information from Mr Ruffley MP for Bury St Edmunds November 2010);

(2) Costs of EU regulations for our economy. This cannot be precise but the following estimates p.a. have been made: £18 billion – in a Report by Open Europe (article by Bojan Pancevski, Sunday Times, Dec 2009) and £20 billion (Ian Milne, A Cost Too Far (Civitas, 2004);

(3) Estimates of the total net cost per annum for our being in the EU:
(i) 3.5% GDP (Patrick Minford: Should Britain Leave the EU (2005), enrofacts, July 2005);
(ii) 3.5% GDP i.e some 40 billion (by Ian Milne);
Both give exponential costs for future EU devices for federal harmonisation – respectively 24.5% and 26.5% GDP (see eurofacts).

The above figures are basic but now this imperative has been made immediate by the latest aggrandisement of the EU Commission by its insistence that its resources be increased by 5% over 7 years and that the EU should collect a tax on fiscal transactions i.e. a further 1.5% to its current take on VAT (at 20% already under attack). Moreover, it intends to erase the British rebate leading to our contributions being twice those of France and 1½ times those of Germany (Today, Radio 4, 30 June 2011; Sunday Times, 3 July).

Indeed, there is now a tsunami of fiscal commitments forced on us to save the euro, a process in which we have been committed until 2013 at least. This for a currency which we refuse as a political ploy to federalism. These are (so far) the £12.5 billions of the bailouts in the eurozone which in effect cancel out the cuts of some £6.2 billion we are so painfully making to save our own economy (D. Hannan, The Daily Politics, BBC1, 18 May 2011). This, despite the fact that the demands are illegitimate. See the assertion of Madam Lagarde, the new head of IMF: “We violated all the rules because we wanted to close ranks and really rescue the euro” (Bill Cash, Parliament, 24 May 2011, European Journal, June 2011).

These forced commitments constitute an ever-increasing black hole which we are told we must accept since we need to save the eurozone even though we are not in it – because we send “50% of our exports” to it. But this figure needs interpretation. Our total exports comprise only 20% of our GDP so 50% of this constitutes only 10% of our GDP and this must be set against our massive trade deficit with the EU (see Office of National Statistics in letter Nov 2001; Global Britain Briefing Note 22). Of course rerouting exports to the rest of the world would create a difficult period of transition. But then so did our withdrawal to fortress Europe in 1972 cause huge difficulties for our Commonwealth friends, who indeed regarded it as an act of treachery (reference to Tanzania You and Yours, Radio 4, 15 July 2011, BBC1 and personal evidence of this anger in Australia). But it would end the massive costs we pay actually to destroy our democracy and would free us from the constant danger of being blackmailed into pouring billions more into support of nations who see themselves as part of a continental dependency welfare state.

One reason no government wants to have a public examination of its arguments for the EU is that all are at best flawed with most false. The most deceitful one is that which makes the claim that membership of the EU gives more power on the international stage. The reverse is the case:

(i) In economics, we have already lost our seat at world meetings, having our place taken by an EU Commissioner. (until recently, it was Mandelson!)

(ii) In foreign policy, as Chris Pattern once said, “Control of foreign policy is what means to be an independent state” (World at One, 28 February 2003). Yet after Lisbon we are required “loyally” to follow all EU foreign policies – an ever increasing number being decided by QMV whereby we have merely some 9% influence. Moreover, this is part of a self-amending Treaty which can be modified in secret with no further requirement to involve public.

Our seat on the UN is also undermined since there the EU is recognised as a state and we must allow it (again under Lisbon) to speak for us on “agreed” policies. Despite the evidence this critical loss of influence is, like so many truths, again dismissed by our politicians as a “myth.” But we have direct confirmation by a former UN Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Mark Malloch Brown, who told the Euobserver on 3 October 2006 that the European Commission will in future represent the EU in the United Nations as “the voice of Europe worldwide.” This will happen gradually with the EU replacing Member States institution by institution. He was supported by former EU High Representative, Javier Solana (eurofacts, 20/10/2006).

