

# EUROPEAN UNION AND DISUNION

REFLECTIONS ON EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Ash Amin and Philip Lewis



BRITISH  
ACADEMY

*for the humanities and social sciences*

# European Union and Disunion: Reflections on European Identity

Ash Amin and Philip Lewis

**THE BRITISH ACADEMY**  
10–11 Carlton House Terrace  
London SW1Y 5AH  
[www.britishacademy.ac.uk](http://www.britishacademy.ac.uk)

Registered Charity: Number 233176  
© The British Academy 2017

Published May 2017

ISBN 978-0-85672-620-0

Designed by Soapbox, [www.soapbox.co.uk](http://www.soapbox.co.uk)  
Printed by Pureprint

# Contents

Acknowledgements	v
About the Authors	vi
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Philip Lewis and Ash Amin</i>	
<b>Part 1: Europe as Idea</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Legacies, Histories, and Ideas of Europe	7
<i>Gerard Delanty</i>	
2. Caution: European Narrative. Handle with Care!	14
<i>Wolfgang Streeck</i>	
3. What is Europe? Place, Idea, Action	23
<i>Paul Stock</i>	
4. Where Europe Begins – on Movement, Refuge, and Migration	29
<i>Dariusz Gafijczuk</i>	
<b>Part 2: Europe as Practice</b>	<b>34</b>
5. European Others and Others in Europe? Entangled Migration Histories of the Postwar Era	35
<i>Elizabeth Buettner</i>	
6. The Crisis of ‘the Crisis of Europe’	41
<i>Albena Azmanova</i>	
7. Ideas of European Failure	47
<i>David Runciman</i>	

<b>Part 3: These Islands and Europe</b>	<b>54</b>
8. These Islands <i>Onora O'Neill</i>	55
9. These Islands and Europe <i>Helen Wallace</i>	59
10. Turning Inward: Brexit, Encroachment Narratives and the English as a 'Secret People' <i>Patrick Wright</i>	64
11. The European History of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland: a Post-Brexit Reflection <i>Kylie Murray</i>	73
12. History and Attitudes towards Europe: Germany and Britain <i>Ian Kershaw</i>	79
<b>Part 4: Reflections</b>	<b>84</b>
13. What has held Europeans Together and What is Dividing them? <i>Patricia Clavin</i>	85
14. Europe Through the Looking Glass <i>Ash Amin</i>	90

# Acknowledgements

This publication has come out of a conference the British Academy organised on Friday 4 November 2016 on *European Union and Disunion: What has held Europeans together and what is dividing them?* The conference brought together academics, policymakers, officials, practitioners and members of the public, some of whom are represented in the following contributions. You can see more on the conference at: [www.britac.ac.uk/european-union-and-disunion-what-has-held-europeans-together-and-what-dividing-them-videos](http://www.britac.ac.uk/european-union-and-disunion-what-has-held-europeans-together-and-what-dividing-them-videos).

The views expressed in the publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the British Academy, but are commended as contributing to public debate.

# About the Authors

**PROFESSOR ASH AMIN CBE FBA** is Professor and Head of Geography at the University of Cambridge. He is also Foreign Secretary and Vice President at the British Academy. He writes about race, belonging, cities and political renewal. His latest books are *Land of Strangers* (Polity, 2012), *Arts of the Political* (Duke, 2013) with Nigel Thrift and *Seeing Like a City* (Polity, 2017) also with Nigel Thrift. He is currently working on a project on mental health and the metropolis.

**DR ALBENA AZMANOVA** is an Associate Professor of Politics at the University of Kent's Brussels School of International Studies, where she teaches democratic theory and political economy. She did her doctoral studies at the New School for Social Research (New York) and has held research and teaching positions at Sciences Po, Harvard University and UC Berkeley. Dr Azmanova was born and raised in Bulgaria, where she took an active role in the dissident movements and the student revolts which toppled the communist regime in 1989. She has served as a political consultant to a number of international bodies, including the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

**PROFESSOR ELIZABETH BUETTNER** has been Professor of Modern History at the Universiteit van Amsterdam since 2014. Her research centres on British imperial, social and cultural history since the late 19th century, along with other European nations' histories of late colonialism, decolonisation, and their domestic ramifications. Her recent book entitled *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society and Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) examines British, French, Dutch, Belgian and Portuguese histories of coming to terms with the end of empires after the Second World War, focusing on the domestic impact of decolonisation, postcolonial migration, the emergence of contemporary multicultural societies and selective memories of empire.

**PROFESSOR PATRICIA CLAVIN FBA** is Professor of International History at the University of Oxford, and Fellow and Tutor at Jesus College. She has written on European diplomacy in the period between 1916 and 1950, the history of the Great Depression (1929–1939), and the history of international organizations, particularly the League of Nations. Her last book *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1929–1946* (OUP, 2013) was awarded the British Academy Medal. Her current research project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, explores how changing ideas about what comprises ‘security’ have shaped 20th century European history.

**PROFESSOR GERARD DELANTY** is Professor of Sociology & Social & Political Thought at the University of Sussex. His research is in the general field of social theory and the historical sociology of modernity. He is author of 11 books including *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Macmillan, 1995), *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Palgrave, 2013). His forthcoming book *The European Heritage: a critical interpretation* will be released in July 2017 (Routledge).

**DR DARIUSZ GAFIJCZUK** is Lecturer in Sociology at Newcastle University. He was the recipient of a British Academy Newton International Fellowship for *The Ruins of Mitteleuropa* – a project that investigated the notion of centrality in the recent history of central Europe. He has previously published in the areas of sociology, social theory and history, with an emphasis on the arts, and the uses of time in contemporary culture and social research. His book *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-siècle: Re-designing Perception* (Routledge, 2013) was nominated for the British Sociological Association’s Philip Abrams Memorial Prize for the best first monograph, and his work has previously appeared in journals such as *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Common Knowledge*, and *History and Theory*. Dr Gafijczuk is currently working on the connection between ‘senses of belonging’ and Europe, looking at how the idea of a community as a binding force can be re-defined to deal with the contemporary ‘politics of disintegration’.

**PROFESSOR SIR IAN KERSHAW FBA** was, until 2008, Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield. He is the author of *Hitler and The End: Germany, 1944–45*. He is currently working on a two-volume history of Europe in the 20th century for the Penguin History

of Europe series of which the first volume *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914–1949* was published last year.

**PHILIP LEWIS** is a Senior International Policy Adviser at the British Academy. He has previously worked in the European Parliament and the UK's House of Lords.

**DR KYLIE MURRAY** is a Fellow and Lecturer in Medieval English at Christ's College, Cambridge. Previously, she was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in English at Balliol College, Oxford, after completing her degrees at St Andrews and Oxford. She researches and publishes on the endlessly fascinating role played by political and national identities in the literature of medieval and early modern Britain, with a particular focus on Scotland, c.1100–c.1600. She enjoys engaging with diverse audiences about how our understanding of medieval and renaissance Britain impacts on the 21st century world: to this end, she broadcasts about her research as a BBC New Generation Thinker for Radio 3.

