

**‘Europeanness’ – Philosophy and Practice in the Relationship Between US and EU**

This paper is an initial exploration of ideas which aim to contribute to a larger research project looking at the impact of Euro-Atlantic exchanges and communications on ‘Europeanness’, within the larger field of cultural and political philosophy.

For the purpose of this research ‘Europeanness’ is understood as a set of ideas and identity discourses based on philosophical and political principles that have underpinned the development, functioning and integration of the European Union.

This continuous shaping process will eventually be traced in the coverage of key events implicating both North American and European actors (e.g. national elections, EU enlargement, EU constitution referenda, international security, media related legislation etc.) by several European media - with particular focus on the press in Britain, France and Italy.

The aim of this paper, while connected to this tentative research, is nevertheless more modest: that is, to offer a possible understanding of the unique position of Britain, sandwiched between the Atlanticist tradition and the imperatives of EU integration, and its current contribution to the ‘European debate’, which is closely linked to nationalist processes taking place in the media.

The United States continues to play a contrasting role in the construction of the European project, at times supportive and at times imposing limits to its development by

its sheer presence and power in the international arena. Its somewhat unfathomable influence on the way Europeans imagine the world today is possibly explained by America being regarded as an extension of European civilisation, whilst more recently Europe becoming an extension of American initiatives (Marga 1997: 232).

Although both of these general views are rather reductionist in nature, they both acknowledge common cultural traditions and the mutual exchange of philosophical principles. The communication established between the European Union and the United States should be therefore regarded as complex and constantly two-way.

Politically, they both share the same Kantian principle of a rational and enlightened union of states aiming to protect peace. Yet one previous main political difference, which has also shaped their media systems in slightly different ways, used to be the openness of the American society, as opposed to the closeness of ethnically stable nation-states. At least this used to be a differentiating characteristic until America's conservative right abandoned the universalist ideal and became nationalist.

Traditionally the American model of multiculturalism is 'cosmopolitan', accepting a 'post-ethnic' hybridisation of identities in its accommodation of immigrants (Kymlicka supports here Hollinger's thesis, in Kymlicka 2001: 266-8). This model has been successfully applied in both US and to some extent Canada (note: both Hollinger and Kymlicka acknowledge that the model has never solved the problem of African-Americans) and has been recommended for application in European countries, where until recently the 'pluralist' model used to be dominant. The pluralist model of assigning group rights exclusively to those groups seen as permanent and enduring is now slowly

being abandoned in Europe under the pressures of accommodating various and numerous immigrant groups and diasporas.

It is therefore somewhat paradoxical that at the present time the US is turning away from liberal and universalist philosophies in order to 'nationalise' in a more ethnic and nationalistic fashion. The collapse of the liberal project in the US and the strengthening of the conservative right is due, according to some researchers, to the design of ahead of time, unpopular and badly 'sold' programmes, lacking a full public discussion, a lack of connection between elites and people, especially in the case of race and welfare policies, and a chaotic 'rights revolution' (Graham in Chafe 2003). These internal factors have been aggravated by the external ones, primarily the current sense of 'national crisis' and the prospect of a 'lengthy struggle against global terrorism' (Graham in Chafe 2003: 316). The success of the conservative right is based therefore on its ability to sell itself as tough on crime, supportive of the military, worshiping the values of family and flag and hence the US media, like all media always quick to jump on the nationalist bandwagon, contributes overwhelmingly to this 'patriotic' imposition.

A process of 'nationalising' (term used by the American sociologist Rogers Brubaker) is now taking place in America. The role of media in this nationalising process was evident in the way the American media have displayed a patriotic alignment with the government and a lack of ethical and critical engagement during the coverage of the recent Iraq conflict. Current lack of American support for European integration can also be linked to Europe's present refusal to fit into an Atlantic framework designed by the Americans (Lundestad 1998: 169).

The concept of united Europe was and remains modelled on the American open society ideal, which has put pressure on the historic primacy of the nation state and national community in Europe. Many European nations have had to come some way in trying to accommodate supra and sub-national structures in their rather inflexible statal organizations. Despite such progress, it has to be acknowledged that the absence of a European public sphere remains conspicuous (Ward 2002) and its actualisation should be the next EU priority. This disparity is apparent in the various national answers to international events in the absence of a 'European' public opinion. It can also be identified in the divergent coverage of the European Union and the different degrees of Europeanness displayed by various European media.

Yet the European project soldiers on, having just integrated another chunk of the continent in May 2004. This process of 'Europeanisation' is not only shaped around common cultural and political traditions, but also the production of 'otherness', of which the US is now integral part. Europeanness is strengthened through opposition to US's current international exploits and to the nationalist advances of American's conservative right on the field left empty by the failure of its liberal project. The last war in Iraq is just another indication that all is not well between the traditional Euro-Atlantic allies.

Yet in this picture Britain cuts a clearly different stand (pro-American and anti-European), which is going to receive even more attention in the next two years in the argumentative climate accompanying the national EU constitutional referenda.

Britain's obstructive position with regards to EU integration has been thoroughly and repeatedly analysed with specific application to the anti-Europeanism of the British

media, particularly the press. In just one of these analyses, Anderson and Weymouth, for example, list geographical factors (separateness from the continent) and the absence of a hostile occupation experience, the dominance of English leading to a lack of cultural engagement with other European cultures and the persistence of certain residues of imperialism (1999: 178), as among the principal causes of Britain's almost unique anti-European stance. Such cultural factors are coupled with the self-interest of major parties, proprietorial influence and media commercialism, the absence of professional journalistic standards, resources and specialised knowledge (Anderson/Weymouth 1999: 183).

