

Think Tanks and Maginot Lines

EU Strategic Funding of Defence
and Security Analysts

Dr Lee Rotherham



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Dr Lee Rotherham has been engaged in Brexit prep since before it was fashionable. He has been an adviser to three Shadow Foreign Secretaries, to the Conservative delegate to the Convention that drafted the Lisbon Treaty, to MEPs, a delegate to the Council of Europe, and a range of front benchers. During the referendum, he was Director of Special Projects at Vote Leave. He has been very extensively published by many think tanks, writing on issues across the full spectrum of EU policy.

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Introduction

For years, the European Union has run multi-million-pound budgets that have provided direct and indirect support to ‘opinion multipliers’. These include not just award ceremonies for filmmakers, but the provision of educational material for schools and colleges, prizes for journalists, and funding for academics.

As the Brexit debate continues over the precise form that the deal should encompass, the legacy effect of these grants (some of which are still in play today, and others which are due to receive funds) needs to be taken into consideration when reflecting on the strategic advice being offered by experts whose views – potentially – may be either directly or indirectly influenced by them.

This short paper reflects first on the historic context of these awards as previously demonstrated by audits. The nature of the exact budget streams in some cases has changed over time, but as recent work has demonstrated, the underlying premises driving the funds and projects, and the risks associated with them for the impartiality of potential and past recipients, remain.

The primary focus of this review however relates to a sector which has not been subject to significant past analysis. With the sudden development of Permanent European Structured Cooperation (PESCO in matters of Defence, the nature of the UK’s future level of institutional association with the EU on security elements becomes a matter of considerable controversy and concern. Yet while the campaign group Veterans for Britain have been closely following developments and mapped out a large number of areas of concern, experts from key UK security think tanks have not expressed the same level of alert consideration for the political and other dynamic risks associated with this process.

The evidence is that potentially damaging features of EU institutional outreach have been operating in relation to certain UK think tanks, just as they have in other fields – and the risk is that years of EU funding and programmes mean that the independence of key ‘establishment’ think tanks is no longer as unambiguous it was, which carries considerable implications of risk for their impartiality over EU policy. This threat will linger after Brexit unless major dynamic changes are made.

Past Studies

The existence of this policy, and the phenomenon that it engenders, is beyond dispute. The first major analysis of it was in fact published via this very campaign group. A Bruges Group publication as far back as 2002 identified a number of specific budget lines whose output was judged in particular to be a risk of the Education Act 1996 where such material was deployed in schools, because it breached strict rules over political impartiality in teaching material (*Federalist Thought Control: The Brussels Propaganda Machine; Ball/Oulds/Rotherham*).¹

This established beyond doubt that the EU had significant budget lines, dedicated to funding proxy supporters and campaigns endorsing its own policy. The report fortuitously came out at the very time when the Convention on the Future of Europe, which would draft what later became the EU Constitution, was spending a week reviewing submissions from civil society, many of which were instantly discredited. It was immediately clear that the process was one of “Brussels talking to Brussels” rather than genuine outreach to ordinary European citizens.²

The research immediately drew support from a number of Eurosceptic political and campaign figures, who used it to draw attention to what was clearly – and quite literally – propaganda put out in support of the European Commission’s policy objectives, including those not shared by the European Council and certainly not endorsed by relevant member states. These observations are reproduced in Box A, to remind us of the scope of the activity.

Box A: Pro-EU propaganda in the early 2000’s across the member states

“Only recently the European Commission has appointed the Czech PR Agency “Via Perfecta” to be in charge of the EU information and communication strategy in the Czech Republic (and funded it). However, this agency is led by a wife of one prominent and most pro-European politician in the CR. This implies possible misuse of the EU funds for self-promotion of certain politicians or political opinions that are familiar to the EU bureaucracy.”

*Jan Zahradil, MP - Foreign Affairs Spokesman for
the ODS Party in the Czech Republic*

1 <https://www.brugesgroup.com/media-centre/papers/8-papers/786-federalist-thought-control-the-brussels-propaganda-machine>

2 The telling expression was invented by David Heathcoat-Amory, one of the Convention delegates.

“It is now clear that not only the European Commission but the British Council, under the direction of the Foreign Office, is funding a European Resource Centre, which is cover for an EU propaganda unit.”

*The Rt Hon. David Heathcoat-Amory, MP –
Convention on the Future of Europe*

“In a referendum people should have the right to hear both sides of the argument in a balanced and fair manner. I took the Irish government to court because they not only restricted the voters access to balanced information, but they used the voter’s own money to persuade them to vote in a particular way. In a referendum the people are being asked for their opinion. This process is made pointless if having asked for their opinion you then tell them there is only one answer they can give and you use their money to convince them that this is true.”

*Patricia McKenna, MEP - Green Party Member of
the European Parliament representing Dublin*

“European propaganda is organised according to a methodical plan. One of its principal victims in France is the University. The purpose of the Jean Monnet Chairs, to which Brussels devotes each year four million euros, is to teach European integration, imposing federalist contents on the lessons in all the fields of social sciences: history, law, political science, economy, etc... Control by the European Commission takes the form of a scientific committee carefully selected by the Commission, which validates the attribution of the “Jean Monnet” labels and grants subsidies only to the teachers who present sufficient political guarantees on the matter.”

*Georges Berthu, MEP - French MEP and Minister f
or Administrative Reform (1986-1987),
Senior Administrator at the Ministry of Finance (1991-1994)*

“There is no doubt a lot of money is being poured out from Europe through our Universities, through the media and many other channels to persuade the British people to accept a European identity that they instinctively reject. Most

of the spending is a scandalous waste of money.”

The Rt Hon. Lord Lamont of Lerwick - Chancellor of the Exchequer (1990-1993)

“It is absurd and abuse of taxpayers’ money, yet each year more and more is spent by the European Commission in its bid to con the European public into thinking that a deeper federal Europe is the only way forward.”

*Chris Heaton-Harris, MEP - Conservative Spokesman
on Budgetary Control in the European Parliament*

“The European Commission office in Copenhagen works entirely for the Yes side and we even experienced in the 1980’s that the Office sent insulting letters about the No side to editors and political opponents without informing us.”

Jens-Peter Bonde, MEP - Danish “No” Campaigner

“A group of deputies from various parliamentary groups proposed in January a motion for an urgent EU referendum. However, it was voted down by the Chamber. This debate on the motion has so far been the fairest discussion of EU pros and cons. We are now collecting a half a million signatures for a motion to hold an EU referendum. Meanwhile the government started last month its 1 m Euro promotional campaign to convince Poles that the terms of EU membership, still under negotiation, are advantageous for Poland.”

*Jan Lopuszanski, MP - Member of the Sejm Committee for Foreign Affairs
(Parliamentary Group of the League of Polish Families (LPR)
and Chairman of the Polish Alliance (PP))*

The revelation of these propaganda slush funds did not, obviously, lead to their dissolution though they would come to be repackaged. Therefore a report by Open Europe followed in 2008 (*The Hard Sell: EU Communication Policy and the Campaign for Hearts and Minds; Rotherham/Mullally*).³

Additional levels of research dug into the Commission’s own policy guidelines, revealing that the EU itself recognised that its output was not neutral. It explored the intent, and set out how the EU chose “opinion multipliers” who could reach out to

3 <http://archive.openeurope.org.uk/Content/documents/Pdfs/hardsell.pdf>

specific target audiences in order to win over the wider public to its way of thinking. In addition to providing a profoundly detailed map of how this was achieved – the analysis runs to over 130 pages – number crunching further revealed that the EU’s propaganda budget was bigger than Coca Cola’s PR budget.

Of particular relevance to this paper, the analysis broke down propaganda activity into three types – direct PR funding, and overt PR work; funding that carried direct PR baggage; and funding that carried secondary PR implications (such as the requirement that particular schemes should be packaged in literature and signage as being “funded by the EU”). Amongst the second order effect schemes are those that are involved in support for academia and think tanks.

For those thinking that ‘propaganda’ is the wrong term to use in this form of state PR activity, Box B contains quotes deployed at the start of the report.