**BARONESS O'NEILL OF BENGARVE CH CBE FBA HONFRS FMED-SCI HON.MRIA** combines writing on political philosophy and ethics with a range of public activities. She comes from Northern Ireland and has worked mainly in Britain and the US. She was Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge from 1992–2006 and Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. She was President of the British Academy from 2005–2009, chaired the Nuffield Foundation from 1998–2010, and has been a crossbench member of the House of Lords since 2000. She is the 2017 winner of the prestigious Holberg Prize, the 'Nobel' of the social sciences and humanities. She chaired the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission from 2012–2016. She lectures and writes on justice and ethics, and in particular on the work of Immanuel Kant. Recent publications also address questions about accountability and trust, justice and borders, the future of universities, the quality of legislation and the ethics of communication.

**PROFESSOR DAVID RUNCIMAN** is Professor of Politics at Cambridge University and Head of the Department of Politics and International Studies. He is the author of a number of books including *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War One to the Present* (2013). He currently co-directs two major interdisciplinary research projects based in Cambridge: 'Conspiracy and Democracy' and 'Technology and Democracy'. He writes regularly about politics in the *London Review of Books* and is the host of the weekly podcast *Talking Politics*.

DR PAUL STOCK is Associate Professor of Early Modern International History 1500–1850 at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and was previously a British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Intellectual History at the same institution. His publications include *The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe* (2010) and *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* (editor, 2015) as well as articles in *European Review of History*, *Modern Intellectual History*, and *The English Historical Review*. He is currently writing a book about popular British ideas of Europe in the period 1760–1830.

PROFESSOR WOLFGANG STREECK FBA is the Emeritus Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne, Germany. Until 2016, he was a member of the Research Council of the European University Institute. His most recent book is *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (Verso, 2016). Other publications include: *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* (Verso, 2014; 2nd ed. 2017), *Politics in the Age of Austerity* (Polity, 2013), and *Re-Forming Capitalism: Institutional Change in the German Political Economy* (Oxford, 2009).

PROFESSOR DAME HELEN WALLACE DBE CMG FBA is Europe Liaison Chair and a former Foreign Secretary & Vice-President of the British Academy. Previously she was a Centennial Professor and then Emeritus Professor at the European Institute in the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has also held posts at the European University Institute, the University of Sussex, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Civil Service College and the University of Manchester. She is a leading expert on the politics of European integration, on which she has authored and co-authored numerous publications.

PROFESSOR PATRICK WRIGHT FBA is Professor of Literature and Visual & Material Culture in the Department of English at King's College London. His books include *On Living in an Old Country*, *The Village that Died for England*, and *Iron Curtain: from Stage to Cold War*. He is presently researching the part played by narratives of encroachment and betrayal in the articulation of national and regional identity in modern and contemporary Britain.

# Introduction

Philip Lewis and Ash Amin

In 2010, shortly before he sadly passed away, Tony Judt, Fellow of the British Academy, presciently said:

*We have entered an age of insecurity – economic insecurity, physical insecurity, political insecurity. The fact that we are largely unaware of this is small comfort: few in 1914 predicted the utter collapse of their world and the economic and political catastrophes that followed. Insecurity breeds fear. And fear – fear of change, fear of decline, fear of strangers and an unfamiliar world – is corroding trust and interdependence on which civil societies rest.*

Insecurity and fear associated with it seem a good place to grasp the momentous changes in public mood towards Europe today. Europe is increasingly seen as a space of encroachment, instability and uncertainty, all of which are undermining confidence in Europe's already fragile political economy of trust, as Albena Azmanova discusses below. Europe is being cast as a threat to security, however defined. It has lost its lustre as a place of progress, security and solidarity.

The contributions in this publication engage with the narratives of European belonging, past and present, and with the work done by them. Narratives are, and have always been, a touchstone of practices of inclusion or division and judgements of the familiar and strange. The Brexit outcome amply confirms this: the 'leave' campaign played on affects of nation, its boundaries, and its outsides to great effect, certainly more so than the 'remain' campaign which focused on the colder facts of the costs and benefits of Europe. Looking ahead, sentiments of belonging may turn out to be key in managing our uncertain and fearful age, when the propositions of future society invariably filter through them.

This is not to detach narratives of belonging from their wider associational fields or legacies. Nor is it to claim that reason, convention and pragmatism are of secondary importance in the politics of identity and affiliation. As Helen Wallace indicates below, the mutating political cleavages we are witnessing today are leading to a much more complicated mosaic of cultural and political divisions in European societies; each working on the other. Additionally, propositions of future society are woven into a tapestry of narratives rehearsed over many centuries as Patrick Wright, Ian Kershaw and Kylie Murray eloquently illustrate for these islands. There is a considerable degree of lock-in. In turn, narratives have their own captive audiences and advocates, requiring active labour. They are not uniform – as Wolfgang Streeck pointedly illustrates, it is hard to imagine a post-colonial narrative in the UK equally acceptable to both post-colonisers and the post-colonised.

Yet, it may transpire that we – publics, politicians, and professionals – think, act and feel through narratives, and perhaps all the more so during times of disruption and uncertainty when the givens of societal framing and reproduction are destabilised. These narratives and stories are not static and change across Europe, as well as different narratives competing in the same place. Narratives of Europe may guide more than public affect and opinion, if the matter of politics and policy too is filtered through them. They are central in understanding the place of Europe in the imaginaries, practices and futures of diverse societies and communities in Europe.

In November 2016, the British Academy organised a conference on the theme of 'European Union and Disunion', which began to debate the significance of narratives and how at different times they have aided or compromised the imagining and workings of Europe. The contributions that follow are the basis of this continuing project, which the Academy looks forward to developing further with our sister academies across Europe in the years ahead. This is a time of charged sentiments towards Europe across the continent. A greater understanding of these sentiments and their discursive frames is critical in the years ahead so that we can acknowledge the tacit and enduring assumptions of community and belonging that are poorly understood, yet pivotal in shaping public response. The nature, legacies and political purchase of narratives of European union and disunion need to be made more explicit if we are to respectfully and diplomatically negotiate the varied affects held not just around the United Kingdom but also by other Europeans.

