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55 Tufton Street
London SW1P 3QL
Telephone: 020 7340 6013
E-mail: euro.foundation@e-f.org.uk
Web site: www.europeanfoundation.org



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Cameron just doesn't understand the case against the EU

Roger Helmer MEP

On 24 March, Prime Minister David Cameron came to Brussels for an EU Council Meeting, but took the opportunity to visit Conservative MEPs. This is a rather novel experience for us – I at least have spent most of my parliamentary career with a Labour PM in office, so a visit from a Conservative PM is a welcome change.

We had a closed session where Cameron spoke for a few minutes, after which we MEPs were each able to put a question – although given the time constraints there was no real opportunity for follow-up points or debate.

I asked: "Prime Minister, you have been reported as saying that you did not want an EU In/Out referendum, because you believe that British membership of the EU is in Britain's interests. Maybe my East Midlands region is not typical, but I'd say that 90% of Conservatives in my region would disagree with you, and 80% would disagree strongly. Shouldn't we listen to our members?"

Cameron has occasionally described himself as a eurosceptic, yet in reply he merely rehearsed the tired old arguments that Europhiles depend on. His answer would have been welcomed by Ken Clarke, or Nick Clegg, or Bill Newton Dunn.

As near as I can remember, he said "Britain is a trading nation. We can't afford to be cut off and isolated. We can't afford to be subject to European regulation that we have no part in shaping".

My reply would be: "Yes, Britain is a great trading nation, so we can't afford to be linked exclusively or preferentially to an over-regulated, over-borrowed, over-taxed economic area that is in long-term secular economic decline". Cameron's implicit assumption, that membership is important for trade, is just plain wrong, and a country like Switzerland (which does more trade per capita with the EU than we do) shows how wrong it is.

The EU has (or is negotiating) free trade deals with around sixty countries around the world. If we reclaimed our independence, it is inconceivable that we would not also negotiate a free trade deal with the rump EU.

We also trade with the USA (and many other countries). Yet no one imagines we need to be ruled from Washington in order to trade with America.

Then there is the proposition, implicit in his reply, that outside the EU we should still be subject to EU regulation, but we should have no part in setting it – "regulation by fax", as it's derisively known. Now of course if you want to export anywhere – to the EU, to the USA, to China, wherever – you have to ensure that your product meets both the legislation and the consumer expectations of your target market. That's a commonplace of international trade (in which I spent much of my career).

But that's worlds away from accepting the crushing weight and cost of EU regulation within Britain on virtually every aspect of our polity – regulation which imposes costs far greater than any trade benefit we achieve from EU membership. And as an MEP for twelve years, I can tell the Prime Minister that his assumption that we in fact influence EU regulation is – how shall I put it – a little optimistic. Yes, we occasionally score small victories, but across huge swathes of regulation we have to grin and bear it.

By leaving the EU, far from having to continue to accept EU regulation, we should free ourselves from a huge and damaging economic and regulatory burden.

Again the US example is relevant. How many British businesses are agonising over the fact that US legislation is made in Washington, and that the UK has little or no say in it? How many businessmen are insisting that we should apply to join the USA, so as to have better market access and more influence on Capitol Hill? None. Yet this is the argument which the PM is making about Brussels.

In fact Cameron's own experience with the EPP argues against him. When he boldly announced his intention to leave the EPP, and to form the ECR group, exactly the same arguments were made. Conservatives would be "isolated in Europe". We should be "cut off from our natural centre-right allies". Sarkozy and Merkel would snub him, and leave him without influence.

Yet exactly the opposite has been the case. As the UK's PM, Cameron has immediate access to EU leaders. He is respected and fêted at European Council meetings. He has had conspicuous success in working with Sarkozy to set up the Libya intervention (however you may feel about the outcome).

The threats of isolation, or being cut off, are so much hot air. We can have most of the trade benefits of membership with almost none of the costs. The economic benefits of leaving the EU would be substantial, and would free us to be much more focussed on trade with more successful parts of the world. And as an independent voice in the councils of the world, Britain would get a better hearing than as a mere component of an EU which itself is failing to make much of a mark globally.

Cameron is wrong. As the eurozone unravels, it is clearer than ever that we should be Better Off Out.

The clear and present danger … fiscal union

Bill Cash MP

This is an excerpt from a pamphlet, 'It's the EU, Stupid', written by Bill Cash.