Because of this endemic power creep by Brussels probably the only way to avoid complete loss of our democracy would be withdrawal from the EU. Despite all the threats from rank and file Europhiles, even former Commissioners Patten and Kinnock present this as a normal alternative. As Patten put it “There would be no catastrophe no biblical plague” (eurofacts, 3 August 2001).

But our politicians love to strut in the club and we have a Coalition with the EU-soaked Lib Dems whose leader was an MEP, holding on to a Tory PM’s coat tails.
EU proposes a trillion euro spending budget

Margarida Vasconcelos

On 29 June, the European Commission presented its proposals for the EU’s next multiannual financial framework (2014-2020). The European Commission called it “a budget for EU citizens”, but it has proposed to spend more taxpayers’ money. It proposed over one trillion euros for EU spending between 2014 and 2020, which is a considerable amount of money to be earmarked for the purpose of running a failing project. The Commission proposed for the next seven years €1,025 billion in commitment appropriations, which will increase from €975.8bn (an increase of 5%), and payment appropriations would increase to €972.2bn from €925.6bn in 2007-13. At a time of severe strain on the majority of Member States’ public finances, where governments are reducing public spending and implementing austerity measures, when Member States are demanding the EU’s next multiannual financial framework to be frozen, the Commission comes up with this proposal.

David Cameron, and other EU leaders including, Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy, Mari Kiviniemi and Mark Rutte, called for “payment appropriations (to) increase, at most, by no more than inflation over the next financial perspectives.” The UK, Germany, France, Finland and the Netherlands have asked the Commission for the EU’s multiannual financial framework to be frozen. However, these calls fell on deaf ears. The Commission completely ignored the UK and other Member State demands for an increase in spending to be limited to the rate of inflation. The Commission has taken on board the European Parliament suggestions when deciding on the overall amount to propose for the next MFF. The Commission has agreed with the European Parliament that “freezing the next MFF at the 2013 level…is not a viable option … [and that] … at least a 5% increase of resources is needed for the next MFF.” According to a Treasury spokesman “The commission’s proposal is completely unrealistic. It is too large, not the restrained budget they claim and incompatible with the tough decisions being taken in countries across Europe.”

It is well known that Brussels has not kept the EU administrative expenditure as low as possible and has been wasting taxpayers’ money. There are around 50,000 EU civil servants who enjoy high salaries, for instance a senior director general may receive over €17,000 per month, plus all the benefits such as family allowances, expatriation allowance, installation allowance, travel expenses, removal expenses, daily subsistence allowance as well as low taxes. Brussels has demanded more posts for the European External Action Service. It is important to note that the salaries of the EU diplomats and administrative staff vary between €52,000 and €216,000 per year. The UK, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden have written to the Commission saying that “European administration spending cannot be exempt from the considerable efforts made by the Member States to reduce their administrative expenditures.” Those countries demanded therefore “very substantial reductions” in spending on salaries, pensions and benefits as part of the next MFF. The Commission is aware of the unpopularity of the package of benefits that EU civil servants are entitled to. In order to give the impression that it is responding to Member States demands, Maroš Šefčovič, the European commissioner for inter-institutional relations and administration, said: “The current economic climate calls for ambitious measures not only from public administration in Member States but also from European institutions and agencies.” The Commission has decided to propose a 5% cut in the staff of each EU institution and agency in the next MFF. The Commission will propose changes to the staff regulations applicable to EU civil servants in the EU institutions, such as a new method for calculating the adaptation of salaries, an increase in working hours from 37.5 to 40 hours a week, without compensation through higher wages, an increase of the pension age from 63 to 65, and the maximum number of leave days granted to staff for annual trip to their country will be reduced from 6 to 2. Nevertheless, the Commission has earmarked €62.6bn to Administration, allocating €12.1bn for pension and expenditures and European schools and €49bn for administrative expenditure of the institutions.
A single currency needs a single country to love it and support it. Some of us spent a part of our lives trying to explain this before the Euro was established. We disagreed with those who claimed the Euro was an economic project, a means of enhancing and improving the single market.

Some of the protagonists argued that sharing a currency was just a technical device, a convenience. It would, they said, take a bit off bank costs and so speed and improve the single market. We were to surrender our monetary sovereignty for a cheaper transaction or cheque clearance.