The first half of the 20th century was wracked by catastrophic conflict in Europe. These conflicts were based to a large extent on narratives of ethno-nationalism, irreconcilable demands for territorial revision, acute class conflict, and a protracted crisis of capitalism. The development of these narratives and the exclusion that they pervaded did not stop the outbreak of war in 1914 or in 1939 being a surprise to many. In our current times the development of narratives of belonging that foster inclusivity and are attuned to the histories and presents of migration for example, as discussed below by Gerard Delanty, Dariusz Gafijczuk, Elizabeth Buettner and Onora O'Neill, will be key in honing cohesive societies locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

Serious discussion is needed around the questions posed by Paul Stock below on what kind of Europe we want to create and what kind of Europeans we want to be. Effort is needed to make new forms of cosmopolitan belonging and old forms of national attachment compatible, and surrounded with a sense of real affective atmosphere. Without such traction, the perils of xenophobic aversion and mutual suspicion will be hard to avoid, as will the destructive consequences that history has shown to follow. As a start we have to better understand, and in some respects refresh our understanding of, the stories of identity, union, aversion and belonging that varieties of Europeans have selected to foster and tell about themselves. Rather poignantly, David Runciman below provides a soul-searching contribution on the uncertainties and unknowns we have about what European failure might look like and how unprepared we potentially are for such an outcome.

The contributions that follow are an attempt to start a conversation on how we can set out on a path that does not lead to such an outcome; in part doing so by understanding the paths that we have tread until this point. A path that can lead us away from such words as these by a Frenchman in 1916:

*I ask, hoping to understand  
This slaughter's purpose. The reply  
I get is 'For the Fatherland'!*

*But never know the reason why*



# PART 1: EUROPE AS IDEA

# 1. Legacies, Histories, and Ideas of Europe

Gerard Delanty

Europeans are divided in various ways, socially, culturally and politically. Many of these divisions result from differences, but not all differences lead to conflicts. Modern complex societies bring about ever greater differentiation. The resulting diversity is mostly a basis for co-operation and integration. Europe is a space of differences, but it also has a shared heritage. This is as true of the nations that make up Europe as it is of Europe as a whole. The nature and dynamics of what people have in common and what divides them can be easily misunderstood if we assume that the national culture is somehow the natural reference point, and that it is based on a congruence of cultural and political communities. But unity does not precede diversity. It is in fact achieved through it. It is also fragile and can easily become a source of adversity.

There can be little doubt that there has been a sharp increase in contestation over Europe in recent years. In the three decades or so following the end of WWII, the idea of Europe was a powerful integrative force that stood for a new age of peace and prosperity. These aspirations were essentially what held Europe together. New divisions have resulted from a changed situation over the past decade and half. European integration has stumbled over significant problems relating to the single currency, the challenges posed by Greece, debtor versus creditor countries, new flows of migration from the Middle East, the rise of the right-wing populist parties and the resurgence of nationalism, British withdrawal from the EU, and rising fears around terrorism. A superficial look would reveal a continent in crisis and a retreat to the comfort zone of the nation. This would be the wrong way to see the current situation. It is a misreading of the signs of the times to see cultural conflict as one between Europe and the nation. There are emerging tensions

to be sure, but these are more frissons within the national community than between nations or between the nation-state and Europe. These divisions are also underpinned by major transformations in the nature of capitalism and democracy.

I would like to make the strong argument that it is the idea of nation that is in crisis due to major cultural shifts within it as a result of changes in capitalism and democracy: national cultures no longer unite their increasingly diverse populations. However, Europe – whether as a reference point for identities or as a unitary space – does not offer an alternative as a means of uniting people. The ideals of the post-1945 context have faded. Nonetheless, the idea of Europe is still a powerful cultural orientation in contemporary societies and offers a model that challenges many cultural identities, in particular those marked by a high degree of closure. The real substance of the European heritage is not in some kind of supra-national order, but resides within nations and in the mosaic of cultural traditions and their narratives and memories, many of which concern aspirations for social justice. It is therefore necessary to understand better the nature of cultural conflict and what I call ‘two competing conceptions of the nation’, an open European-oriented one and a closed inward-looking one. It is not the case that one is the authentic one and the other, at best, secondary. Even in the closed inward one, there are also signs of latent Europeanisation and of cosmopolitanism. I argue that neither are able to capture the ground of social justice and that this results in a major source of division today. Social justice was once the main source of the success of nations but it is no longer the case. The future of Europe is very much a question of solidarity and social justice.

## Cultures in Conflict

From a sociological perspective, cultures – whether nations, ethnic groups or urban communities – are diverse and stratified across different axes. There are three major cleavages in post-WWII Western European societies that have shaped the cultural field of the nation. Of these, it is the third that is now particularly significant since it effectively expresses a decline in the integrative capacities of the national culture.

The old cleavages in post-1945 (western) European societies were defined by right and left and generally underpinned by class politics in the context of a model of capitalism that has come to an end today.

These cleavages thus took the form of capital versus labour and concerned issues of social justice. Since the 1980s, as the older industrial economies gave way to increasingly post-industrial ones, new cleavages emerged, adding to the existing ones and in part transforming them. These new cleavages have often been referred to as the new politics of class and reflected cultural issues rather than the older ones of capital versus labour. The rise of environmentalism and feminism were two major social movements that led to a profound change in the political cultures of late 20th century Europe around so-called post-material values. Many of these developments have been associated with the political values of the university-educated middle class and the new values of individuated life styles. These developments emerged at a time of major change in capitalism with the rise of neo-liberalism and technocratic governance, on the one hand, and on the other the declining power of older cultural traditions, for example religion, and more generally of cultural authoritarianism that was founded on patriarchy and religion. In this context, which is also one of a changed relationship between elites and the masses, a new cleavage took shape which did not replace the older class one but added a new level of political contestation around cultural politics. It can be described as a cleavage between radical cultural pluralism and neo-liberal techno-conservatism. As a result, solidarity and social justice were eclipsed.

Since around 2001, with 11th September as a symbolic marker, a new range of cleavages arose which were associated with the emergence of security agendas and the rise of the populist right and xenophobic nationalism. This led to a much more complicated mosaic of cultural and political divisions in European societies, with the old political parties in many cases challenged by new right wing parties and no longer able to rely on the traditional sources of authority, such as religion, patriarchy and deference to the upper class. The progressive cultural left was also challenged in a new era of hyper-globalisation leading to a crisis in social justice. Since the worldwide financial crisis and a marked increase in economic inequalities and low growth economies after 2008, pro- and contra-EU became an additional level of political contestation and for the first time the very rationale of European integration was called into question.

To simplify, at the present time there are three main cleavages that structure the political-cultural field of the public sphere in Europe: a) the still strong capital versus labour cleavage that resolves around right versus left issues; b) the cleavage of neo-liberal techno-

conservatism versus radical cultural pluralism; and c) the emerging cleavage of nationalism versus cosmopolitanism. The first two reflect, respectively, the social critique and the cultural critique of capitalism and are largely to be contextualised within national settings. The third cleavage, which is my main focus, is driven, on the one hand, by nationalism and a populist reaction to globalisation as well as to radical cultural pluralism, but also draws on right and left currents. On the other hand is the diminishing influence of the national culture on many people whose habitus is increasingly more plural, if not hybrid, and whose world has been transformed by anti-authoritarian and post-material values. This value divergence is now very great and underpinned by very different kinds of work and increased diversity. This group is likely to be Europeanised in their self-identification and in their lifestyles, but will reflect different positions within the right/left wing divide. The Brexit Referendum is a vivid example of this division within the national community to a point that the very unity of the national culture is in question. In this case a cultural difference was amplified into a political conflict.