The EU is a compression chamber which is now reaching a dangerous level – the only solution is for the United Kingdom to hold a Referendum, as recommended in my pamphlet. This would release the democratic safety valve. I am writing my pamphlet as the Franco-German summit at the Elysee Palace of 16 August confirmed a step towards greater fiscal union of the Eurozone countries, following the economic collapse of bankrupt Eurozone countries in the economic crisis. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, vowed to defend the failing single currency project and form a real economic government for the Eurozone formed by an Economic Council of Heads of State and Government. This includes the proposal to elect a stable president for that purpose for two-and-a-half years beginning with Herman Van Rompuy (the current President of the European Council). On top of all this there are proposed draconian common tax policies for Germany and France, including a socialist-style financial transaction tax and a joint corporate tax rate by 2013 and the too-little-too-late deficit limiting laws. Now it is time for the Coalition Government to wake up to the dangers that this grave step to full fiscal union poses to the UK's national interest.

So what will Eurozone fiscal union and economic governance do for the Eurozone itself, for the European Union and for the United Kingdom?

It is apparent that not only the Government but a number of others believe that it is in the interests of the Eurozone, the EU itself and the United Kingdom to promote the idea of fiscal union and economic governance of the Eurozone, led by Germany and France. This is a dangerous gamble – the balance of judgement for which must be thrown against the project, certainly for the UK, just as the opt-outs at Maastricht did not prevent the creation of European government, which has failed, with damaging consequences for the United Kingdom. There are a number of reasons why fiscal union will not work either for the Eurozone or for the United Kingdom.

The claim that there is a "remorseless logic" avoids the fact that it is the deeprooted causes of the structure of the Treaties and the attempt to create unity out of diversity, with overregulation and employment laws, which actively prevent growth and therefore prosperity and employment. Apart from Germany there is no evidence of growth in the Eurozone and Germany itself is insisting on conditions which would have to be complied with but given the state of the other European countries the evidence is that it will not succeed.

The sovereign debt countries of many of the Eurozone Member States' including the original PIGS and now including Italy is evidence enough. There is no prospect of them retrieving the situation without growth but this will only come with the repeal of the employment laws, redundancy laws, the social laws and other impediments to increasing the prosperity to small and medium sized businesses. There is therefore a certainty that the Eurozone will not be a trading entity and therefore our own stability will not be enhanced by their fiscal union and economic governance. There will be further debt-crises which will be followed by the need for further bailouts but there will be no money to pay for them and Germany's conditions will not be met – this is a chaotic fiscal union within the Eurozone and it would be better to recognise this immediately as a matter of realistic "remorseless logic". Furthermore, when the implosion comes there will be even greater probability of the rise of the Far Right because the electorate will simply not put up with the burdens they would be expected to carry under such a debt/transfer union.

As far as the United Kingdom is concerned, the solidarity in relation to the Single Market within the Eurozone would lead to the Eurozone countries who are part of the fiscal union voting together, as Professor Roland Vaubel of Mannheim University has indicated the prospect of raising rival costs and "regulatory collusion" would do immense damage to our ability to compete and the Single Market itself would be in disarray. Apart from that, the United Kingdom's trade deficit with the rest of Europe has increased by £40 billion in one year alone and a Eurozone with fiscal

union would be even worse.

There is an Alice in Wonderland fantasy around that the idea of a fiscal union would be a possible runner or in any rate, a short term fix but unfortunately this judgement overlooks the fact that it is doomed to failure and we would be better off keeping ahead of the curve by avoiding the inevitable implosion and sitting down with those from other Member States or those who are prepared to discuss with us the want to avoid the implosion. The idea we would be able to discuss opt-outs ignores the fact that we are now enmeshed in European government, but with two Europes, now built on sand. In order to remedy the situation we would need so many opt-outs, not only in terms of social and employment laws but also in relation to home affairs and justice, arrest warrants, immigration, energy (which through the Renewable Obligations will destroy the British landscape), the City of London and the whole overregulation of British business which must be repealed.

Adopting the idea of agreeing to, let alone promoting, fiscal union is shorttermism at its worst and also pandering to the determination of France and Germany to maintain the political will of the union, which will lead to the predominance of Germany which in turn will be faced with monumental difficulties in the struggle to maintain an unworkable Eurozone. We are told that these proposals would be put into effect under Article 136, which involves a Treaty, but under Section 4 of the European Union Act we would be denied a Referendum, and told that it would not affect us and only affect the Eurozone – this is a dangerous fiction.