Box B: The EU’s PR mission, taken ex cathedra

“From my involvement in the campaign for European Monetary Union, I was struck by the huge amounts that the Commission spent to promote monetary union. In this regard, it is no accident that monetary union carried the day in the face of negative attitudes that were present from the very start of the campaign... Hardliners argue that taxpayers’ money should not be used to finance propaganda, and that is certainly a position adopted by the eurosceptics. I do not believe that the Commission should be too concerned about this. We need to invest if active citizenship is to become a reality”

*Fernand Herman, President of the Belgian branch of the
EU-funded Union of European Federalists*

“Europe is suffering from a very serious problem with its citizens, and the problem is not ready to disappear either. It is not as simple as what is commonly termed as the democratic deficit – I think it is nonsense to speak about a democratic deficit because we do have our institutions in place – but it is, I fear, a basic problem which is a reality of our life today. Most of our fellow citizens in Europe do not feel they belong to Europe in the same way that they feel they belong to their towns, regions or countries. They do not feel they are European citizens. The problem is not rooted in Europe’s institutions or procedures. The only way we can resolve the question is to change people’s mindset”

*Pascal Lamy, former EU Commissioner and President
of EU-funded think-tank Notre Europe*

“We have a communications problem... We haven’t explained enough the benefits of European construction... We have been too modest”

Former European Parliament President Nicole Fontaine

This report remains the touchstone document for understanding the full machinery of the EU’s PR apparatus. Two subsequent reports have, usefully, updated its work.

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) produced two useful analyses looking at the peculiar phenomenon of the ‘sock puppets’, lobby groups designed or supported in order to lobby the funder. One of these looked at how the practice worked in the UK, particularly over environmental and left-liberal issues that do not have widespread public sympathy.⁴ The other looked at what was going on in 2013 in relation to EU proxies (*Euro Puppets: The European Commission’s Remaking of Civil Society*, Snowden). The analysis demonstrated that a number of these groups simply would not survive without EU funding and thus were economically dependent upon Commission largesse – a factor that clearly carries immense implications for the worldview and the output of the recipient. A by-product has been that “The EC’s policy of picking allies and supporting them with taxpayers’ money has made the system more elitist and less democratic.”

Notably, the IEA’s campaign led to a change in the law. An ‘anti-sock puppet clause’ introduced ringfencing, so that public grants could not be siphoned off and used simply to lobby the government. However, this only operates in terms of how the UK Government spends taxpayers’ money, not Brussels.

An additional update was subsequently developed by Business for Britain in 2015 (*How Much Does the EU Spend Promoting Itself?* Lewis).⁵ This report correspondingly acts as a useful annex to the Open Europe report that brings assessed figures more up-to-date.

What is clear with the above is that the EU’s institutions, predominantly but far from exclusively the European Commission, have been at the forefront in pursuing a declared but previously little-appreciated agenda of selling the package tour of ever-closer union, campaigning in opposition to the arguments and criticisms

4 <https://iea.org.uk/publications/research/sock-puppets-how-the-government-lobbies-itself-and-why>

5 <https://web.archive.org/web/20160501160405/http://forbritain.org/propagandapaper.pdf>

expressed by Eurosceptics across the continent. This has been undertaken at an astonishing financial level, and has continued in various forms up to 2015. The implications arising from the second order effect of these programmes continue to be felt today.

The EU as Benefactor

The nature of the EU's support to influential institutions comes in a variety of forms, which can be direct or indirect. Consequently it can be visible or invisible.

Direct financial support to a body can obviously be awarded through grants. This tends to be accompanied by a requirement to advertise the assistance provided on the organisation's website, and so this form of sponsorship is noticeable (the obligation to show the relevant EU logo is after all part of the deliberate intent of showcasing the value of the "EU's" financial generosity). This, significantly, tends to follow a bid process in which the organisation sets out why it merits the funding: in turn, this carries inherent risk of that body committing to aligning itself to the strategic direction of the funder in order to maximise the chances of obtaining the cash. Historically there have even been a few cases where particular institutions known and trusted to follow the EU ideology have been written directly into the EU budget. These have tended to be those most sponsored by MEPs and former EU grantees.

Individual events and publications may also find themselves supported by the Commission on a smaller scale. This has historically often been achieved by devolved funding run through local offices.

Association with any of the above carries value for the institution or individual supported. It may provide a measure of financial security and stability in the first instance; but less obviously, campaign groups and think tanks and above all academics are heavily dependent upon the maintenance of their credibility. Running events and producing research, or being advertised as an official go-to person or committee member, does more than simply sustain their institutional direction – it also builds up the individual's CV. An academic who becomes a professor thanks to an EU grant, or a think tanker whose publication beefs up their curriculum vitae, is obviously going to be grateful for the support, and by simple osmosis will to some extent be drawn towards favouring the grant system that provided the opportunity in the first place, though the scale of effect will quite naturally vary from individual to individual.

The level of pro-EU advocacy that arises will, however, in many cases already have been pre-conditioned, because the EU is inserting itself into professional and ac-

ademic training and development. In both terms of simple funding but also programme development, the EU institutionally is engaged in supporting training projects ranging from law, to history, through languages to economics and politics. Institutionally it even has its own higher education structures. The College of Europe has campuses at Bruges and Warsaw, and describes itself as

“a private university/institution and can rely on an extensive network of contacts in European institutions, national administrations, international organisations, European universities and professional circles. Alumni of the College of Europe occupy positions of responsibility in Europe and across the world.”⁶

This makes it a finishing school for those engaged in EU political integration, and a significant networking centre. The Commission is one of its key funders. Over in Florence meanwhile, the European University Institute (EUI) focuses on doctoral and postdoctoral work with an EU angle. It is a focal point for 1000 academics operating in the field. Of its results, the EUI notes,

“The EUI offers excellent career prospects. 69 per cent of our alumni are currently employed in academic positions while 12 per cent work in international organisations. Alumni from the ECO department frequently obtain positions in central banks. 31 per cent of all alumni from all cohorts are now employed in senior positions, such as full professor.”⁷

It would be beyond controversy, having had discussions with graduates of these institutions, to observe that these institutions - and the subjects involved with EU Studies themselves - draw pro-EU people towards them. The élite is self-forming.

This should not be a controversial claim, any more than it is to suggest that Qom attracts theologians who tend to be Shi'a; Leningrad State University attracted Marxists; and Sussex's Centre of Gender Studies probably has a disproportionately high share of Feminists compared with the general population.

People tend to become deep specialists in subjects that interest them or with which they empathise, if not actively affiliate themselves to. To commit a number of years of one's life to studying a subject requires a passion at the very least for learning, but quite often an alignment with the topic chosen; and one can reasonably postulate that maintaining and developing a career in a field requires a deeper level yet. Who lectures on Shakespeare who hates the Bard?

But combined, what this means is that the various domains covered by EU studies

6 <https://www.coleurope.eu/why-study-college-europe>

7 <https://www.eui.eu/About/WhyChooseEUI>

are generating a coterie of pro-EU deep experts. By the EU itself setting up the hub institutions where research and training takes place, and by engaging with academics in the selection and development of other research programmes, the Commission has reinforced the commanding heights over how the expert elite of core policy developers and thought shapers is first generated, and then professionally or academically trained.

Simply put, **the European Commission has in effect spent decades training a pro-EU cadre.** It has done so in order to pursue the agenda of an integrated Europe operating within the model of the European Union framework. As previous research listed above demonstrates beyond all doubt, this has been a conscious policy. Under its 2002 Communication Plan (which has the merit of being in the public domain, and not apparently significantly superseded), it declares

“Fighting ignorance and apathy is now a must for the European Union”

And this is to be achieved within a mission statement that sets out

“To improve perceptions of the European Union, its institutions and their legitimacy by enhancing familiarity with and comprehension of its tasks, structure and achievements”

It continues,

“Neutral factual information is needed of course, but it is not enough on its own. Experience has shown that a given item of information will not remain neutral because its presentation will constantly be reworked by the media, relays and other opinion multipliers.

“Genuine communication by the European Union cannot be reduced to the mere provision of information: it must convey a meaning, facilitate comprehension, set both action and policy in a real context, and prompt dialogue within national public opinion so as to enhance the participation of the general public in the great European debate.

“The objective of this new strategy must therefore be to generate awareness and combat ignorance and apathy so as to lay a firm foundation for the management of public life, a clearly understood form of governance between the European Union and its citizens. The main point is to improve popular perceptions of the Union or, in short, to boost the general awareness of the European dimension of citizenship.”

In specific terms of reference to academia and think tankers, it observes

“The European Union must practise targeted communication. Dialogue with opinion multipliers and dialogue with the general public in the Member States do not satisfy the same demands.

“Information must therefore be provided at two distinct levels, using different messages and appropriate tools. Certain information must be addressed to those who are interested and already reasonably well-informed whereas other information must be aimed at those who are apathetic and unfamiliar with the European Union.