My first thesis, then, is simply the sociological claim that national societies are becoming increasingly divided around a new cleavage that polarises societies into two groupings: those whose orientations and social location are mobile, diverse and open, and those who are relatively homogenous and resistant to those who are different. It follows from this that differences between European societies may be less pronounced when one looks horizontally comparing different social classes than simply looking at different national cultures. There has been an extraordinary degree of Europeanisation of youth and in the lifestyles and value orientations of the middle class. While the rise of the populist right across Europe signals opposition to migrants and ostensibly opposition to the EU, it is also a product of Europeanisation, even if it appeals to very different people (i.e. those who have not experienced much diversity first-hand). In general, communities that have experienced a high degree of diversity and mobility will be open to others, while those who have not experienced much diversity will resist it. This is true not just of white working class communities, but also of ethnic/post-migration communities. Where this intersects with economic deprivation the level of resistance will be greater. It is rather this dynamic of a weakening of solidarity that plays out in a complex field of other cleavages than the objectivity of Europe or the objectivity of migration that is the source of much cultural and political hostility.

So, the tension is not then between the nation-state or national culture and Europe, but between two competing and more or less contradictory interpretations of the nation. In this view, nations are the carriers of European values and where we should locate the European heritage. It is not therefore a matter of defining national culture first as self-enclosed entities where solidarity is to be found and then seeing how much of it is reconcilable with Europe or with other cultures. The major clash today is within the nation. It is no longer only a conflict of right versus left but an internal conflict. It follows from this that the wrong approach is to find a balance between diversity and a common culture, or seeking first to identify a common culture and then see how much diversity is reconcilable with it. In a context in which a common culture has all but fragmented, the only prospect is to build communities that are diverse and reduce the inequalities that amplify adversities. The key challenge here for Europe is to capture the ground of social justice.

While complex societies cannot easily build common cultures, if they are not to retreat into singular cultures they can strive to create a shared culture. A shared culture, in contrast to a common culture, is one in which there are shared reference points but not a homogenous cultural value system. Very different people can share a place, a city or a nation, but they do not have to be similar. The search for a common culture is not a solution to the problem posed by singular cultures. The idea of Europe should be seen less as a common culture than a shared one wherein different groups, themselves highly pluralised, achieve a degree of solidarity with each other. This is one concrete way in which to see Europe and its cultures as an epitome of unity in diversity.

## European Heritage as a Shared Culture

Culture is very much about how people interpret their experiences. Different historical and cultural experiences will produce very different interpretations and thus will generate different cultural orientations. The result is diversity. But culture also takes shape from unifying traditions and principles, and does so at different levels. National traditions and wider transnational ones also have a certain force as do higher ones such as universalistic ideas (for example, peace, freedom, democracy and justice) and concepts that cognitively structure the symbolic narratives and imaginaries that make up identities and cultural traditions.

The European heritage is a carrier of such ideas, which should not be seen as unifying master narratives, but as reference points that will often have different interpretations. The idea of 'Europe' is a cultural model that has had a formative influence in the making of social identities and the diverse cultures of Europe. It is not a common culture but a framework of interpretation out of which a shared public culture is possible. I have argued above that this understanding of Europe is not contrary to national culture but is the basis of national culture.

The argument is thus that the idea of Europe does have this function of a larger framework of interpretation. The idea of Europe operates as a reference culture against which collective identities as well as national communities define themselves. On this level, the European dimension is akin to a repertoire of ideas, principles, modes of cognition and thought that crystallise in more specific national cultures, as well as in other more particularistic cultures. In this sense the specificity of the European heritage is less one of content than of form. It is simply a unity in diversity. The forms in question establish certain kinds of structures – similar social, cultural, political patterns – but with significant variation due to different interpretations made of them at different times and places by different social groups. In this view, Europe did not emerge out of a single culture, but out of numerous exchanges and interactions. Thus what are often seen as separated histories are in fact interconnected and entangled.

There are three dimensions to this: first, a feature of many collective identities and cultures today is that they intersect with other identities and cultures. This is not only a recent development – identities have always taken this form. However, there can be little doubt that there has been an increase in cultural pluralisation in recent times; identities (memories, cultural phenomena of all kinds) are not separate but interact with each other, and as they do so the encounter brings about a change in at least one of the interacting elements. Second, the intersection can lead to the mutual cross-fertilisation of identities and memories, such that it is possible to say that the cultures have become entangled. Entangled memories are becoming increasingly prevalent today in the context of transnationalised societies. Third, it is possible that entangled identities and memories will become embroiled in each other to a point that they lead to the creation of new syncretic or hybrid forms. It should of course be noted that not all entanglements will lead towards syncretism and it must also be emphasised that intersections, like ships passing in the night, do not lead to entanglements. I would

also add that entanglements are not necessarily to be seen as inherently good: they can and, very often do, entail clashes of culture. However, for good or for bad, it is a fact of cultural history that much of our past has been shaped by entanglements.

In conclusion, it is possible that a more explicitly developed transnational approach to the European heritage might reveal a different and more compelling account of the past that would give substance to the European cultural heritage as a unity in diversity. A transnational approach offers a double critical lens through which to view the European heritage: it draws attention to how national histories are interconnected and it shows that such interconnections must be situated in a yet broader and more global context. What are urgently needed today are ways to capture the inherent cosmopolitanism of the European heritage as a legacy that is integral to national culture. If this does not happen, there is likely to be an increased clash of cultures across Europe.

The political challenge that follows from this analysis is that public understandings of national culture should be fostered that affirm its European dimensions, and that national culture, like Europe more generally, should itself be represented as unity in diversity. Perhaps there should be more emphasis on the unity in diversity of national as well as European culture in the public sphere. But cultural arguments are not enough. Underpinning culture are social issues concerning solidarity and social justice. What is now needed is a fundamental shift in the very conception of Europe to more fully capture solidarity. This is more important than issues of mobility, markets or supranational governance. My analysis suggests that the nation is no longer able to deliver social justice without connecting with a larger sense of political community. This may be the best opportunity for both expressions of political community – nation and Europe – to reinvent themselves.