Furthermore, the justification for the Coalition Government is said to be the reduction of the deficit. This will not be reduced without growth where 50% or our trading is with a moribund Europe, and bearing in mind our trade deficit we carry with the rest of Europe. The Coalition Agreement is said to determine our European policy – according to the question I put to the Prime Minister – and it is the Liberal Democrats who have put an end to renegotiation and repatriation of powers. This is a dead-end policy. This will be made even worse if we acquiesce in the creation of fiscal union because the Eurozone will not only fail to grow, it will implode. The rise of the Far Right is a serious prospect as the electorate of Germany and elsewhere begin to react accordingly.

There is a further concern that Maastricht itself lies at the root of European governance and which gravely exacerbated the dangers of the move to political and economic union. The acceptance by the Conservative government of Maastricht and now of Lisbon, leaving aside the smaller Treaties of Nice and Amsterdam have created a political problem embedded in the Coalition Agreement which significantly departs from the principles of Conservative policy. After all, the Conservative Party was united against Lisbon and for a referendum. The current arguments in favour of fiscal union appear to be seeking to justify the acceptance of both Maastricht and Lisbon when Maastricht is a self-evident failure and Lisbon was rightly opposed by the Conservative opposition in every respect.

It is a major strategic failure to claim that the policy of the Coalition is to reduce the deficit when so much of the policy that is needed to achieve this cannot be sustained without having a clear and definitive policy of disentangling our relationship with the European Union without dealing with the problems which it presents to the UK, let alone the EU itself. We are being marched into the black hole of economic chaos. There are those in Germany such as Hans-Olaf Henkel, former head of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) ("Having been an early supporter of the euro, I now consider my engagement to be the biggest professional mistake I ever made …"), who understand the dangers of all this for Germany and those such as Michael Sturmer who have been issuing warnings about the Maastricht Treaty and the current economic and political chaos which has evolved. They clearly do not want a fiscal union because Hans-Olaf Henkel, for example, is arguing for Austria, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands to leave the eurozone and create a new currency leaving the euro where it is, because they know that Germany is facing an ever-escalating stream of further financial commitments, including the impossibility of bailing out Spain and Italy, let alone the PIGS. There simply isn't the money to do it.

We are at a cross roads and we are taking the wrong turn by endorsing fiscal union and creating two Europes without renegotiating Europe, without renegotiating the Treaties and without creating an association of nation states – an EFTA-plus – led by the United Kingdom, which is turning a vision of Europe into chaos.

Allowing Eurozone Member States to go ahead towards fiscal union and economic governance creates two Europes, to which the United Kingdom would remain bound by Treaty and law, though they are built on sand. It will have profound economic, political and constitutional consequences for UK vital national interests. This will fundamentally change the UK's relationship with the whole of the European Union, not only our relationship with the Eurozone. We must have a Referendum in the light of such a profound

change in our political relationship with Europe.

The Franco-German summit joint letter states "The aforementioned proposals should be implemented in such a way as to serve the cohesion of the European Union as a whole." It therefore fundamentally affects the UK. It also sets out how it will be achieved: under Article 136 and enhanced cooperation i.e. by Treaty without a Referendum but by Act of Parliament. Enhanced cooperation is being misused.

These new proposals would create a critical mass and an unlevel playing field with existing massive overregulation. We are talking about a two-tier low growth area already showing signs of inertia which makes a nonsense of Britain's ability to grow on the back of European growth. We have to start trading vigorously and independently with the rest of the world and our strategic economic and foreign policy to be geared to these objectives. After all in the 18th and 19th Centuries, we did this with enormous success and in a global economic world, the opportunities are there to be taken but not if we are hamstrung by a simple trade policy dictated by the EU.

A new Treaty will be required to achieve these objectives but regardless of how they achieve fiscal union, a Referendum is now essential. It is therefore the British people who will save their Parliament.