I remember saying that joining a single currency is like sharing a bank account with the neighbours. I have friendly relations with my neighbours, but I just feel that if we tried to share a bank account it would get in the way of our good relations. We would need to know a lot more about each other. We would need rules about how much we put in and how much we drew out. Above all, we would need to be careful about how much each used the common credit card or borrowed on the common mortgage.

So it has proved. All those who said a single currency was altogether less intrusive than that now have to accept that at the heart of the Euro’s troubles lies the issue of how much each country can and should borrow in the common currency. At the base lies the issue of how much of each country’s borrowings will be supported by their common Central Bank. At the centre of the dispute lies what the rate of inflation and the currency exchange rate should be, with strong countries favouring low inflation and high currency, and weaker countries favouring the alternative.

The Euro was always a political project. The economic rules were discarded as soon as they proved inconvenient. The rule that no country should borrow more than 60% of GDP in total was still born from day one. Now the architects of the single currency are changing their tune. They now say that of course it needs to be a fiscal union as well as a monetary union.

Fiscal union means a common economic government. It means people at the centre have to say how much any given country can spend and tax and borrow. It means the European Central Bank and the other Regulators have to control all the banks in the zone. It means the richer parts have to send money to the poorer parts to make it work.

All those of us who fought long and hard against the specious arguments that Euro entry was win win journey to more trade and prosperity now have to help those who blundered to understand the error and find a way out. We need to explain that you cannot solve a problem of borrowing too much by lending more. You cannot make the Euro and its common interest rate are right for both Greece and Germany by waving a magic wand or by pretending they are.

Either they need to slim down the number of members in their currency to a more managable core, or they need to complete their political union rapidly and start to make the kind of decisions single country single currency areas make to help the poorer parts.

The best contribution the UK can make to all this is to stay out. We helped the Euro by not joining. Can you imagine what a mess there would have been if the UK’s budget deficit and banking problems had been landed in the Eurozone? Not only should we stay out, but we should say that in return for our agreement to much more central economic power for the Eurozone the UK wishes a looser relationship with the EU. It would be good for them and good for us. The UK is one problem they do not need to worry about, as we still have the main economic levers in our own hands, to use well or badly at our own expense.
On 5 June, the centre-right coalition of Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski was re-elected for a second term in office.

As predicted, Gruevski’s cumbersomely-named Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) formed a governing coalition with the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration.

Aside from a handful of complaints about ballot-rigging in ethnic Albanian areas close to the country’s northern border with the disputed province of Kosovo, the election was an uneventful one – just as one might expect it would be in a South Balkan republic with little more than two million citizens.

Gruevski’s coalition, while struggling to deal with the realities of the country’s crumbling infrastructure and high unemployment rate, has two clear priorities: achieving Macedonian membership of both NATO and the EU.

Both of these objectives, however, appear to be little more than a pipe-dream as a result of a debilitating name dispute with its southern neighbour, Greece, which has hampered its ability to operate on the international stage.

Since a referendum sealed Macedonia’s independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the country’s constitution has referred to the state as the ‘Republic of Macedonia’. Opposition from Greece to this name, however, meant it took until April 1993 for the country to be recognised by the United Nations, yet under the rather clumsy title of the ‘former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ (FYROM).

The opposition to official recognition of the name ‘Republic of Macedonia’ stems from rather paranoid concerns on the part of Greece that Skopje is seeking to make irredeemably territorial claims on the historic Kingdom of Macedonia which includes the northern Greek province of ‘Makedonia’.

Perplexingly, Athens also cites the country’s predilection for erecting statues of Alexander the Great – the most recent being a $13 million gold-cast in Skopje’s main square – as rather tenuous evidence that Macedonia is seeking to claim Greece’s cultural heritage as its own.

This is, at the very best, a shrill over-reaction on the part of the Greek government.

Even the briefest of visits to Skopje would demonstrate the efforts of the Macedonian government to regenerate the city; from the ongoing repairs to the imposing Kale Fortress which dominates the city’s skyline to the aesthetically-sympathetic buildings springing up along the banks of the Vardar River.