## 2. Caution: European Narrative. Handle with Care!

Wolfgang Streeck

Post-Brexit debates among my pro-European British friends – and almost all of my British friends have now become enthusiastically pro-European – make me feel again, after so many years, like a foreigner in a country whose political language I have yet to learn to decipher. I am mystified by how personally people take the outcome of the referendum. Some even feel obliged to apologise, not just to Europeans in general but even to German Europeans – quite unlike what I thought it was to be British! One thing that I used to admire about the British was what I perceived as a pragmatic, detached, empiricist rather than idealistic attitude toward matters political, *sachlich*, as we say in German. Instead I now see a sentimentality, a collective emotional soul-searching that one normally associates with other countries. In Continental Europe today, a growing number of people find it quite reasonable to ask if the European Union, or what has become of it, is still the right kind of political organisation for Europe as an international community; many doubt this and say so. To them, if a Member state came to the conclusion that the EU has ceased to be functional and decided to exit from it, this would not be the end of European civilisation; a different kind of union might then have to be invented, and this would be all there was to it. Not so in Britain, it seems, where the question of EU membership has become a question of collective identity, even of moral decency, national as well as personal: who are we, and who am I? Are we, am I, sufficiently 'European', presumably meaning tolerant of difference, civilised, welcoming to strangers of all sorts, or are we a society of nationalist 'little Englanders' for which one must be ashamed – xenophobic, racist and all this?

Not that Brexit did not look a bit eccentric from a Continental perspective. If the EU was in fact overly centralised, suffocating self-determination and democracy in its member states, for which there is a lot to be said, this would have least applied to Britain, with its rebated financial contribution, its numerous exemptions from European social policy, its non-membership in Schengen and, most importantly, Monetary Union, and its promised release after a vote to remain from both the 'ever closer union' requirement and the obligation to pay social benefits to Eastern European immigrants. Other countries, like Greece, Italy and Spain, would have much stronger reasons to exit than Britain, which in many ways was no more than a half-member anyway. Moreover, there was never a sustained effort on the part of UK governments to have the deficiencies of the Union, as they saw them, corrected; all they ever asked for were exceptions and, after they had got them, let the Union be as it was. Why did they leave then? Perhaps because, where the British did influence the direction the Union took, for example when it aborted the Social Dimension and the integration process was narrowed to the completion of the Internal Market, the Union became a less attractive place than what it might have been, giving the British working class, in particular, good reasons to get disaffected with it.

Feeling utterly incompetent to say something meaningful on the European or non-European identity of the British or the English, I limit myself to a few comments on a related subject, that of 'narratives' of and on Europe as a whole – stories about what 'Europe' is or should be, where it begins and ends, and what 'values' it stands for. Of those I have encountered quite a few over the years, including recently when 'pro-European' politicians began desperately to search for new, more effective historical justifications of their version of a European political compact. The point I want to make is that such stories are not necessarily innocent only because they are about Europe and not about individual nations, and that they are also by their very nature opportunistically adaptable to the politics of the day and the needs of the powers that be. Thus when I went to Gymnasium in the 1950s and 1960s, for nine years of Latin and six years of Greek, we learned about the Persian Wars, from Xenophon to Herodotus, and our teacher was adamant that the story we were working hard to translate and understand was about the eternal battle of 'Europe' against 'Asia', a battle of freedom against servitude, of democracy against tyranny, of 'us' against 'them' – 'them' having more recently become Russia, aka the Soviet Union, and communism. Don't fall behind the ancient Greeks when it comes to defending Europe against the Asian hordes!

Of course the story was more complex than that. ‘Europe’ was also and at the same time divided between ‘culture’ and ‘civilisation’, ‘culture’ standing for Greece and ‘civilisation’ for Rome. Greece was vastly superior in literature, philosophy and science, but unfortunately too divided to form a strong unified state; Rome, for its part, was culturally sterile but somehow better at statecraft, warfare, road and bridge building and similar trivial pursuits. Later we, the German *Kulturvolk*, became the new Greeks, divided in hundreds of small fiefdoms, whereas the Romans returned in the form of the French, our *Erbfeind*, a unified nation-state always out to invade and subjugate us, and for centuries able to do so until Bismarck gave the *Kulturvolk* the *Nationalstaat* that it deserved, to unite culture and civilisation in a Europe in which civilisation would sooner or later have to be subservient to culture. Of course there had recently been a little accident on the way to our common destiny, when we temporarily changed the story and Europe became the home of the Aryan race, claiming its rightful place under the leadership of the Führer. While this was a regrettable aberration, even though one strongly committed to a united Europe, essentially there was no reason to worry – in the long run the *Kulturvolk* would be back, and this would be for the better for Europe and everybody else.

Narratives like these are easy to construct, some historians specialise in it, and so do ideologues of all sorts. Typically inspired by power wielders and distributed through their means of communication, they are associated with political projects likely soon to turn out more or less sinister. The good news is that their shelf life is limited. Given the complexities of history any such narrative must be selective – which opens plenty of doors for politically useful distortion while it also invites effective revisionist critique. Together with changing conditions and interests, this requires them to be continuously rewritten. Still, the temptation remains apparently irresistible on the part of rulers and their regimes to try and institutionalise politically expedient accounts about ‘us’, taking possession of our emotional attachment to the places, the people, the music, and the languages, dialects and accents through which we have become who we are, and which connect our sense of identity – one can also say: our desire for a place where we can feel at home – to a political purpose that more often than not has good reasons to eschew critical scrutiny.

As I said, even the most skilfully designed collective identity narratives are unlikely to live long since their subject is simply too big – too diverse, too convoluted, too multifaceted, too contested. A lot of

brute power is required to make such a story stick – power that is not available in a democracy. Take any European nation-state, especially today when there is immigration. For example, try to imagine a post-colonial ‘narrative’ of the UK equally acceptable to post-colonisers and post-colonised. Germany, of course, is an even more difficult case: will immigrants, in particular from the Middle East, own up to a German historical identity, a concept of self in which the cultural and civilisational catastrophe of the Holocaust will always and inevitably have to assume a central position? I suggest that a shared *Gedächtniskultur* is impossible to install in a pluralist society in which all groups can claim equal value for their particular experience and any attempt to impose an obligatory common consciousness will be seen as authoritarian interference with personal liberty and dignity – not to mention the deplorable condition of the teaching of history in German and, I suspect, also British secondary schools where Henry Ford rules supreme: history is bunk! If there is at all a desire for a common story about where one’s political community comes from and what has formed it and keeps it together, it today clearly takes second place behind investment in marketable skills leading to ‘careers’ in societies integrated above all by norms of correct consumption as spread and enforced by ‘social networks’ and similar devices.