While concluding,

“Particular attention should be given to young people and the education sector”⁸

These ambitions, and the price tags that accompany them, as we shall see have considerable implications for the output, impartiality and integrity of unwary think tanks.

The Expectations of the EU Paymaster

EU funding comes with a price tag.

In the first instance, projects are selected according to criteria that broadly endorse the direction of Commission thinking rather than undermines it; the fact of funding in itself generates a sort of confirmation bias.

Secondly, for potential recipients of EU finances, there is an awareness that the donor is providing money that could be awarded elsewhere, and this has the potential to skew the bid itself. It also has particular potential to affect the research if repeat awards are sought rather than one-offs.[1]

Thirdly, there is the psychological impact of receipt of money and what may simply be subliminal inference that ‘the EU is a good thing as it is keeping me in a job’.

We might take a non-EU example to demonstrate the principle. An LSE research centre received a pledge of £1.5 million over five years from an institution with links to the Libyan regime; an LSE business offshoot also received a contract of £2.2 million for training Libyan officials. The dictator’s son received a PhD that was claimed

8 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52002DC0350:EN:HTML>

to have been at best plagiarised and possibly ghost-written. In a video link-up, the dictator was oleagiously awarded a prize previously given to Nelson Mandela. Whatever the exact circumstances of the turn of events, what is clear is that the links generated disquiet within the LSE itself, and that the Director of the LSE resigned in the aftermath.[2]

The risk of ‘contamination’ of funding, where the grant and the prospect of more funding affects the ‘editorial’ stance of the institution, is unquestionably in prospect. It might be overt as above, or lesser.

There is a reason why governments fund and encourage the study of their country in academia, and that is because it is an expression of soft power. The more people like Dickens, the more likely is it that they are Anglophile. The more people like Racine, the more likely it is that they will support la Francophonie. If more people study Marx, the more likely it is they would have marched in favour of Moscow. The more money that goes into Islamic institutes, the more likely that a particular branch of Islamic theology gains adherents. It is just that some countries, like the UK and the British Council, are very hands-off about it, while others are not. The Commission here is replicating the self-interest of a nation state, or of an ideology, and perhaps both.[3]

One small portion of the EU’s slush funds that are of most relevance to this paper fall under the rubric of *Structural Support for European Think Tanks and for Civil Society Organisations at European Level*. Strand 1, “European Remembrance,” is associated with linking in anniversary commemorations to the context of European integration, or of affiliating it with the fight against xenophobia or totalitarianism. Strand 2 is about encouraging lobbying and political engagement by those who could be mobilised in the cause.

The guidelines in the call for proposals observe,

“The European citizenship is an inherent element in strengthening and safeguarding the process of European integration. [...] It aims to contribute to citizens’ understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions of enjoying the rights and privileges of being a European citizen.”⁹

Bids can be put in by think tanks, civil society campaign groups, or international campaign groups (a category which lends itself to pro-EU collective campaigns established deliberately to win this funding).

9 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/en_4.pdf

If we then take a step back, the Europe for Citizens programme (which is the general funding scheme) has a political ambition to it which includes as an aim “to foster European citizenship”; and awareness of “the common history and values of the Union.”¹⁰ It is “open to all stakeholders promoting European citizenship and integration.” Funding priority would be given for bids relating to civic participation that “will give preference to initiatives and projects with a link to the Union political agenda.”

The tenor of this is common and longstanding. It goes beyond the example given above, into the 33 areas the Commission identifies as being of particular interest to academia and think tanks, and of which several have a bearing on international security affairs.¹¹

Box C: Areas identified by the Commission as being of particular interest for support to academia and think tanks, predominantly under Erasmus+ funding

Animal welfare, plant health, public health and food safety

Agriculture and rural development

Bank and financial services

Business and industry

Climate action

Competition

Communication, audiovisual services

Consumer and public health

Culture and media

Development and cooperation

Digital society and economy

Economy and financial affairs

Energy

Environment

10 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32014R0390&from=EN>

11 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/find-calls-funding-topic_en

Education

Employment, social affairs and inclusion

Europe for Citizens

European neighbourhood policy and enlargement

Fight against fraud

Humanitarian aid

Horizon 2020

International development cooperation

Interpretation, conference organisation

Justice

Maritime affairs and fisheries

Media

Migration and home affairs

Regional policy

Statistics

Sustainable development (eco-innovation)

Taxation and customs

Technical support provided by the Structural Reform Support Service

Youth

The Example of Social Sciences Academic Grants

A review of how EU funds have impacted upon UK academia in the Social Sciences proves particularly informative in several regards. Such a review has been undertaken, precisely because of the concerning studies which we referred to earlier.¹² It involved a major audit of 200 recent successful funding applications.

The report (undertaken by this author) acknowledged that academic research could entail fairly esoteric material, and despite obvious temptations to take at face value the premise that all study inherently carries merit, even if it is reflecting on inter-war German opera in New York. Nevertheless, it was quickly clear that EU funds in many cases were simply supplanting national ones, and EU grants were not necessary, existing only to provide EU-sourced funding per se.

More of a concern, in some cases, bidding for EU funding did appear to be skewing the research into a particular angle. The end objective in some cases was expressly meant to support the generation of a pan- and pro-EU intelligentsia. Very large sums are being directed at certain universities, including in PR activity; and in turn this could help explain professional and institutional bias towards EU membership during the referendum.

Thus while the Jean Monnet system of providing focal points for EU studies was operating as a tier one echelon of support for European integration, a much greater deployment of very generous grants was being awarded more widely. The resulting bias risk needed to be acknowledged by those being consulted by the Government about future EU policy, who remain on, or had been previously on, the EU payroll - just as much as someone from the LSE offering advice about the previous Libyan regime ought to be heard in the fuller context. As the study said,

“Acknowledging the risks inherent in this system is important to Government today as it explores expert advice on what options the UK should pursue with Brexit. There is a continuing danger that advice issued by some academics (including legal specialists) remains skewed towards the unambitious today, with an inherent bias towards unnecessarily maintaining vestigial links rather than conducting a full audit of what form of simple association is operationally most functional and useful for the UK.”

This came with a rider, which applies equally to this paper;

¹² http://www.theredcell.co.uk/uploads/9/6/4/0/96409902/research_interests_with_covers_10.pdf

“This is not to denigrate the expertise of the individual, or to say an academic is not entitled to a personal opinion. It is rather to add a caveat emptor sign on any apparent consensus. Judging by the choice of witnesses called by some Parliamentary Committees, the lesson could be much more widely learned.”

It was clear that funding was being provided with an intent to promote the generation of a pan-EU elite, supportive of certain supranational philosophical concepts. Just as notably absent was funding and support for research that endorsed the concept of the nation state, or a model of intergovernmental cooperation short of the EU’s ambitions. In certain cases it was clear that funding proposals were being tailored to the expectation that a robustly integrationist bid stood more chance of gaining money.

How then does this strategy compare with the EU’s approach in the associated domains of Defence and Security issues?

EU Funding of Defence and Security Think Tanks on the Continent

A brief review of the nature of EU funding might be of value at this point as it extends to think tanks dealing with security and defence issues in other European countries. This demonstrates the importance the Commission attaches to sponsoring key policy drafters and opinion moulders in this field, which are of importance since these key and credible institutions are precisely those supposedly impartial bodies that civil servants turn to for external inspiration and justification when shaping national policies.

It helps the Commission in particular that it has its very own bespoke Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) think tank. The European Union Institute for Security Studies was set up as long ago as 2002, as an autonomous agency operating under nascent CFSP auspices. It is based in Paris with a liaison office in Brussels. Its core mission is,

“to provide analyses and fora for discussion that can be of use and relevance to the formulation of EU policy. In carrying out that mission, it also acts as an interface between European experts and decision-makers at all levels.”

Its events are designed to bring together “EU officials, national experts, academics, decision-makers, media and civil society representatives from the EU member states, as well as the rest of the world.”

Taken in the abstract this hardly seems controversial. However, the principle is predicated upon accepting the norms and general direction of CFSP integration. There is obviously no room for a Eurosceptic vantage point, or scope for an appeal not to develop CSDP further. A simple review of speakers at past conferences and events shows people at most accepting that CSDP development has “challenges” and intergovernmentalism is the current “norm”, but takes as a given that the direction of travel over the medium term is towards deeper integration. The question is never *whether*, but *administratively how*, as part of the “momentum” of the EU gaining more powers and capabilities. Pretentiously, the EUISS has established “Task Forces” to develop policies and strategies for the EU to co-opt. This as we have seen is entirely in keeping with the EU’s methodology of recruiting arm’s-length proxies to argue its integrationist case for it, and to cite in its support.