In reality, both Greece and the Republic of Macedonia are in agreement with the historical fact that both contained land within the then-Kingdom of Macedonia. As a result, basic logic dictates that the two nations will share some historical similarities – including national figureheads.

Aside from containing portions of the former Kingdom of Macedonia, the modern-day Republic also encompasses portions of ancient Bulgaria. Indeed, while many Macedonians adhere to the Eastern Orthodox religion, the minutiae of the traditions to which its practitioners adhere are closer to those of the Bulgarian wing of the church than Hellenic customs.

As with the remainder of the Balkans, the modern-day Republic of Macedonia is a cultural and ethnic melting pot – just as Greece itself is.

Greece’s fears in respect of Macedonia are made all the more curious by the Greek government’s relative silence on the issue of the independence of Kosovo. While technically opposed to Kosovan independence from Serbia, the Greek government accepts the legality of passports and other formal documents issued by the authorities in Pristina.

If Greece was truly concerned about territorial expansionism, it would offer more fulsome opposition to the creation of an overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian state in South East Europe – particularly given that the realisation of a ‘Greater Albania’ includes the annexation of the Epirus and Yiannitsa regions of modern-day Greece.

As far as acting on irrational fears about irredentism are concerned, the Papandreou administration and Karamanlis government before it are highly selective.

It would be foolish to deny that the country continues to face significant and political challenges, yet Macedonia should undoubtedly be offered a path to European Union accession. Indeed, European Union leaders have made a clear undertaking to continue the process of EU expansion to include all Western Balkan nations.
While Macedonia first submitted its application for EU membership in 2004, the Greek government has insisted the country be referred to as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at all times. Upon receipt of the application, Macedonia’s decision to name Skopje airport ‘Alexander the Great International’ was almost immediately cited by the Greek government as an explicit act of “aggression” towards its southern neighbour. Since 2008, the resolution of the naming dispute has been a formally-codified pre-condition of Macedonian accession.

Just as the country’s EU aspirations have been stalled, Macedonia’s aspiration to join NATO has similarly been rejected by Greek opposition. Despite sending troops to Afghanistan, proposals to invite the country to join the organisation were vetoed by Greece at the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest – again, subject to resolving the naming dispute. Greece did, however, vote in favour of opening membership negotiations with Albania and Croatia, both of which acceded to membership a year later.

Greece’s policy of paranoia towards Macedonia does nothing to inspire confidence in Greece as a responsible actor in either regional or global policy.

Indeed, rather than view the naming dispute as a bilateral disagreement between two governments, it has sought to ‘Europeanise’ the issue and thus deny a democratic country in South East Europe a chance to engage fully with supranational bodies. Such a chance was not denied to Greece when it joined the then-EEC in 1981, despite its numerous diplomatic entanglements in respect of Cyprus and Turkey.

Greece is a country with not inconsiderable problems. The failure of the Hellenic social model to provide an economically viable future for the country’s citizens has been made painfully clear to people across the world.

Elevating this dispute to an EU level and sustaining it in the corridors of NATO and the United Nations for almost two decades is at best laughable and, at worst, pathetic.

Grow up, Greece.

Daniel Hamilton is Director of the civil liberties group Big Brother Watch. He writes in a personal capacity.

---

# Brussels dangerous interference with radioactive waste disposal

The European Commission has been trying unsuccessfully and for a long time to introduce Community legislation on nuclear safety, including waste disposal. Then in 2009, it won the support of the EU Member States, as the Council adopted a Directive establishing a common EU framework for the nuclear safety of nuclear installations. The Convention on Nuclear Safety and the 2006 International Atomic Energy Agency Safety Fundamentals guidelines are voluntary. The Directive incorporates provisions of these instruments into EU legislation, which are now mandatory for all EU Member States. The Directive duplicates the work being carried out within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency and gives the Commission scope to interfere with decisions taken by Member States.

On 19 July, the Council adopted a directive establishing a Community framework for the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste resulting from civilian activities, endorsing the Commission proposal from last November, which according to the Commission “is a logical next step after the Nuclear Safety Directive.” Member States now have two years to transpose the Directive into national law. The Directive sets up a EU legal framework for spent fuel and radioactive waste management, ensuring “that Member States provide for appropriate national arrangements for a high level of safety in spent fuel and radioactive waste management to protect workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionizing radiation.” The Directive will apply to “all stages of the management of civilian spent fuel and radioactive waste from generation to disposal”, it will not apply to waste from extractive industries. The aim is to set up a common EU approach for the storage of spent fuel and radioactive waste.