What applies to a European nation-state applies even more to Europe as a whole. ‘In unserer reflexionsreichen und rasonnierenden Zeit’, to quote Hegel, the aspiring authors of a hegemonic European *Erzählung* are likely to spend their time fighting with each other. Is Europe the home of democracy and freedom or of fascism, slavery, and industrialised mass murder? When did ‘Europe’ begin, and where does it end? Is Russia part of Europe? Or Turkey? Is there a border to Asia, and if so, where is it? ‘Der Islam gehört zu Deutschland’, according to a former German President – does it also belong to Hungary or Serbia, then, and if so, in what sense? A wide variety of stories can be constructed on those themes, provided one is willing to be sufficiently selective. But why should the kind of selectivity that would be favoured by an English-speaking, cosmopolitan-minded intellectual elite be privileged over the selectivity preferred by a Palestinian immigrant living in Duisburg, Germany – if they care at all – or by a French writer who happens to be a connoisseur and aficionado of French 19th century high culture? I suggest that as long as there are no power instruments available to a European political class by which to impose a unified European history on a yet-to-be-forged European society – the kind of toolkit that the French state was able to use when turning peasants into

Frenchmen before and after the lost war against Germany in 1871 – there is no chance that such questions can ever be settled.

This does not mean that there was no demand for a common account of what Europe is and what it means to be European. For some time now, when referenda on EU-related matters began to go wrong, ‘pro-European’ technocrats, not normally friends of literary constructivism, have been calling for a new ‘master narrative on Europe’ – a re-vamped *Große Erzählung* appealing to the hearts of those whose minds were unable to comprehend why free markets and supply-side economics were good for them – as though such stories could like commercial advertisements be invented ad libitum to serve a present purpose. (Indeed in the German language, the spectrum of meanings of a word such as *Erzählung* overlaps with that of *Märchen*, or fairy-tale: ‘Du kannst mir viel erzählen...’) Note that the strategic objective here is to blur the distinction between Europe as an emotional home, a place of individual and collective identification, and ‘Europe’ as a political construction, more precisely, the ‘Europe’ of the EU – enlisting the former to reinvigorate a political project that has increasingly fallen into disrepute among a growing number of its supposed beneficiaries. No search for historical truth here; narratives as demanded by Merkel, Hollande, Juncker and company are nothing but instruments to be replaced if necessary by other instruments until finally one does the job – just as, in the words of a member of the European Commission after the Treaty of Maastricht had failed to pass a national referendum, we’ll keep repeating the vote until the result is right. Can this work?

Considering that United Europe may be the last sacred political object for a good part of Europe’s liberal-cosmopolitan middle classes, it might indeed. Even some of the most sophisticated and often cynical students of political life allow themselves to wax sentimental when it comes to ‘Europe’ – for them a dreamland, as immune to evidence-based criticism as a religious faith. Perhaps one reason why ‘Europe’ tends to advance in some circles to the status of a civil religion is that it can be presented as a historical departure from past sins of nationalism and colonialism. All that is and was wrong with national politics is or will be right with its supranational replacement: ‘Europe’, to quote Jacques Delors, as a location for the optimism of the will superseding the pessimism of the intellect – and indeed a place where such optimism can be claimed to be morally obligatory given the disasters of the past.

The convoluted history of the EU, its permanently changing, ever more enigmatic institutions and the successive 'narratives' called upon to provide it with legitimacy, has apparently not been reason enough for many to dissociate their sense of 'Europeanness' from the politics of 'Europe' and its 'integration'. For a while united Europe was to be supported because it was a source of shared prosperity; since 2008 this has become less than plausible. Another promise was democracy; this was discredited with the advance of technocratic neoliberalism, as the EU turned into a liberalisation machine for the political economies of its member states. In the post-social democratic 1980s and 1990s, the Grand European Narrative featured a 'European Social Model' to oppose American neoliberalism – a specifically European capitalism, softer and with a human face, as embodied in Delors' 'Social Dimension', to be attached to his main project, the Internal Market, once it was completed. The theory Delors invoked to make his narrative plausible was that people cannot love a market, so for a market to be viable it must be supplemented with social solidarity – in other words, with a welfare state. For a while this was good enough for selling the EU and its newly adopted supply-side economics, even to British trade unionists – who at the 1988 TUC in Bournemouth greeted Delors with a rousing rendition of 'Frère Jacques'!

Today, 'Social Europe', the 'European Social Model' and the 'Social Dimension' of Europe are effectively deleted from the Union's self-presentation. Now, with hindsight, everyone can see that it was never clear what exactly these slogans were to mean: was it something that the welfare states of EU member states were supposed to have in common – which proved to be very little – or was it a set of supranational European institutions yet to be created to complement, preserve, make compatible or take the place of national welfare states – all of which turned out to be impossible. Britain under Thatcher was the leading opponent of efforts to embed the European market economy in a European welfare state, and when New Labour was in power, 'Social Europe' as a concept was altogether dropped from Eurospeak. Meanwhile national 'social models' were gradually sucked into a unified neoliberal economic order of continental dimension, sustained by national governments and supranational institutions deliberately insulated from political-electoral pressures. This holds in particular for European Monetary Union, before and even more so after the financial collapse of 2008. Currently the national remnants of the democratic welfare state continue to be hollowed out by the 'four freedoms' of the Internal Market, together with unremitting pressures from the European Central

Bank and the European Council for 'structural reforms', such as cutbacks in public spending and legislation to make labour markets more 'flexible'.

Thus a new story is needed, and now the flavour of the day is the EU as the wellspring of peace in Europe, in the postwar years just as now and in the future. But again this is easily recognised as yet another myth. That there was peace in Europe after 1945 was due to the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, the division of the Reich into four, five or six parts (depending on how you count), and the integration of West Germany into NATO, with its new army of 420,000 placed under Allied command. It is true that the European Coal and Steel Community reassured other European countries, in particular France, that German *Schlüsselindustrien* would not again be used for producing tanks and artillery, unless of course under NATO supervision. And it is also true that the European Economic Community assured Germany of access to foreign markets for the products of its oversized manufacturing sector and the raw materials it needed – making self-sufficiency ("autarky") as unnecessary as the military conquest required for it. As to Europe as a whole, however, the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact and the COMECON were just as important as the United States, NATO and the European Economic Community, founded only in 1958, in maintaining the European part of a cold peace based on what was then called 'Mutually Assured Destruction', the quite appropriate acronym being MAD.

Later, progress in European integration, mostly economic, helped Italy and Austria work out their disagreements over Südtirol (although for most of the time Austria, committed to 'neutrality', was outside the EU), just as British and Irish EU membership may have contributed to a peaceful settlement of the two countries' long-standing differences. Also, the EU arguably kept Belgium from breaking up, and in future may help Serbia, Croatia and other states on the Balkans, to live together with reasonably open borders. But apart from this, the two nuclear powers that are (still) part of the EU, France and Britain, never felt inhibited by their association with a European 'peace project' from engaging in remarkably frivolous military adventures in places like Libya and Iraq, with or without American encouragement. And recently, with the return of tensions between the United States and what is now Russia, the EU has, under German leadership, faithfully executed its assigned role in the American geostrategic effort to pull Ukraine into the 'Western' ambit, in order to cut Russia down to size, with the result of a new militarisation of international relations at the border between Western and Eastern Europe. Interesting how similar today's peace narrative,

enriched with a European liberty story organised around the marriage *pour tous complex*, has become to the Persian War 'freedom versus slavery' story of my Greek teacher of old.