The EUISS is not a credible independent voice.¹³ Usefully, however, its staff listings demonstrate the nature of the interrelationship between academia, think tanks, and EU institutions. A former director in particular was a member of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA – today, the European Political Strategy Centre, EPSC) of the European Commission, in charge of relations with think tanks and research centres.

It would be instructive, but a massive demand on time, to draw up a link diagram showing the revolving door relationships between a number of key European think tanks, personnel, and EU funding. We are obliged instead to briefly focus on the nature of the support and links a few in turn.

The **Centre for Applied Policy Research** (CAP) is based in Germany and was founded in 1995. It is associated with LMU Munich (a university), “with a particular focus on questions of European integration.”¹⁴ A 2017 research paper supports greater outreach programmes by the Commission towards citizens “to prevent the latter from voicing their frustrations in a different form, such as by supporting EU-skeptical, populist parties.”¹⁵ Engaging Europe’s youth with the EU structures is, along with general EU strategic direction, one of its core priorities. Commissioner Ollie Rehn in giving a keynote speech at the centre as far back as 2006 applauded its staff for supporting the Commission’s work on enlargement, and one academic in particular “whose contribution to the study of European integration I admired as an academic, and which I find valuable now as a policy-maker.”¹⁶ It lists the European Commission

13 This is despite it being funded largely by member states themselves. However, this funding is fixed, and therefore not contingent on output.

14 <http://www.eufp.eu/centre-applied-policy-research-cap>

15 <https://www.cap-lmu.de/download/2017/CAP-Working-Paper-2017-01.pdf>

16 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-06-626_en.htm

as one of its partners.¹⁷

The **Centre for European Policy Studies** (CEPS) has been described in a LSE paper in telling terms;

“A lively think-tank world also exists within Brussels itself. Many think-tanks receive a large share of their funding from research-commissioning EU bodies, but private corporations are also important financiers. One example is the Centre for European Policy Studies. If funding is a proxy for relevance or even influence, then it must be one of the more substantial players in Brussels. Over a third of its 7.6 million euro budget is funded by the EU and about 20 per cent comes from private corporations. Its research programmes seem to mirror the EU Commission’s core directorate general structure.”¹⁸

A Senior Research Fellow, who is also a former EU ambassador, penned a piece in June for the Euractiv website entitled “Brexit: are they insane?” It comments include “Brexit becomes indeed before our very eyes the dreadful mistake many had suspected,” and concludes, “How to get out of this farcical tragedy, when neither the Prime Minister, Cabinet sub-committee, Cabinet in plenary, nor Parliament can rule sanely in the interests of the people? Only one way now. A second referendum, or ‘People’s Vote’ as it is now being proposed.” Further comment here is superfluous.

The **European Council on Foreign Relations** (ECFR) is headed up by a former staffer from the CER (see below) who wrote a book entitled *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, and ran a think tank that was closely associated with Tony Blair.¹⁹ One of its co-chairs is a former Commissioner; another a former EU Special Envoy. It has seven sub offices. The UK membership of its council consists of 26 people, a majority of whom have self-identified as being pro-EU and a number strongly anti-Brexit.²⁰ The organisation does now and again at least acknowledge there are Eurosceptics out

17 <https://www.cap-lmu.de/english/cap/partners-network.php>

18 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/71709/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-The%20role%20of%20think-tanks%20in%20the%20EU%20policy%20process%20remains%20largely%20uncharted%20territory%20for%20political%20sc.pdf> Figures for funding, here and elsewhere, relate to the latest published statistics (generally for 2017).

19 <http://www.ecfr.eu/profile/C18>

20 The full list, without categorisation but of general interest in itself, is as follows - Douglas Alexander, Alexander Betts, Charles Clarke, Ian Clarkson, Robert Cooper, Brendan Cox, Flick Drummond, Andrew Duff, Timothy Garton Ash, Heather Grabbe, Charles Grant, Damian Green, Jo Johnson, Mary Kaldor, Mark Leonard, Daniel Levy, Adam Lury, Kirsty McNeill, Anand Menon, David Miliband, Andrew Puddephatt, Nicola Reindorp, Emma Reynolds, Janet Royall, Rory Stewart, Chuka Umunna.

there, but token inclusion occurs without impeding its general direction.²¹ Commentaries include such headings as “May must withstand Johnson’s bonfire of the vanities - If she does not, the Johnson sabotage effort will have succeeded, and the outlook for the negotiations and the country’s future will be grim indeed”; and “Rejecting suicide, Britain settles for self-harm on Brexit”. Its donors include the Commission, the (Commission backed) EU-Japan Centre, and the Commission’s offices in the UK.

The **European Institute for Asian Studies** (EIAS) ominously describes itself as “a leading Think and Do Tank based in Brussels, the capital of the European Union.”²² It “seeks to act as a focal point for EU-Asia relations and studies in Europe”, and notes “The EIAS network comprises a rich cross-section of disciplines and sectors, officials and civil society actors, policy makers and policy shapers, scholars and diplomats, from all over the world” (including the University of East Anglia). It was set up with EP and Commission funding in 1989.²³

The **European Institute of Public Administration** (EIPA) is a quango established in 1981, but because of its work supporting officialdom is worth referencing here. It is funded by both member states and the Commission, largely covering EU law and institutional procedure, but also paying for publications and some research. This appears to be through external liaison with academics, for example with the universities of Bristol and Aberdeen, CEPS and others, on EU-CIVCAP and developing EU policy over conflict prevention and intervention.

The **European Policy Centre** (EPC) is based in Brussels, and gets €250,000 from EU funds.²⁴ Its mission statement states it is “dedicated to fostering European integration through analysis and debate”.

Friends of Europe supposedly takes a different format in operating as a forum that brings people in rather than running as a standard think tank, though the extensive modern staff register rather seems to bely the original set up today. It has been a prolific commentator on EU policy (and bombardier of MEP email in-trays) since 1999, when it was set up by a journalist from the Financial Times. While claiming to be neutral, it considers Brexit and the retreat from current levels of EU integration to be negatives. Its annual report for 2017 observed,

21 Consider what can be drawn from the end wording of the joint letter that is here: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_world_will_not_stop_a_statement_from_leading_europeans7061

22 <http://www.eias.org/about-us/>

23 <http://waterstonesbru.blogspot.com/2014/04/dick-gupwell-interview.html>

24 http://www.epc.eu/about_financing.php

“Many Europeans welcome the rise of intergovernmental authority as opposed to power wielded by the EU institutions. They see the Council as preferable to having the EU run by faceless and unelected bureaucrats who seem indifferent to the needs of ordinary people and are immune to democratic controls. But that’s an inaccurate and prejudiced view”²⁵

Its President is a former Commission Vice President. Its trustees include another former VP, a former Commissioner, two former EP Presidents, Michel Barnier, and a number of former EU staffers and MEPs. The European Commission, European Parliament, and EIB are each recorded as having donated at least €40,000 each.

The **German Institute for International and Security Affairs** (SWP) declares funding from the European Commission.²⁶ It has had an office in Brussels since 2009. In June 2018, it published a paper saying that Brexit weakened the UK diplomatically and endorsed greater linkage over the development of an EU intervention capability (though this was expressed in a more balanced way than expressed by some of the other think tanks).

The **Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy** (ELIAMEP) in June 2018 hosted an invite-only roundtable on EU Defence integration. At the time of writing there is no information on the discussion, but the back record of the speakers invited implies the output varied from mildly to very supportive (which would qualify as what’s seen as a ‘balanced range of opinions’ at these sorts of events). Its research funding since 2009 primarily comes from the European Commission.²⁷

A fuller appreciation of the spread of EU financing can be obtained by perusal of the EU’s budget as broken down into several key budget lines, and also the register of lobbyists.²⁸ But a further hint can be obtained indirectly by glancing at the EU’s own go-to place for academic input. The EU runs ORBIS, which is an information hub. As its managers explain,

“ORBIS is powered by ESPAS, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, a unique inter-institutional project aimed at strengthening the EU’s efforts in the crucial area of forward planning. ESPAS brings together the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Secretariat General of the Council of the European Union and the European External Action Service to strengthen the Union’s collective administrative capacity to identify and analyse the

25 https://friendsofeurope.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/FoE_annual-report_WEB.pdf

26 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/friends-and-partners/sponsors/>

27 <http://www.eliamep.gr/en/about-us/funding/>

28 http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm and <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/searchControllerPager.do?declaration=&search=search>

key trends and challenges, and the resulting policy choices, which are likely to confront Europe and the wider world in the decades ahead.”²⁹

It does this by acting as an online information node, that in effect channels academic papers towards those in the EU institutions that are looking for reference material. It does this in EP terms, for example, by linking in with URBIS, which is the counterpart for MEPs engaged in legislative consultation and who are looking for subject matter experts.