Other causes for the pro-American rather than the pro-European orientation of UK's political philosophy is UK's close military alliance with the US, especially a high degree of integration in intelligence operations, and more obvious cultural and linguistic links (Anderson/Weymouth 1999: 160).

With regard to media positioning, the impact of American journalism on British journalism is well documented in the Americanisation (e.g. Tunstall) and MacDonalidization (Ritzer) theses and now in the resurrection of Huntington's legacy of war between civilisations and consequent Muslim backlash, which is sure to preoccupy media researchers in Britain for some time. With regard to the practice and teaching of journalism, journalism theory in Britain is still grounded in American based theories: the Frankfurt School and Chomsky's 'propaganda model', an obsession with the Watergate measuring tape, and a culture of political cynicism, largely imported from the US, that substitutes true investigative journalism with aggressiveness - Lloyd 2004: 101 (John

Lloyd 2004 argues, for example, that the journalistic mistakes in the Gilligan-Kelly 'affair' were caused by a drive to damage the government at all costs).

To all these causes one must add another similarity between Britain and the US, which could account for the bypassing of ideological hues in the Labour support of both liberal and conservative US governments. In contrast to its European partners, which are more comfortable with downplaying their nationalising processes and are appropriating a 'cosmopolitan' philosophy of group rights, Britain is undergoing a more 'nationalising' stage. This is determined by the aggressive affirmation of historic minority nationalism (Scotland, Wales) and the preoccupation with the necessity for a more ethnic response on behalf of the English majority (also with regards to immigration) - this obsession is apparent in the amount of writing on the subject by Haseler (1996), Hastings (1997), Paxman (1999), Heffer (1999), Marr (2000), Alibhai-Brown (2000), Linsell (2001), and Kumar (2003) and the Scottish accounts of Paterson (1994), McCrone (1992 & 1998), Nairn (2000), Hearn (2000), Harvie and Jones (2000) and Schlesinger et. al. (2001).

This reinvigorated nationalising process is naturally linked with pro-American attitudes, as the US provides a good current example of aggressive patriotism which finds a legitimising affirmation on the international stage. British nationalising therefore regards Europe as 'the other' and links anti-Europeanness with the discrimination against the new immigrants.

Countries which are uncomfortable with their uncertain national identity feel threatened by the openness of the European project. This assumption is also proven by some new EU members from Eastern Europe, where alarming signs of anti-Europeanism

can be partially justified by the continuation of a nationalising process that was renewed in different forms after the fall of communism. These are also the countries which foster pro-American feelings (e.g. Romania, a future EU member, is one such country where nationalism thrives and where pro-American feelings go hand in hand with anti-Europeanness voices).

As Charles Grant, the director of the Centre for European Reform correctly remarks in the December 2004 special issue of *The Economist*, in countries like The Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany, most mainstream papers are likely to back the EU constitution, with some criticism coming only from the tabloids, the extremes and the populists. Polish coverage, he also mentions, is going to be ‘unenthusiastic and sometimes negative’, but nowhere near the hostility of the most British press, including broadsheets like *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. As a result, the different degrees of anti-Europeanness are likely to be measured against the various intensities of nationalising processes as displayed in the media, traditionally the ally of nationalist processes (Gellner, Anderson, Billig etc.).

If this assumption is true, then internally, ‘breaches’ in the anti-Europeanness wall should be accompanied by diverging national circumstances. Scotland therefore provides an interesting example. The coverage of the second Iraq war in the two Scottish national broadsheets has shown their pro-governmental (somewhat pro-American) bias, evident in the dominance of elite sources and a failure to address critical issues like civilian casualties or environmental damage, with *The Herald* presenting a more negative view of the war than *The Scotsman* (Robertson 2004). However, Scottish media anti-war voices

seem more consistent than the rather isolated position of the *Daily Mirror* among the London-based papers. Also, *The Herald*, the Scottish paper with a less problematic representation of identity and located in a clear Scottish framework, is also the most critical of Britain's role in Iraq and also a pro-European paper.

In conclusion, Britain's unique position with regard to its choice of foreign allies and its constant anti-Europeanness can partly be explained by the existing nationalising process which moves away from the open 'cosmopolitan' model slowly gaining hold in other European countries, and towards a more ethnic and closed process, which used to be the European norm. Similar patriotic responses from the US make the American government a more natural ally and an example of internal nationalising through the affirmation of patriotic feelings within an international, external structure (coinciding with toned down ideological divides after the end of the Cold War). Needless to say, the UK runs the danger of missing out from its contribution to Europeanness, which despite any present worries about EU constitutional referenda seems an unstoppable process.

Of course, the absence of a proper European public sphere (and the absence of a true European media or a common European communication strategy) remains a point of concern, although the debates sparked by the proposed EU constitution might very well trigger an initiation of a more consistent form of European public sphere of rational debate.

British engagement in this process could be encouraged by the fact that English is coming to dominate as EU's working language, presently England shares a similar drive for economic reform with most other European countries, has the same security needs

and the same ‘unsolvable’ problems (e.g. immigration). 2005 is branded as ‘the year of the people’ and most media and politicians should use the occasion to address the representative and democratic deficit not only at a national, but also European level.

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