Official EU narrations of European identity are designed to anchor a more or less well-conceived set of supranational institutions and a historically specific geopolitical project, both subject to permanent change, in people's emotions and affections – under their skin, as it were. We should forcefully resist any such attempt. States, national, supranational, subnational, come and go, as did the small and pleasantly unpretentious West German state that existed between 1949 and 1990 in which I grew up. States are, at best, secular devices for the maintenance of order, to the extent that this is at all possible, and must be repaired, rearranged or discarded if they fail to do their duty. There is nothing sacred to them, unlike perhaps to human identity. Sentimental stories dressing up a political regime as more than a fallible human creation are to be considered with utmost suspicion. Gustav Heinemann, the third President of the Federal Republic of Germany, in office from 1969 to 1974, was asked by a newspaper reporter whether he loved 'our state' (having resisted the Nazis and resigned from the Adenauer cabinet in protest of German rearmament, he was suspected by the Right of insufficient patriotism). Heinemann answered: 'I love no state, I love my wife'. That's the spirit. 'Wife' may mean more here than a person, but it can never mean an ongoing project of state-building plus market expansion glorified by a 'master narrative' put together in its support by public relations specialists.

As I said, many of my British friends and colleagues seem to feel violated in what they see as their European identity by the vote of their fellow citizens to resign from the EU. I think they are making exactly the kind of mistake that the designers of the 'European narrative' of the day want them to make: confuse a set of political institutions aligning a selection of European nation states in a neoliberal common market with Europe as an international community of jointly produced diversity, a way of life, a civilisation, a culture, and if you will a home. In doing so, they contribute to the sacralisation of a worldly institutional edifice designed to do worldly duty for some while imposing the costs on others. Actually they could know that the EU as it stands, and in particular its core, the European Monetary Union, has long become a political and economic disaster that urgently requires deep restructuring if it is not to do even more serious damage to the European peoples and their peaceful co-habitation. Brexit may have helped make this clear even to some

of the Euro-fanatics outside the United Kingdom, although their capacity to learn is limited. Brexit may therefore in fact be a pro-European act of great potential significance. Moreover, if there is any normative political principle that is indeed deeply European, then it is that as a citizen of a European country, and of the European world we have inherited, you are entitled to disagree with your government, and even with the structure of the state through which that government undertakes to govern you, and still retain the right to be considered a patriotic citizen, of your country or, as the case may be, of Europe. In fact, sometimes being pro-European may demand being 'anti-European' in the meaning of the term administered by those who are currently driving the 'European project' against the wall.

# 3. What is Europe?

## Place, Idea, Action

Paul Stock

What is Europe? Nearly two-and-a-half-thousand years ago, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (c.484–c.425 BCE) pondered precisely this question, remarking on the elusive meaning of the term. ‘As for Europe,’ he wrote, ‘no men have any knowledge whether it is bounded by seas or not, or where it got its name, nor is it clear who gave the name.’ Herodotus adds that the term might have derived from Europa, a mythological Phoenician princess, though he glosses over this theory as vague and poorly-evidenced – a surprising conclusion given his notorious predilection for fanciful or exaggerated accounts. Today, the same core issue – what is Europe? – has lost none of its immediacy. In fact, related questions are among the most urgent in contemporary politics: what does ‘Europe’ mean, and to whom; where are its borders; who is European and who is not; what is Europe’s future? Importantly, these are also historical enquiries: if we are to understand the trajectory of contemporary discussions about Europe, we need to analyse the histories of those debates as well as the concepts which underpin them. Here I want briefly to consider Europe as a place, as an idea, and, crucially, as a set of actions. In common usage the word typically refers to a continent, but it would be a mistake to assume that it refers strictly to a material location. Instead, we need to think of ‘Europe’ as an idea: a set of changing and historically-specific beliefs which shape our understanding of places and peoples. But neither is it enough to reduce ‘Europe’ to an abstraction: ideas about Europe have concrete effects as individuals and other social actors justify their activities and policies in terms of those ideas.

For many people, the question ‘what is Europe?’ has an obvious answer: it is a continent, specifically the western part of the Eurasian

land mass. 'Europe', in other words, is a place: a demarcated area of the Earth's surface. It is therefore a real, material entity detectable by the senses: one can live within Europe's boundaries, stand on its soil; or leave it for another separate place such as Africa or America. But it would be a misleading to assume that 'Europe' is an objective product of the Earth's physical features. This can be appreciated if we consider the continuous historical debates about Europe's geographical extent.

As Herodotus's remarks illustrate, the dimensions of Europe were unclear even to the earliest users of the term. In some classical texts it seems to have referred only to the coastal mainland distinct from the Greek islands and the Peloponnese, while in others Europe and Libya were conflated as the same large land mass. Similar problems have continued right through the modern period and into the present day, often focused on the placement of Europe's eastern boundary at the point it meets Asia. Early modern cartographers proposed a bewildering variety of potential borders. For example, the French geographer Nicholas Sanson (1600–67) suggested a line connecting the White Sea to the River Dnieper in modern-day Ukraine, thus making Moscow a city in Asia. At the other extreme, the Dutch map-maker Gerard Valck (1652–1726) traced the Europe-Asia boundary from the River Ob in Siberia to the Caspian Sea.

By the later 18th century, one particular border had become especially widely reproduced, though it owed its success to a specific ideological agenda, and not simply to the dispassionate observation of natural truths. Beginning with the Ural mountains near the Arctic Circle, this boundary followed the lines of the Rivers Volga and Don southwards before terminating in the Black Sea. Proponents of this line often justified it on the grounds of ancient precedent: according to both Strabo (c.64 BCE–c.24 CE) and Ptolemy (c.100–170 CE) the River Don or Tanais marked the eastern limit of Europe. But in fact its popularity emerged from very specific political circumstances. The Urals-Don border was championed by Philip Johann von Strahlenberg (1676–1747), a Swedish military officer held prisoner by Peter the Great of Russia (1672–1725) and forced to undertake cartographic work for the Russian state. Strahlenberg argued that other proposed boundaries were 'fictitious' and that these mountains and rivers formed an unmistakable dividing line. Significantly, his argument placed Russia securely in Europe, and it therefore cohered fully with Peter's wider political and cultural agenda to promote his country as an unambiguously European state. The demarcation of European space is therefore directed by ideological priorities rather than by observation

of the natural environment. One might even argue that socio-political purposes can structure how the terrain is perceived and interpreted.