All EU Member States are members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA has developed safety standards, which are not legally binding, and its incorporation into national legislation is voluntary. There is an international agreement that covers this area - the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Under the Directive the international principles and requirements for spent fuel and radioactive waste management will become legally binding and enforceable.

Brussels is once again interfering with Member States’ competences, as the civilian use of the nuclear power as well as management of spent fuel and radioactive waste is a Member State responsibility. The directive stresses that “each Member State shall have ultimate responsibility for management of the spent fuel and radioactive waste generated in it.” Nevertheless, there will be a shifting of the decisions over radioactive waste disposal from the Member States to Brussels. Brussels will interfere with the Member State policies on the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste.

[Margarida Vaisconcelos]
The Ambitious Mr Rasmussen

Glen Ruffle

It was never a good idea to install as the head of NATO a man who was previously considered for the post of ‘European President’, as the rejected European Constitution would have had us accept.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former Danish Prime Minister, forged his career in terms of foreign policy by following the Ellemann-Jenson Doctrine, which states that small states have little hope of achieving leverage on the international stage unless they build alliances and cooperate with the big, powerful states, in their expeditions.

Hence Denmark, under his leadership, cantered off to war in Iraq alongside the United States, in the hope of gaining increased political weight and significance in the world.

Naturally, Rasmussen also saw cooperation with the European Union as another way to increase Danish leverage, resulting in which he became a leading contender for Tony Blair’s desired job: President of Europe.

Thankfully the people of Europe were allowed a say and the chance to reject these follies, and thus Blair went off globe-trotting and Rasmussen became Secretary-General of NATO.

However, as Rasmussen’s actions and words testify, he has not left his pro-European views behind. Indeed, he often sounds like a man with a vision to merge his organisation into the European Union.

An article he recently wrote for the journal Foreign Affairs, entitled ‘Nato in Libya’, reflected that NATO had the firepower and capabilities to do everything it wanted. The constraints it had were not in terms of physical assets, but political will. However, he feels that in the long-term, the constant cuts in European defence spending are a real danger to future operations.

European’s just can’t not think forwards. Whether it is the inevitable problems from the ‘one-size-fits-all’ Euro, or the inability to predict a conflict in Libya (most Europeans thought Afghanistan would be the last major military venture), European policy makers increasingly are ignoring hard-facts. Sadly, British ones are also heading the same way - the defence cuts and sharing of aircraft carriers being classic examples.

Rasmussen fears for the decline in European defence spending, noting that as the world gets richer, more is spent on defence (in China and India), but in Europe it is the other way round. Increasingly, the defence burden of spending falls on America and Canada in NATO - 21% is now paid by Europeans, leaving 79% for the North Americans to pay for.

Rasmussen notes the European tendency to talk about ‘soft-power’, and rejects that too - it is not soft-power that stopped genocide in Libya, or soft-power that halted the Taliban, or stopped Slobodan Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia.

At this point Rasmussen’s European intentions come to the fore. Pointing out that the US is not always going to lead, and faces it’s own debt crisis, he see’s a great opportunity for the EU to step up and be a global player. For that to happen, he argues, their needs to be better and more efficient defence spending (by which he means more cooperation and less duplication of what one state is doing by another) and greater cooperation in the pooling of resources between NATO and the EU.

Rasmussen clearly wants to push the EU to use the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty to integrate further. He wants Article 24.1, “the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence”, to be implemented and for Article 24.2, the integration of Member States defence capabilities, to become a reality. Lisbon contains all the provisions for Rasmussen’s dream: Article 42 demands that Member States must provide their military forces for EU expeditions and ventures, and that a new body, the European Defence Agency, will coordinate military activities and military build-up across Europe, to improve European capabilities, exactly as Rasmussen wants. This is not about individual states developing, it is about a top-down approach which sees the resources of states being coordinated for the development of a European force.