This latest step hallmarks the failure of UK foreign policy for decades. The letter from the German Chancellor and the French President to Van Rompuy following the Franco-German summit of 16 August ultimately involves elements of EU-wide policy which those acquainted with foreign policy and EU-policy making will observe is deliberate. They threw in the push for the EU-wide common consolidated corporation tax harmonisation, knowing perfectly well that it would be rejected because it is by unanimous vote and that the UK Parliament would never accept it. What this amounts to is that, with that rejection, the UK leadership would be left agreeing to an EU Treaty or enhanced cooperation without a Referendum because they have evaded this under Section 4 of the European Union Act – despite my attempts to remove this provision and the commentary on it by the European Scrutiny Committee – where they claim or assert that such a Treaty applies only to the Eurozone.

The proposals for European economic government require a Referendum because the whole package involves a fundamental change in the relationship of the United Kingdom to the European Union. Thus, Cameron and Osborne will claim a victory asserting that they have repudiated the single currency and that the "remorseless logic" of the Eurozone policies leads to Eurozone fiscal union and economic government. Such a victory would be pyrrhic indeed – it would give the appearance of resolution, but in the words of Winston Churchill, the Government "go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, allpowerful to be impotent." Indeed, as I warned Michael Heseltine at the time of his bid for the Conservative leadership election – what is the point of being Prime Minister of nothing?

The Coalition Government are acquiescing in ever deepening European integration. At Prime Minister's Questions on 24 November last year I asked the Prime Minister to "… explain why at every turn-the City of London, the investigation order, economic governance of Europe and the stabilisation mechanism – the coalition Government under his premiership are acquiescing in more European integration, not less? And there is no repatriation of powers."

As I stated to the Chancellor on 11 August, during the emergency parliamentary session, even Edward Heath would have vetoed, let alone called for, such a fiscal union of the other Member States. This surrender is nothing short of appeasement.

It is impossible to conceive against this background that the creation of a critical mass of a fiscal union and other coordinated policy making within the Eurozone will do anything but irretrievably damage the United Kingdom – nor will it stabilise the European Union, as the riots and protests, the PIGS crisis, the failed Lisbon agenda, the overregulation, the low-growth and the breaking of the rules constantly shows. Nor will the fiscal union prevent further bailouts which will create a deeper black hole, triggering German insistence on compliance with the conditions they are imposing. When this does not work then there will be political upheaval in Germany, as they seek to control the Eurozone, followed by total implosion. The reason this will happen is because the fundamental structural problems in the EU as a whole and the Eurozone of overregulation and uncompetitiveness in so many of the Member States and therefore excessive public expenditure without growth means that the conditions, as with the Stability and Growth Pact, are part of the Eurofantasy. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's fatal acquiescence is an act of appeasement to the Euro-integrationists. There is no reciprocal advantage to the United Kingdom whatsoever.

The announcement to the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Thursday 11 August – which he slipped in whilst attention was

riveted on the UK riots, during the emergency parliamentary session – that the Prime Minister has urged France and Germany to accelerate fiscal union in the Eurozone, is both historic and disastrous.

The Chancellor, replying to my objection to his statement on 11 August, argued that "The remorseless logic of monetary union leads towards fiscal union, and that was one of the reasons that I opposed joining the single currency. However, it is now in our interests to allow that to happen more in the Eurozone, because it is in our absolute national economic interest that the Eurozone is more stable. It is clear that that means that they need to have more fiscal powers to reduce instability. That means, of course, that Britain must fight hard to ensure that its interests are represented and that we are not part of this fiscal integration."

The Chancellor has completely missed the point. Fiscal integration of the Eurozone would have the most profound impact upon the United Kingdom.

There has clearly been no attempt to discuss or consult on all this in Parliament or any of its committees or the British people. Nor has there been any attempt to obtain any reciprocal advantage to the United Kingdom such as renegotiation of the Treaties or the repatriation of social and employment legislation or any other powers, which are needed for UK growth.

It is impossible to conceive against this background that the creation of a critical mass of a fiscal union and other coordinated policy making within the Eurozone will do anything but irretrievably damage the United Kingdom – nor will it stabilise the European Union. The Coalition Government's policy is based on a dangerous doctrine, as I put it to the Prime Minister after the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement on 11 August. There is no reciprocal advantage to the United Kingdom whatsoever.

A Referendum for the United Kingdom voters is indeed now a matter of "remorseless logic" and the question which must be put, given that the status quo is untenable, must be whether by a simple majority the British people decide either to leave the European Union altogether or to renegotiate all the existing Treaties and to form a trading arrangement with political cooperation but no more.