If you are in a position to funnel and filter who those external experts are, then you have a measure of influence over how legislation is developed.

If we take the subject of “Defence”, there are 80 entries that have been uploaded as reference studies. The authors are listed in Box D, below;

Box D: Authors of Defence Documents Accessible to EU Lawmakers on the ORBIS Reference System (including joint work)	
Author	Number of documents shared online
Centre for Strategic and International Studies	19
Atlantic Council	15
Munich Security Conference	10
SWP	9
EUISS	8
European Commission	5
European Parliament, NATO, ISS, Europol, EEAS	4
Chatham House, RAND, Air and Space Agency, UK MoD	3
World Economic Forum, Eurodéfense-France, ICSPA, Council on Foreign Relations, The Dahrendorf Forum, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, UK Government Office for Science	2

²⁹ <https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/>

Author	Number of documents shared online
Economist, National Intelligence Council, CEPS, ASEAN, Fondapol, Centre for a New American Security, Australian Defence College, McKinsey, ARES, Chicago Council, Robert Schuman Foundation	1

It might be some reassurance to Eurosceptics to note the presence of non-EU funded institutions on the list, in particular US think tanks, and the Atlantic Council which is associated with NATO itself (though RAND, for example, is in fact recorded as having received EU grants). However, it is also important to consider the material drawn from these bodies and why they are being included. CSIS is a massive and highly considered think tank based in the capital city of the United States, the world's superpower. Its works that are cited are rather more of a technical or global nature, for instance considering future developments in Asia Pacific. The Atlantic Council is too closely associated with NATO concepts to ignore, but in any event its output is caveated by splits within NATO itself over European Defence integration. The Munich Security Conference is a collection of middle ground output from VVIPs.

However, it is with the 'less frequent flyers' that we start to see the real discussion emerging over the more controversial aspects of European Defence integration, the elements that would feed into studies that raise 'do we or don't we' questions. US think tank output does not tend to reflect on individual administrative elements of CSDP development, for obvious reasons of strategic focus. The EU-funded output does.

The SWP we encountered above, along with the EUISS. The vantage points of the European institutions over whether they should be granted more power can easily be predicted, and citing them repeats established policy intent and aspiration as a given.

This is just a snapshot as it were of one shelf of one library. Even if one approaches this with a measure of anecdotal caution, what is instantly clear from the selection is the marked absence of material that rebuts from first principles the notion that the EU should be developing further capabilities and integrating more. It also correspondingly seems that, of think tanks based in Europe, organisations that receive EU funding are more likely to become 'required reading'. We might otherwise in any event be able to predict this development, since those very entities are the ones that have been commissioned to undertake research in the field, and obviously the original funding needs to be justified.

But what of think tanks reflecting on European security that are based in the United Kingdom? Does EU largesse head hither, and risk corrupting the integrity of their output?

The UK Situation

The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is a prince amongst think tanks, having been founded in 1831 by the Duke of Wellington. It prides itself on the quality of its output, and on its objectivity. It describes itself as the “podium of choice” for world leaders and eminent policymakers. It also states that it “rejects funding that is incompatible with its independence or honesty.”³⁰

However, given the self-interested motivation underpinning the Commission’s outreach scheme, the scale of EU funding of RUSI cannot but raise serious questions about the implications and potential price tag that arise from EU donatives. Of RUSI’s £6.6 million budget for the financial year to 2017³¹ the European Commission is cited as having provided upwards of £1 million of this.³² Strikingly, and alarmingly, this puts it two funding categories higher than the next biggest donors, who are at best providing half and perhaps less than a fifth of this sum – the bracketing is vague. Intriguingly, one of those third order donors is the Qatari Government, and funding even at that level has been criticised by campaign group Open Democracy as meaning RUSI cannot be trusted to provide impartial commentary on Gulf politics.³³

The nature of the EU funding and where it goes to is not clear: it might conceivably be exclusive seed funding, or spent on tasked projects. As a result, it is not clear if funding elsewhere listed by the Commission should be counted as part of this total or separately. The nature of the figures suggest they are supplementary. In any event, RUSI projects listed by the Commission as having received EU grants include,

- * €117,082 in 2017 for a major joint project on *Strengthening and Energizing EU-Central Asia Relations*;
- * €76,130 in 2016 in support of a *Programme to promote activities in the field of the protection of the European Union’s financial interests*;
- * €339,145 in 2015 for *Collaboration Over Social Networks*;

30 <https://rusi.org/inside-rusi/rusi-funding>

31 <https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/rusi-annual-report-2017.pdf>

32 <https://rusi.org/inside-rusi/rusi-funding/supporters>

33 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourbeeb/david-wearing/why-is-bbc-presenting-rusi-as-objective-analysts-of-middle-east>

- * €2,194,500 in 2015 for *Cocaine Route Monitoring and Support*;
- * €2,000,000 in 2015 for *Critical Maritime Routes*;
- * €999,915 in 2014 for *Cocaine Route Monitoring and Support*;
- * €357,791 in 2014 for *Countering Lone Actor Terrorism*;
- * €2,000,000 in 2013 (the year such EU funding seems to have begun) for *Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism in the Horn of Africa*.³⁴

It is a simple observation to note that this demonstrates an unquestionable level of funding dependency on a single external outside source, which itself happens to be pursuing a broader political agenda. Suggesting there is a possible risk to the independence of the institution arising from this should be uncontroversial.

For an institution like RUSI, this should be a major concern. It is however correspondingly also a much broader one to the rest of us. RUSI has a considerable degree of influence in Whitehall and wider circles, and to some extent sets the discussion agenda in its field. Its advice is sought and respected by decision makers. RUSI members meanwhile are reticent to go public with their criticisms. But specific examples suggested by a number of friends of the institution, and cited to this author, include the following;

- * Events tailored for the RUSI's own academics and "Euro-leaning officials" rather than more widely;
- * A reticence to discuss key components of European Defence Integration such as EDF and EDIDP, which carry policy implications in their own right;
- * Lack of understanding of small print detail as a consequence of missing the interconnected aspects of the subject;
- * A privileged level of cooperation with the CER in several fields that endorses the latter as a supposedly middle ground organisation (we cannot imagine, by contrast, RUSI ever having contemplated a joint paper with the Bruges Group, Business for Britain, or even Open Europe, for example).

The suggestion, perhaps unkindly, separately offered to this author by three event attendees is that the Institute does not have a deep grasp of the subject matter.

In any event, we might also cite as an example a day long event hosted jointly with the UK in a Changing Europe in May 2016 – that is to say, at the very point in time

³⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm

when the referendum debate was in full swing.³⁵ Of its speakers, a review of their output suggests that one third of them practised academic neutrality in their personal professions over the subject of Brexit, while two thirds fell into the Remain camp. Nobody on the panels, however, is readily identifiable as being a Brexit supporter.

Or we might consider an otherwise largely refrained paper from three weeks before the referendum poll, which then concludes by stating,

“The nationalist instincts that drive the ‘leave’ campaign have much in common with similar resurgent movements across the Western world – from Donald Trump in the US to Marine Le Pen in France, from anti-migrant parties across northern Europe to authoritarian populists in Austria, Hungary and Poland”³⁶

This rather tars the “leave campaign” with a sticky brush.