Article 42 has rules on Permanent Structured Cooperation for those states which want to go further, allowing and encouraging deeper integration and cooperation than the treaty was permitted to talk about.

It is clear that, as the Secretary-General of NATO, Rasmussen is concerned about its future. NATO is facing a US president who is losing interest, economic problems, and a European base which is reluctant to spend any money. However, the Lisbon Treaty contains all the articles and powers that he dreams of, to integrate Europe and build a stronger force. If Europe can start this process, the overlap between NATO and the EU can be removed and slowly NATO will be merged into Brussels.

Article 21 of Lisbon does demand that the EU build relations with NATO.

However, from Brussels’ point of view, it could easily be argued that NATO is a useful tool that will never be fully redundant. Whilst Brussels would love to take most of NATO under its own control, it is a useful cover and umbrella for unpopular actions. European forces could be deployed under the NATO name when the EU is too weak to admit it wants to do something, and of course, NATO ties the US into European security, which ultimately is a safety net if Europe continues to axe defence spending.

Rasmussen’s view of the world is very much shaped by his Danish background, and his belief that Denmark could never impact the world without integrating into some greater alliance. Facing a declining NATO, Rasmussen wants to integrate it into the European Union. And such an achievement would surely mark him out for a job as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
Roger Helmer is not a sceptic in the normal meaning of the word: “a person inclined to question or doubt accepted opinions”. He does not doubt. He is as certain that he is right as the targets of his attack: the Brussels bureaucrats, Europhiles and “climate change alarmists”. Neither is he a contrarian, merely seeking controversy. His positions are based on his well-reasoned response to the evidence that he sees. Sceptic at Large is, then, more a personal manifesto.

Helmer threads a narrative through extracts from his speeches and blogs which gives the book the immediacy of responding to events as they unfold. It also gives the book a sense of frustration, almost exasperation, that others cannot see his obvious truth. Roger Helmer in person is charming and witty. The charm is here: even under severe provocation he remains courteous; his infectious humour is, however, largely absent.

Time and again he is surprised at how far the Brussels machine will go to rig the debate. He reminds me of Charlie Brown in the Schultz cartoon: repeatedly Lucy holds the football for Charlie to kick and each time pulls it away at the last minute, leaving Charlie Brown on his butt in the dust. The European Council recognised “that there were problems with democracy, transparency and efficiency within the EU” and Helmer agrees with them adding “corruption” to the list of indictments. The European Convention, tasked with solving these problems, instead produced the “all-embracing” Constitution which threatened to “end British independence”. When French and Dutch voters reject the Constitution, Helmer is “astonished at the bare-face effrontery” that revives it as the Lisbon Treaty. When Ireland struck “a historic blow for freedom and democracy” by rejecting the renamed Constitution, Helmer is shocked by the cynicism that requires them to vote again.

He is no less disappointed in the leadership of his own Party. Having supported David Cameron for the Party leadership in 2005, he was “appalled, shocked and disappointed” when Cameron “repudiated” the policy of holding a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. According to Helmer, David Cameron has drifted away from the core beliefs of the Conservative Party and the LibDems are having undue influence in the coalition. On the Irish bail-out, Turkish accession to the EU, the European Arrest Warrant and Investigation Order, Ken Clarke’s justice policies and the decision to “decimate the armed forces” he is at odds with his party. Or, at least, he is at odd with its leadership. As he says, “the Party rank-and-file is a great deal closer to my position than to that of the Conservative High Command”.

He is at odds with them too on what he calls “climate change hysteria”. He neither accepts the “alarmist science” nor does he believe the measures proposed will do much to improve matters. Green climate policies are “probably unnecessary, certainly ineffectual and ruinously expensive”.

Helmer takes the opportunity to settle some old scores: with his long-standing rival in the East Midlands, “Bill Turncoat Dunn” who, having been elected a Conservative MEP, defected to the LibDems and with Hans-Gert Pöttering, the former leader of the EPP who moved to expel him from the Group in the European Parliament. The BBC’s Environment correspondent James Harrabin and the Guardian’s Leo Hickman are taken to task on climate change and he repeatedly mocks “Rumpy Pumpy” Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and “Barosso No-Mates” the President of the Commission who proposes paying journalists to travel with him.