But it will only be the British people who can and will do this with the help of those of goodwill who are prepared to follow this through. We saved the UK and Europe through two World Wars. Now we have the greatest economic crisis that Europe and the UK has faced in generations and a breakdown in our own society. The cause of the economic crisis (not the symptoms, such as Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Italy, etc) is the construction of an undemocratic and unworkable European Union, most recently through the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty, but stemming from the unrealistic aspirations for political union provided in the Maastricht Treaty. This created European government and which set the course for a greater Germany, both peaceful but unacceptably dominant at the same time.

We only have to look, as my pamphlet does, at the impossible trade balance, between 2009 and 2010 – which has risen by as much as £40bn in one year against us – and the fact that the fiscal union dominated by Germany and which the Government has conceded, will massively increase this trade deficit, destroying British businesses and British jobs. Such treatment will be obvious to those concerned for what happened with the Bombardier plant in Derby, through the misuse and the machinations of the Public Procurement Directive.

As my pamphlet demonstrates, it is also about the massive unemployment generated by employmen regulations which destroys small businesses and people's lives, the transfers of power over UK financial services and the City of London – meaning that it is no longer only small businesses that are being cut off but the wilful acquiescence of conceding jurisdiction to the EU over the City of London as well. For a mammoth 1 trillion Euro budget, the British taxpayer is now being asked to increase our already substantial contribution by £1.4 billion every year for the next seven years until it reaches £23.1 billion. European overregulation has cost us £124 billion from 1998 until last year, meaning that EU regulation in the past eleven years has cost every UK household an average of £4,912.

Think of how much money we could spend on schools, hospital, defence and the wellbeing of our own people rather than bailing out failed European states, much of which is their own fault and the rest is the fault of the failed European project which has passed laws which prevent growth. With 50% of our trading with the European Union as a whole, we are trading with a bankrupt, low-growth Europe – the only exception being Germany. At the same time we allow our basic industries and utilities to be bought up by Germany and French companies (which they do not reciprocate) repatriating their profits at the taxpayer's expense in the pursuit of so called European obligations and gaining control over our energy. This cannot be allowed to continue. There is no room for argument about the status quo.

The EU ethic: waste is OK

Glen Ruffle

As the financial crisis for the Euro deepens, the moral and ethical implications are immense. Should hard-working Germans be paying for the idiotic economic policies of Greece and other Mediterranean economies? Should todays governments be mortgaging the unborn children of the future to pay for welfarists? Should Central Banks be debasing their currencies with Quantative Easing and making the people of Europe who sensibly saved money, poorer?

The legions of financiers who advise the European Commission may have their own answers, but when the Commission wants more ethical and philosophical answers, usually to scientific questions, it can turn to a group of advisors known as the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, or EGE, to help it.

Obviously this group does not focus on economics, but instead on providing specialist information on the challenges being brought by advances in Science – such issues as Stem-Cell testing, animal cloning, nanotechnology and genetic modification. Lisbon commits the EU to promoting the advance of science and technology in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, and in Articles 6 and 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, states that it (the EU) will protect and preserve human health, but apart from these references, the EU's commitment to medical ethics is not exactly clearly spelt out in the treaties.

The EGE group has been in existence for 10 years already, and has been established with a further 5 year mandate from 2011 to 2016, and is appointed by the Commission President. The President of the Commission is responsible for assigning the EGE its work programme each year, and the oversight for this, and day-to-day running and planning, is organised by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers.

The current composition of the Group consists of, almost exclusively, Western European people. Only one Professor from Poland represents Eastern Europe – Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic are all not represented. By expertise, the group consists of 4 Theologians, 5 lawyers or legal experts, and the rest being professors of health, ethics, medicine and genetics. The maximum number of experts in the group can be fifteen.

The EGE is legally paid for by European taxpayers. The costs produced by the group are assigned to Commission expenses, and as such, we pay for this group. And do the taxpayers get value for money? Legally, the members of the group are required to attend a minimum of 4 meetings a year, hardly demanding, and the EGE has the power to set up working and research groups, which would surely simply do the roles of the myriads of civil society groups and professional organisations that already do this work.

Anyone wanting expert moral and ethical advice can turn to such organisations as the British Medical Association, The Institute of Medical Ethics, the General Medical Council, The Ethox Centre at Oxford University, the established churches who have expert commissions themselves, or private charities, such as CARE (Christian Action Research and Education). All of these organisations, and hundreds more, can and do provide expert advice for free, costing the taxpayer nothing. And in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU does commit itself to consulting with such groups, removing the need for its own 'in-house' department (Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, Article 17.3).