RUSI also prompted press coverage suggesting Brexit would weaken the UK’s position in NATO, including the loss of the DSACEUR slot.³⁷ And again, a RUSI report underpinned media criticisms that the UK should be closely engaged with the EU as it developed the PESCO spectrum.³⁸

Particularly baffling was a briefing paper from February 2018 stating that a “disruptive Brexit” (a term open to abuse) would have highly damaging implications for peace, security and democracy across the continent.³⁹ It considered US defence procurement as a threat to the UK which should drive it towards cooperation with the EU, and (though it does not say so) by default into the developing PESCO systems: “the case for close cooperation between the industries of the EU27 and the UK remains as strong as ever.” It proposed continued deep UK engagement on justice and home affairs (JHA) matters, adapting to Brexit on the basis of a temporary extension of the oversight role of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and even the prospect of “regulatory alignment” – a ‘fax democracy’ approach that had already been ruled out by Government red lines. Even so, it declared, “the UK is likely to have to go further to reassure the EU on its willingness to adhere to EU regulatory standards and court judgments.” Perhaps most strikingly absurd, even if we put to one side an aside that sets hares running about the Northern Ireland peace process, was the claim that the UK’s withdrawal from both the Customs Union and

35 <https://rusi.org/event/uk-and-eu-membership>

36 <https://rusi.org/publication/briefing-papers/SDSR-Brexit>

37 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-latest-news-uk-lose-most-senior-nato-military-position-eu-european-union-deputy-supreme-a7519196.html>

38 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-european-security-uk-eu-deal-terrorism-crime-extremist-theresa-may-munich-a8212476.html>

39 <https://rusi.org/publication/briefing-papers/brexit-and-european-security>

the Single Market “has the potential to further strengthen nationalist political forces across Europe.” This is an old and lazy assertion which also unfortunately happens to be straight from the Brussels press office copybook.

It has taken nineteen months from the signature of the PESCO foundation documents for RUSI to finally start to grapple with the implications of the Defence Union, and what flows from strategic autonomy for the ‘EU military’ in particular.⁴⁰ It may yet be that RUSI reflects more seriously on the bipolar statements coming from Brussels, reviewing the genuine risks to NATO that are associated with the EU’s ambitions. It might yet look beyond the platitudinal half of the bipolar rhetoric from the EU’s institutions. One hopes so.

The **Royal Institute of International Affairs** is otherwise known as Chatham House. It boasts of its integrity and of how in order to maintain it “The institute receives no subsidy from the UK government or any other source.” And yet, amongst its partners in its latest annual report, it lists the European Commission.⁴¹

Its definition of partner is as follows;

“Partners provide significant long-term support for the institute’s research and other activities.”

Amongst its Research and Event Supporters is listed the European Investment Bank (EIB). Corporate members include the EIB, the EP’s UK Office, and the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, though we might discount this latter category as simply being a mechanism for guaranteeing seats at any interesting speech.

The **International Institute for Strategic Studies** (IISS) has been operating since 1958, and is a multi-nodal think tank. Again, it underlines that it only accepts funding that will not limit its research or institutional independence.⁴² In its listings of support for Research and Conference Activities, in the top level bracket of over £500,000 declared, it lists the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium.⁴³

The IISS constitutes one of the four institutions listed as comprising the Network.⁴⁴ It is thus a major recipient of EU funds. The purpose of the network is clearly linked to EU policy development, since it is stated in these terms;

“The fruits of the network discussions can be submitted in the form of reports

40 <https://rusi.org/commentary/eu-strategic-autonomy-and-ambition-pesco>

41 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017-07-18-annual-review.pdf>

42 <https://www.iiss.org/governance/fundin>

43 <https://www.iiss.org/governance/funding---research-and-conference-activitie>

44 <https://www.nonproliferation.eu/about/>

and recommendations to the responsible officials within the European Union.

“This network aims at supporting EU action to counter proliferation. To that end, the Consortium can also establish cooperation with specialized institutions and research centres in third countries, in particular in those with which the EU is conducting specific non-proliferation dialogues.”

The **Centre for European Reform** (CER) sees itself as a ‘critical friend’ of the European Union. This is how members have described themselves in meetings over the years in the presence of this author. It is certainly not an institution that would be considered eurosceptic by any Eurosceptic. A report from the LSE, itself not a noted bastion of that cause, observed,

“Largely reliant on corporate funding, it is in favour of closer European integration.”⁴⁵

In its own terms, it explains,

“We regard European integration as largely beneficial but recognise that in many respects the Union does not work well. We also think that the EU should take on more responsibilities globally, on issues ranging from climate change to security.”⁴⁶

This is commendably upfront and honest, though might be stated more frequently by those citing its output.

Equally commendably, the CER does not presently appear to be a major recipient of EU taxpayer funding. It appears to have only received in the last couple of years a small amount, probably to cover someone’s attendance at a Commission-funded conference. However, this funding restraint might be accounted for by an increased level of support from pro-EU businesses in recent years – it is notable that its Advisory Board includes a number of key Continuity Remainers with big business links.

In itself this raises a separate and equally intriguing question as to the extent to which Remain figures in big businesses, that themselves enjoy close lobbying terms with the EU and were wheeled out corporately in support of a Remain vote, have been acting as a form of proxy conduit for bankrolling think tanks that support giving more power to the EU institutions.

45 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/71709/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-The%20role%20of%20think-tanks%20in%20the%20EU%20policy%20process%20remains%20largely%20uncharted%20territory%20for%20political%20sc.pdf>

46 <http://www.cer.eu/about#tabs>

We leave big anti-Brexit businesses like Airbus to explain their policy towards funding think tanks, and any expectations that might accompany such grants, for themselves.

In any event, the CER has historically been in receipt of EU funds. For example, over 2011-13 it was recorded as receiving an EU subsidy of €20,000.

Sometimes the name does what it says on the tin. [4]The Federal Trust campaigns for federal forms of government, within the UK and within the EU, as well as globally. Its Director is a former MEP who left the Conservatives because they weren't pro-EU enough – again commendably, he has always been upfront about his views. Its Advisory Council includes some of the leading lights of the Remain rearguard campaign. It also says something about the state of UK universities that it is a member in its own right of UACES, the UK's academic association for EU studies. It received €10,000 from the EU in 2015; €19,500 in 2012; €35,000 in 2011; €24,640 in 2010; €13,951 in 2009; and €40,000 in 2008. It is a relatively small scale operation whose EU funding has declined as supportive British MEPs lost their seats. [5]

The **Foreign Policy Centre** describes itself as “an outward-looking, non-partisan international affairs think tank based in the UK.” Its mission is to “provide an open and accessible space for the ideas, knowledge and experience of experts, academics and activists from across the world, so that their voices can be heard by a global audience of citizens and decision makers in order to find solutions to today's international challenges.”

This clearly includes engaging with the European Commission. It received €19,000 from the EU in 2015; €20,000 in 2014; €20,000 in 2013; €16,500 in 2012; €20,000 in 2011; €20,000 in 2010; and €20,000 in 2009. It seems to have made a more conscious effort to demonstrate balance than other think tanks, but a 2016 paper demonstrates the limitations of what can be achieved when operating within preconditions – in this instance, what measure of public trust can be won back by the EU institutions without the return of any powers as an option.⁴⁷

A noted Labour-affiliated think tank is the **Fabian Society**. Judging by a comment piece hosted for a Shadow Defence Spokesman in January 2018, it considers EU Defence procurement integration to be a positive development. The piece observes “Rather than become ever more reliant on the US, a much greater emphasis needs to be placed on collaborative projects, especially with other European nations.”⁴⁸

It names the European Commission as one of its Recent Partners. It is listed on EU

47 <https://fpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1770.pdf>

48 <https://fabians.org.uk/the-future-of-britains-defence-industry/>

databases as having received €19,000 from the EU in 2015; €19,800 in 2014; €19,500 in 2012; €17,500 in 2011; €17,500 in 2010; €17,500 in 2009; and €14,400 in 2008.

Impact on the UK-EU Security Debate

Demonstrably, there is from the above a clear money link that unites a partisan element in the security debate – the European Commission – with think tanks, whose output is intended to influence policy attitudes in governments, professions, and industries over how much power that funder should be given.

What is less immediately obvious is the personal aspect. In a number of cases, the institutions employ staff that are not UK nationals – indeed the CER for example makes play of underlining that half of its staff come from other EU countries. In itself, this generates an under-appreciated risk of bias.

One's personal upbringing, however much one seeks to mitigate it, will have a bearing on the formative process of an academic. This is inevitable, due to culture, language (and accessibility of ideas much more broadly), history, family, social, and geographic reality. Education is imprinted upon the individual who has already been formed by the accident of their upbringing.

Of course, individuals as they develop intellectually are able to accept, modify, or reject their views based on personal experiences and reflection. But consider for a moment what one might style 'the challenge of the middle ground'.

Let's take as an abstract a theoretical think tank that deals in economics. Let us now presume it is based in Limerick. Depending on a range of preconditions, its staff may encompass a swathe of viewpoints over economic modelling, the Laffer Curve, and the merits of state intervention. But what happens if it now recruits five members of staff from Cuba, Venezuela and (*reductio ad absurdum*) North Korea? The middle ground in those environments is likely to be well to the Left; and bringing them into the think tank will risk skewing attitudinal approaches correspondingly. The same applies in reverse to a think tank reviewing policy over the NHS that's based in say Swansea; bringing on board staff from outside of the culture that tends to uncritically place the institution on a pedestal may be more creative and break down assumptions constructively.