If the general tone is of gloom and disappointment, there are moments when the real Roger Helmer emerges, like the sun from behind a cloud. He is sceptical about the merits of art, literature, poetry or architecture after the early 20th century and gives us paean to Edward Burne-Jones (“move over Michelangelo’s David … move over Moan Lisa”), to Lutyns, to Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia and to H.E. Marshall’s Our Island Story. Are there clues here to his wider world view? He appears in country attire to support the Fernie Hunt Team Chase and at the East Midlands Food Festival praising the producers of Lincolnshire Poacher Cheese. Is there nostalgia for more certain times? He quotes Cecil Rhodes, “the greatest prize in the lottery of life was to be born an Englishman” and goes on, “I was born a free Englishman … All I ask is to be a free man in a free country again.”

Sceptic at Large will be probably be read by those who already agree with Helmer, on the EU and on climate change. It deserves a wider audience. He may be certain where he stands on these issues but his positions are well argued and he deserves to be read by those of us who really are sceptics.
Brussels has already started the process of harmonisation of energy taxes. Council Directive 2003/96/EC restructuring the Community framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity have been governing several aspects of energy taxation (the Energy Taxation Directive). It lays down common rules on what should be taxed and sets out minimum tax levels for products used in heating, electricity and motor fuels, which EU Member States are required to levy although they are allowed to set their own national rates above these minimum rates. Presently, minimum rates are based on the volume of energy consumed. However, the Commission has been trying, for a long time, to introduce minimum levels of taxation on different types of fuels related to the intensity of their emissions. Despite the opposition of some Member States, particularly the UK, the European Commission has recently proposed an EU-wide minimum tax on carbon, by reviewing the Directive on energy taxation. Hence, Member States would be obliged to levy a CO2 tax on fuels in order to cut emissions if such proposal is adopted. Under the Commission’s proposal, Member States would be required to redesign their national energy tax regimes, which is unacceptable.

Under Article 113 TFEU, the Council may adopt “provisions for the harmonisation of legislation concerning excise duties” but only if such “harmonisation is necessary to ensure the establishment and the functioning of the internal market and to avoid distortion of competition.” However, there is no evidence that the single market would be distorted. Such proposal breaches, therefore, the principle of subsidiarity. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Justine Greening, told the European Scrutiny Committee that the Government believes that the “effective functioning of the single market” does not needs action at EU level “requiring Member States to implement two distinct tax bases for energy taxation.” The European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) asked the Commission to reconsider whether this proposal complies with the principle of subsidiarity and with the requirements of Article 113 TFEU. Bill Cash, Chairman of the ESC, wrote to the President of the Commission expressing the committee’s concerns. The committee believes that the Commission has presented no evidence that “the internal market will be distorted if EU legislation is not adopted.” According to the Committee the Commission has failed to comply with Protocol 2 – on the “application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.” The Committee concluded that the main purpose of the legislative proposal is “compliance with energy and climate change objectives” but not “good functioning of the internal energy market.” Hence, further harmonisation on energy taxation has not been justified.

Presently, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Ireland apply a carbon tax, and some other Member States are planning to introduce it. The Scandinavian countries support the Commission’s proposal whilst Germany and Poland are concerned that their coal and steel industries would be disproportionately affected by the proposed tax. The Commission’s proposal is also facing opposition from the UK. It is important to recall that taxation is one of the very few areas where unanimity is required, under the Lisbon Treaty. Hence, unanimity is required at the Council for the proposal to be adopted, and consequently, the UK government can, in fact, veto it. The Government must, therefore, veto such proposal otherwise UK taxpayers will face another tax.

If the proposal is adopted, Member States would be required to impose taxation on energy products in accordance with the draft Directive. The Commission proposed to exempt from the carbon emissions tax energy products that are already subject to the EU Emissions Trading System. The Government does not support these “mandatory exemptions”, because, according to Justine Greening, “this would remove the EU vires for the Government’s planned carbon price floor on electricity generation” which will come into effect in 2013, and “it regards as an important step in reforming the UK’s electricity markets and in delivering the long term investment needed in the power sector.”