As such, why the Commission sees a need for a group to advise it on ethics, when most probably every country in the EU has similar civil-society groups capable of providing this information at zero cost to Europe's taxpayers, is a mystery. It is surely yet another example of the statist thinking at the heart of the EU project, demanding more and more power and departments to feed off taxpayers money, and the self-obsession and insecurity that grips the EU institutions, as they grapple for power and attempt to make themselves feel important, to feel that they matter.

Perhaps the moral-theologians inside the group can take some time off from biology and read some of Friedrich Hayek's philosophical works, and then feed some of his conclusions to the Commission. We can but dream.

EC wants final word on border controls

Margarida Vasconcelos

North Africa's unrest and the massive displacement of people have put the Schengen system under increasing strain, which has provided an excuse for the European Commission in calling for increasing EU intervention, diminishing Member State roles in ensuring security of their borders. Last May, the Commission considered introducing a mechanism allowing for the temporary re-introduction of internal border controls under very exceptional circumstances, taking the view that such decisions must be taken at the EU level and not unilaterally by the member states.

The European Council agreed that "A mechanism should be introduced in order to respond to exceptional circumstances putting the overall functioning of Schengen cooperation at risk, without jeopardising the principle of free movement of persons." According to the European Council, a "safeguard clause could be introduced to allow the exceptional reintroduction of internal border controls" but "as a very last resort," and "in a truly critical situation where a Member State is no longer able to comply with its obligations under the Schengen rules." The Commission was therefore invited to present legislative proposals for such a mechanism.

On 16 September, the European Commission adopted a package of measures to respond to the European Council requests and to the European Parliament's July resolution requiring "that any new mechanism should focus on enhancing the freedom of movement and reinforcing EU governance of the Schengen area." The Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation No 562/2006 (Schengen Borders Code) in order to provide for common rules on the temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders in exceptional circumstances. Presently, under the terms of the Schengen Borders Code, a Member State is allowed to temporarily re-introduce border controls at its internal borders in exceptional circumstances, where "there is a serious threat to public policy or internal security." In case of foreseeable circumstances, the Member State in question must notify other Member States and the Commission "as soon as possible" providing information about the scope and duration of the re-introduction, and the reasons for doing so. As regards urgent cases, the re-introduction may be effected immediately.

Whereas presently, the member states may introduce border controls on their own, in case of a serious threat to public policy or internal security, the new mechanism, as proposed by the European Commission, would be activated by Brussels. The Commission believes that "The possibility to reintroduce controls at internal borders should (…) be based on a decision taken at the European level, instead of on the basis of a unilateral and sometimes opaque national decision." The Commission proposal is, therefore, intended to prevent "unilateral decisions" by member states. Hence, the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders would no longer be decided inter-governmentally but according to the Community method.

The Commission reiterated that the reintroduction of internal border controls is a measure of "last resort", so it would only be contemplated if all the other measures have proved ineffective in mitigating the threats above-mentioned. Unsurprisingly, the assessment of the necessity of this measure would be made at EU level.

Member States would be able to unilaterally reintroduce border controls at internal borders, in response to unforeseeable events, such as a terrorist attack or a massive and sudden influx of migrants. However, the reintroduction of border controls at internal borders in such circumstances is limited to five days then, they would have to ask the Commission for permission.

In the meantime, the EU leaders agreed to strengthen the Schengen evaluation system. The Commission has decided to amend its 2010 proposal to respond to the European Council's request for a safeguard clause to be introduced to address situations where a Member State is unable to comply with Schengen rules.

The Commission wants to have a leading role whilst reducing member states ability to introduce temporary border controls in the Schengen area. Member States are being asked to give away further national competences and to pool more sovereignty. The European Commission completely ignored member states calls for national sovereignty on this policy to be retained. Obviously, Member States want to protect their borders but under the Commission proposal they would have to ask permission for the Commission do so. Before the Commission presented such proposals, the interior ministers of France, Germany and Spain issued a statement saying that "the decision to reinstate controls at internal borders temporarily must be based on a thorough assessment in terms of national security, which can only be carried out by the member states on the basis of the expertise and resources of their security services." They "believe that respecting the core area of national sovereignty is very important to member states." Consequently, those member states "do not share the European Commission's views on assuming responsibility for making decisions on operational measures in the security field." These member states may form a blocking minority in Council.