The recruitment of foreign nationals, we would argue, is correspondingly not a negative in itself. But the effects it may have on output contrasted with the domestic narrative should at least be recognised.

This becomes a real issue, however, where the institution is not only being funded by the subject of its study, but where the external authorities being hired in hail from environments which are culturally more sympathetic to it, and are furthermore part of a network trained by it. What is happening in some cases appears to be that EU nationals who are by background more inclined to be sympathetic to EU integration, who are already intrinsically by nature of their interest in the subject better disposed to EU integration, and who have been then trained up in EU studies by EU funds, are brought into an EU circuit of interlocking and mutually-reinforcing institutional bubbles.

One might take this as an inevitable consequence of recruitment processes. There is, however, the further feature of former institutional figures from the EU (or sectors where pro-EU thought is institutionalised) transferring across into academia and think tanks as second careers. Some found and run them; others move across onto the board of advisers and provide support to fundraising, in particular ex-Commission officials and MEPs.

To return to our hypothetical Irish economics think tank above, that would be like recruiting former East German civil servants onto its board of directors. The consequences should be obvious.

As an aside, these factors perhaps perhaps incidentally help account for the Southern Irish accents in past years speaking out in favour of EU integration from certain corporate business lobbies, and in particular advocating the UK joining the Euro.

It is absolutely not our intention in stating this to castigate individuals for their views. This is not a matter of declaring, "Brutus is an honourable man." For this very reason we avoid forensically taking apart some of the interesting CVs of some of the key think tank figures. But it is critically important to recognise that this risk of infused bias may be having a critical impact on how CSDP developments are being interpreted by those think tanks and commentators.

But let's consider the nature of the current debate on EU Defence integration.

A Silent Revolution

CSDP integration is unquestionably happening. A lot of material has been put into the public domain by the EU institutions, setting out what their ambitions are. A range of different views do exist amongst member states as to whether widening or deepening is preferred, but putting contemporary events into an historical timeline reminds us that this in effect is a simple matter of salami slicing priorities.

There are differences in interpretation amongst commentators that emerge over the benefits and risks arising from this integration. We might summarise them as follows;

- (a) Ambitious advocacy: CSDP integration is a good thing and something that ought to be pursued energetically;
- (b) Technical review: CSDP integration should be studied in terms of being a gradual process of improving efficiency, and mere instances of administrative evolution over how the EU works;
- (c) Strategic warning: CSDP is a significant threat to the UK (NATO and Five Eyes (FVEY)) - if you review it, as one ought, taken comprehensively and over the long term.

If one considers the corporate stances of the think tanks funded by the Commission, it so happens that it funds those that pursue the first two lines. It supports those that endorse the ideology and strategic ambition of military and security integration; and it funds those that ponder the individual pragmatic cogs working towards gradually closer integration but without considering the round, or the horizon.

But, demonstrably, if one does consider the big picture, there is a sovereign risk. It is not our intent to here repeat in full depth the material that Veterans for Britain cites to demonstrate the point, but it is worth briefly flagging up that the process includes clear areas of risk to the independence of a state that intends to be sovereign.

The EU treaties already allow for the development of “a common defence.” The process of

EU defence integration is now extremely wide-ranging, and encompasses the following -

- **Structural:** generating permanent frameworks for activity such as standing HQs and support systems;

- **Policy:** increasing central/communal decision-making, and common doctrine;
- **Financial:** creating common budgets;
- **Industrial:** generating a common EU defence industry, at the cost of shutting national production and limiting R&D capability through regional specialisation;
- **Organisational:** generating standing units, training, and pooled/commonly-funded assets.

Some proposals are both hi-vis controversies and also easy for the UK to avoid, like joining a common EU Engineer Corps. Others are more complex or obscure. They include -

- The **generation** of EU defence entities that duplicate and thus undermine NATO counterparts (notwithstanding explicit claims that they do not);
- **Strategic development**, meaning the UK has endorsed new jointery before DExEU has reviewed it;
- **Rationalisation of procurement**, generating potential Single Market obligations even after Brexit;
- **Legal implications** arising from CJEU oversight, both commercially and operationally.

Since November 2016, the EU has launched a range of deeply ambitious projects. These include the European Defence Fund (EDF), the European Defence Research Programme (EDRP) and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP). The core element to this sits with the European Defence Agency (EDA). The intent that has emerged from Whitehall and the Commission has been that the UK will end up in an arrangement with it that is “closer than a third country”. However, this carries consequences that are universally being glossed over: the only existing model for this is Norway, which is required to be heavily compliant with EU strictures. Meanwhile, the MoD has been signing off the EU’s plans pushing massively towards Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) without any apparent review of what the consequences are for its own freedom of action as other parts of Whitehall commit to major levels of administrative association.

These developments are closely interlinked and commitments follow on from one another, as the following diagram succinctly demonstrates.



These are the concerns. But to reflect on the output of UK think tanks funded by the EU, one would not know it. The narrative is one of technical delivery, not addressing the consequences or desirability from first principles. The strategic risks are rarely cited in papers; they are passed by without comment on speakers' platforms; and they are dismissed when experts are asked in front of Parliamentary Committees.

Risk and Mitigation

The study we referred to earlier, that reviewed the EU's funding of academia in the realm of Social Sciences, was able to identify six areas of concern that arose as a result.⁴⁹We might usefully ask the same questions here.

(i) *Why is the EU funding something in the first place?* In the case of CSDP funding, it can be argued that subsidising the larger think tanks may be generating some fresh product. However, one would expect PESCO to be a subject they should be interested in any way. Funding for the very small think tanks has been more evidently responsible for subsidising output from sympathisers.

(ii) *Is there a risk of adding EU bias to the output?* It was clear from the Social Science funding that some research proposals were being skewed towards anticipated EU lines that would increase the likelihood of grants being made. The absence of bid paperwork in the public domain however leaves the CSDP bid considerations a matter of speculation.

(iii) *Is the EU really concerned not about the research but about the making of an EU elite?* CSDP funding would be in keeping with proven Commission objectives elsewhere.

(iv) *Does the fact of big money on big projects increase bias risk?* We suggest that the prospect of bias risk from EU grants is inevitable. This becomes more so if grants become normative, form a large proportion of overall spending, are critical to the continued employment of staff, or are vital to maintaining a flagship project used to sell the credibility of the think tank as a 'go-to' institution more widely among potential private sector or state funders. Conversely, where the institution has been set up by supporters of the EU, there is paradoxically a reduced risk as the sponsor already knows what it is going to get. This mitigating feature here for the latter, however, does nothing to redress the lack of impartiality.

(v) *Is all the funding going to the right places?* One might suggest not, if the EU is not funding any academics or think tanks that challenge the CSDP on its basic premise.

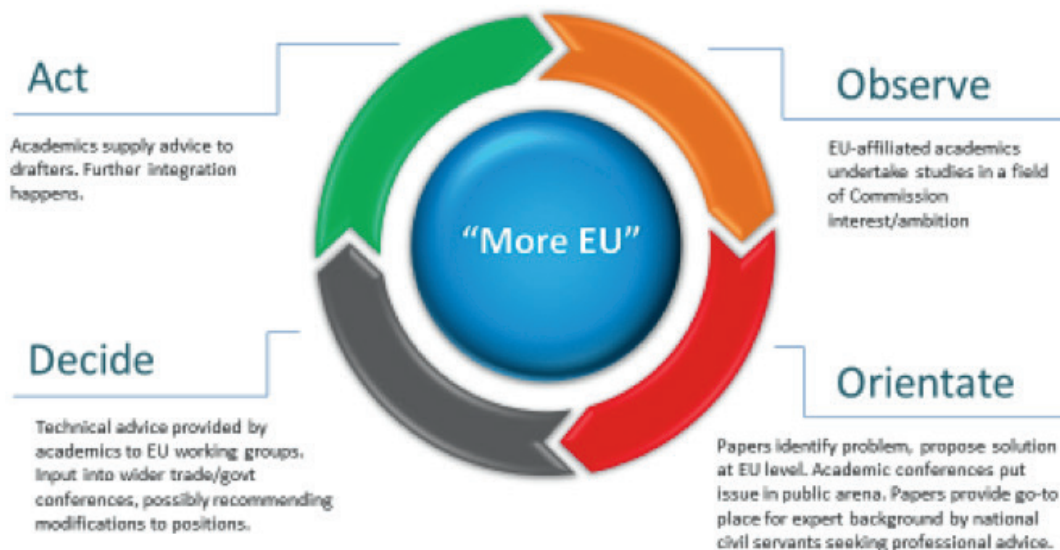
(vi) *Is academia being co-opted to justify EU activism?* We have it from the horse's mouth that it has done so elsewhere, and there is nothing to suggest it intended a different policy here. The variable is rather whether this approach is still being consciously pursued or is a legacy effect.