The UK does not take part in adoption of this regulation as it constitutes a development of provisions of the Schengen acquis, in which the UK does not participate. However as noted by Timothy Kirkhope, Conservatives and Reformists group spokesman on justice and home affairs "The UK government needs to get involved in this reform. The control of migrants into one EU country has implications on the flow of migrants into the whole of Europe, including the UK. What happens in Calais and Normandy affects us and it is in our interests to allow countries on our doorstep to regain control over large flows of migrants – many of whom will ultimately be destined for the UK."

Europe the Albatross

Thomas Kingston

Youthful optimism is an oft-used phrase but unfortunately – though I may be youthful – optimism is something I most certainly don't possess with regards to the European Union. However that's not to say I'm pessimistic – I would prefer to think of myself as a realist, being only a year older than the Maastricht Treaty, I cannot remember not being a part of supra-national European behemoth and as I've grown, Britain's and indeed most member nation's sovereignty has shrank and shrivelled until it resembles only a shadow of what it once was. The simplistic explanation I was given when I first asked what the EU was, was "it's a group of European nations working together to help each other and share ideas" and now rather than simplistic I think it's safe to say that it's more idealistic. Maybe once it started off as such a commendable ideal but now it's a burden that links successful nations to failing and irresponsible ones and means that nations like the UK are suffering because of poorly thought out policies and dare I say blatant lies.

To link our future with growing nations is a beautiful, charitable and benevolent idea but the core responsibility of elected officials is to serve, represent and protect their people – and allowing our fortunes to be linked with states that are dragging us down is certainly not what they're mandated to do. Idealism and charity has its place in prosperous times when we can afford to, but in the current case of a global economic ice age it's time to accept that every man (or nation) for itself might be the most responsible policy even if it isn't the most charitable.

From as far back as I can see the European Union (in whatever incarnation it was in) has been based upon idealism and survived on luck alone. The original principle of preventing further wars was admirable of course, and the ECSC member states did have geography on their side having being ruined by WWII, however the EU in its current form is unrecognisable and is more like a mutated cousin than a successor of the ECSC. As a prospective member the UK should have realised that so many differences in economy, culture, law and society would cause issues with integration, not to mention the stretch of water that has separated us from the rest of Europe. Indeed I would say it's nearly as ridiculous to expect Britain to profit from such a continental-centred organisation as it is to expect Turkey to integrate well, and possibly for some of the same reasons. This stretch of water protected us from Dutch, Spanish, French and German invasions for many centuries, so to suddenly ignore its existence and enter into a complex and restricting union with these nations and then ignore even the simple geographical implications of its existence is borderline delusional behaviour.

Yet I wouldn't go so far as to advocate us withdrawing wholesale from Europe but the European Union in its current form is not a friendly or advantageous clique for us to be associated with (I wouldn't say we were in the clique as we never seem to benefit from it). The fact that we as a nation are a Union in the form of a United Kingdom with its members on unequal terms, allowing students from other EU member states to study for free in Scotland when students from the UK that aren't Scottish have to pay, suggests that there may be problems closer to home that need resolving, rather than considering bailing out EU states that used deception to gain access to support and aid, and are now needing more aid to get themselves out the mess that their deception caused.

I see Europe as a dark storm cloud constantly looming over our heads and that without reform this storm cloud may unload a rain of problems over Britain – the EU may only look like it's on a temporary downturn at the moment but this potentially could end up a lot worse and do we really want to get dragged down? The obvious alternative in my opinion is to aim for an EFTA style agreement, which of course we once were part of before we left it for further integration. In my opinion cultural and educational programmes like ERASMUS are excellent but are the ridiculous ideas such as the CAP worth them really (the bizarre nature of CAP was recently explained to me by a farmer who was given subsidies to grow Linseed, as long as it germinated he was paid, regardless of whether he harvested it).

I see it as my generation's duty to steer the nation away from further unrealistic and ultimately idealistic Treaties and to do our utmost to: encourage trade links with Europe without issues of governance and law being dictated to us, propagate trade links with developing nations in a form that would benefit both partners and to further strengthen ties with Commonwealth of Nations members who we already have a number of things in common with. This in my opinion is our only hope of having a successful 21st Century and also the only way there will be a Britain worth passing onto my children's generation.