We might then turn to reflect on what is meant to be achieved with these hun-

⁴⁹ Op. cit.

dreds of thousands of pounds. The easiest way to visualise it is through placing think tankers on the same OODA loop that academics within teaching establishments sit.

Role of academics in the EU integration OODA Loop



(Taken from Research Interests: EU Funding and British Academia, Red Cell, 2016)

The European Commission has a track record in using its power to fund research to extend its influence into areas of currently limited or no competence. The European Parliament cross-references contracted research to justify further accruals of power during periods of treaty change.

The salty Eurocynic would no doubt express it in these terms: parts of academia are being played by the Commission in a relationship lying somewhere between symbiosis, mutual parasitism, and useful idiocy.

But it is important to underline that this is a generality. Review of the literature output generated across a range of fields demonstrates very different attitudes, just as output varies significantly from one EU state to another. Some analysts clearly do make a greater effort to engage with the countervailing Eurosceptic narrative, and some think tanks are better at deploying caveats than others.

However, the scale of the funding; the institutionalised networking of EU studies within EU frameworks, and the inherent sympathies genetically encoded within EU

studies themselves, all encompass bias risk.

It is likely that the fact of Brexit will reduce this risk – but over time, and perhaps only generationally. It may in the process generate new bias risks for the future, as alternative sources of funding emerge, and alternative centres of study develop that have weaker ties to EU authorities. Though that would be a long term consideration.

Of more immediate interest is the prospect of those advising the UK Government on its post-Brexit policy towards EU integration being amongst the very advocates of that policy. Counter-revolutionaries make poor advocates of the revolution.

The best and simplest remedy here, and the one most likely to encourage deeper reflection of the problem, would be for any recipient of EU funding who is engaged in policy development to be required to declare an interest. That would apply for both organisations and individuals.

Conclusion

A core reason why the EU funds academia and think tanks is out of self-interest. Of course in the process it generates papers that ostensibly provide external thinking, or audits that consider how effective its activities have been and how they might improve. The problem is that it too easily becomes a self-licking lollipop.

The Commission's own PR machinery has long recognised the propaganda value of its awards, and endorsed the process. It is left to grant recipients themselves to exercise self-restraint and to maintain their own impartiality. This becomes progressively more difficult the more important the money becomes to the recipient over a long period of time.

In any event, it appears that the nature of the UK's debate on CSDP, as in many other areas of academic study, has been skewed by the gravitational pull of the Commission. It is harder to assess the extent to which pro-EU businesses have played a part and acted as proxies to the EU integrationist cause. What is clear, by contrast, is that more questioning think tanks that do not take such a supportive line, and which are more Eurocritical, have not been recipients of EU largesse. This is a looped development: more EU-critical bodies would not apply for grants in the first place, knowing the small prospect of them getting them and the heavy strings that would be attached to them even if they were successful. If they are more liberal or right of centre, they would also be less inclined to ask for state (ie taxpayer) funding. Such a predicament meanwhile suits the Commission strategists just fine.

Ultimately, the single biggest fact likely to restore the full integrity of EU-funded UK think tanks working on CFSP (and any other issue) will be for the EU funds to dry up completely. This may, mostly, happen over time. In the meantime, it is only appropriate that such sponsorship be treated as a declarable interest whenever staff are proposing policy towards Brexit. The level of responsibility is particularly important where an institution is considered a leader in its field, and professes to be a trusted and impartial interlocutor.

Today's circumstances might also however generate a further opportunity for institutions like RUSI. Until fairly recently, it used to be more member-driven, allowing opportunities for relatively junior personnel within Defence and FCO structures to put forward blue sky papers. The current model is very centre-driven and top-down. It's also been accused of having become too close to the Cabinet Office over the last twenty years, having reportedly at times seen two or three people on secondment.

Box E, below, provides one member's viewpoint on how opportunities may be taken to redress this.

Table E: Former soldier and diplomat Adrian Hill is one critic of RUSI's shift in recent years away from traditional formats. In an excerpt from a piece online for Veterans for Britain, he had this to say...⁵⁰

The RUSI also has been lucky with its staff and this good fortune continues today. If enough income is the problem, why not open membership wider and welcome senior non-commissioned officers? Surely that would throw the net much further in the best direction, restore the armed forces atmosphere and encourage some lively writing for the Journal. Indeed, one 'suspects' there are more police officers among the membership these days. Why not more voices from the Law. How many scientists and engineers are there among the membership? How many experts on AI? Let's launch a recruiting drive – among all sized companies and overseas governments to replace this income from the EU Commission as a matter of urgency. Even better, surpass it handsomely. Fortunately the institute has a very good membership team for this kind of marketing campaign. Just look at the list of smaller sponsors on the website.

Right up to the 1980s of two dozen members on the RUSI Council only eight were civilians and two of them spoke for the universities, the others for their ministries and industry. Today we have the opposite. Barely a handful of former officers are involved with an RUSI Council packed with civilians, many retired from gov-

50 <http://veteransforbritain.uk/who-pays-the-piper/>

ernment jobs. They are eminent souls but the name of the institute says all you need to know – The Royal United Services Institute. Sometimes papers issued by the institute read as though written by the Treasury, Cabinet Office, FCO or all three. Therefore, may I also urge that some blue water between the RUSI and ‘Whitehall group think’ would go a long way to liven up an institute now in the capable hands of a lady from America. Let’s hear opinions from serving officers – and why not NCOs as well? When Jenny Shaw commissioned my articles for the Journal years ago – written while serving as a diplomat but about airborne forces, airmobile and armoured warfare, indeed strategy – the FCO tried to block their publication. One article ‘challenged the concepts on which the 1974/1975 Defence Review had been based.’ Damn’ right! True to the duke’s legacy, Jenny ignored their objections. She had the support of two D Day veterans – General Tony Younger who as a major on the 6 June 1944 commanded 26 Squadron RE with its AVREs for clearing mines and booby traps, filling moats and blasting pill-boxes until wounded; Rear-Admiral Teddy Gueritz who as a Commander waded ashore as a beach master and directed the landings under fire for nineteen days until wounded. Tony was the Director of the RUSI and Teddy the Deputy-Director. At the same time Christopher Foxley-Norris, who flew in the Battle of Britain, was not only Vice-President of the RUSI but Chairman of the Battle of Britain Fighter Pilots Association and also President of Leonard Cheshire’s Foundation; they had met at RAF Hullavington when learning to fly. I count myself extremely lucky and honoured to have known all four of them as friends.

The institute must take care to keep on its true compass bearing. Otherwise there is a danger that the RUSI no longer reflects the Duke’s vision. That would mean the *loss of a great champion for the men and women of our Armed Services*. I am glad that David Petraeus is our Honorary Vice-President – but at times he must feel lonely.

Taking such a check on its true compass bearings might well mean a shift away from a heavy reliance on EU money, stepping back a bit from the separate bias risks from proximity to Whitehall groupthink, and re-engaging with real sailors, soldiers and airmen.

The restoration of its grassroots might be the salvation of the likes of RUSI.

THE BRUGES GROUP

The Bruges Group is an independent all-party think tank. Set up in February 1989, its aim was to promote the idea of a less centralised European structure than that emerging in Brussels. Its inspiration was Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech in September 1988, in which she remarked that "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level...". The Bruges Group has had a major effect on public opinion and forged links with Members of Parliament as well as with similarly minded groups in other countries. The Bruges Group spearheads the intellectual battle against the notion of "ever-closer Union" in Europe. Through its ground-breaking publications and wide-ranging discussions it will continue its fight against further integration and, above all, against British involvement in a single European state.

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The Bruges Group holds regular high-profile public meetings, seminars, debates and conferences. These enable influential speakers to contribute to the European debate. Speakers are selected purely by the contribution they can make to enhance the debate.

For further information about the Bruges Group, to attend our meetings, or join and receive our publications, please see the membership form at the end of this paper. Alternatively, you can visit our website www.brugesgroup.com or contact us at info@brugesgroup.com.

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