Another perennial problem concerns Europe's south-eastern border: specifically, whether the Ottoman Empire (and later Turkey) is part of Europe. Certainly there is a long tradition, traceable from at least the medieval period, which views Turks as alien invaders and thus as non-Europeans. For instance, the future Pope Pius II (1405–64) fulminated against Muslim incursions westwards: 'now that the city of Constantinople has fallen and been transferred into enemy hands [...] now truly we have been stricken and felled in Europe, that is to say in our own fatherland, in our own house, in our seat'. But the presence of Greece within the Ottoman Empire complicated the situation, especially for the majority of post-Renaissance thinkers who considered classical civilisation fundamental to European history and culture. Greece and the Ottoman Empire were thus seen as simultaneously within and outside of Europe, and the precise location of any boundary is obscured by competing interpretations of history and identity.

Given the practical challenge of locating Europe and its borders, it is not surprising that one early 19th century mass-market reference book defined 'Europe' as 'the name given to one of the four great divisions into which geographers have divided the world'. 'Europe', in other words, is not a natural feature of the Earth; it is a concept invented and imposed by geographers. This suggests that a different approach is required: perhaps we need to think of Europe not as a physical place, but rather as an idea. According to this approach, 'Europe' is a set of beliefs or principles which can be used to interpret the world and to define spaces and peoples. By investigating the idea of 'Europe' we are not searching for its essential meaning – a conclusive explanation of what it 'is'. Instead, as Peter Rietbergen argues in his recent history of the continent, we are thinking of Europe as 'a series of world-views, of peoples' perspectives on their reality, sometimes only dreamt or desired, sometimes experiences and realised'. Such ideas about Europe are always historical in the sense that they emerge at specific moments and according to particular ideological agendas, but they can also be long-lasting and reconceived in new contexts. We have already encountered the medieval idea that Europe and Christendom are commensurate, and that only Christians can be Europeans – an association which has continued to exert great influence despite the supposed secularisation of post-Enlightenment culture. Other familiar ideas from early modernity include the belief that Europe is the sole legitimate successor to the traditions of classical

Greece and Rome; that Europe is a region uniquely free from tyranny and thus the home of 'liberty'; or that Europe is a uniquely 'advanced' culture which is destined to lead the world by influence or conquest.

In all of these cases, it would be a serious error to take these ideas at face value; to treat them as straightforward descriptions of fact, rather than as these interpretations of the world. The belief that Europe is a Christian continent, for example, ignores the presence of other faiths in European culture, Christianity's global (not just continental) reach, and the long history of denominational conflict in the region. Just as we would recognise the racist and imperialist assumptions which underpin late 19th century notions of a European 'master race', so we must be similarly aware that all statements which purport to define or describe 'Europe' and 'Europeans' emerge from specific ideological and historical contexts. The historian's task is to recognise that 'Europe' is a form of discourse: a way of organising, communicating and legitimising ideas about people and space. Importantly too, the history of the idea of Europe encompasses ideas about European fragmentation and not just unity. After all, some of the most potent and enduring concepts of Europe are premised on firm distinctions between different nations or political systems, races or stages of societal 'development'. The assumption that Europe is irretrievably disunited needs to be interrogated alongside claims of, or plans for, European unity.

It is not enough, however, to imply that Europe is merely an abstract concept to be analysed on a theoretical level. Ideas about Europe have material consequences because they inspire practical action. There are many examples throughout history of individuals, governments and other social actors using ideas about Europe to enact policy, to justify activity, or to delineate identities. Pope Urban II (c.1042–99) defined 'Europe' as the 'part of [the world that] we Christians live in', and portrayed it as collectively humiliated by Muslim possession of the Holy Land. Urban's speeches evoked and encouraged a trans-European culture and a Christian military alliance: they are now often seen as both a theoretical justification and a practical impetus for the First Crusade. Later, by the 17th century, politicians and political theorists in various Western European countries came to think of 'Europe' as a finely-balanced network of separate states, each with independent, though occasionally overlapping, interests. A key foreign policy objective based on this idea was to prevent a single state from achieving hegemonic power over the continent. Certainly, one can see this principle behind British involvement in several 18th century conflicts, as

well as the agreed treaty settlements which followed them. The Congress of Vienna which followed Napoleon's defeat declined to weaken France unduly and thus create opportunities for a new hegemon in its place. Related ideas about European equilibrium continued to underpin British foreign policy into the later 19th and 20th centuries, especially as the consolidated German states altered the balance of power.

Today, different ideas about Europe sustain policy-making. In 2005, the Heads of State and Government at the Council of Europe set out a joint vision for 'a united Europe, based on our common values and on shared interests'. Fundamental to this is the 'core objective of preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law', facilitated by a detailed action plan covering numerous practical issues from ensuring compliance with common legal standards to the joint promotion of sport. Likewise, the European Union has tried to re-cast and realise centuries-old ideas about 'European liberty' with its policies on the so-called 'four freedoms': the free movement of goods, people, services and capital across the states of the Union. By contrast, critics of the EU propose, and increasingly enact, alternative measures based on different conceptions of the idea of Europe. Eurosceptics often stress the irreconcilable independence of European nation-states, and advocate practical measures – like heightened migration controls – to achieve their distinct version of the 'ideal' Europe.

To sum up, 'Europe' is not a natural fact of geography. It does not possess essential and unchanging characteristics which can be discovered if we look hard enough for empirical evidence of its true nature. Instead, 'Europe' is a concept fashioned by humans, established and reinvented according to historically-specific belief systems and ideological principles. Crucially though, these ideas about Europe are also real, precisely because people *believe* that they are and because they *act* on those beliefs. Europe is always more than just an abstract idea: it has tangible applications and can structure our understanding of the real world. The task of the historian is to trace the emergence, trajectory and consequences of those ideas. This is a crucial responsibility given the continuing prevalence of ideas about Europe in contemporary societies, cultures and politics. We need historians to analyse and contextualise those notions, especially when they are used and abused for concrete ends. For those of us living inside the continent – as well as for a great many elsewhere – conceptions of Europe are everywhere, deeply woven in the histories we tell, in the identities we employ, and in the places we inhabit. This means that it is misleading and simplistic to

claim that we can either be 'in' or 'out' of Europe. Instead, the key questions for policymakers – and Europeans – are 'what kind of Europe do we want to create?' and 'what kind of Europeans do we want to be?'

These questions were largely neglected in the recent referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the EU. The proffered options were poorly defined, and there was almost no attempt to evoke an idea of 'Europe' – within or outside of the EU – which could realise a clearly-articulated social, cultural or economic vision. In the aftermath of the referendum, there needs to be more open debate about what 'Europe' means for us today, and the extent to which the EU in its present form can realise those ends. In arguing, as I have done, that Europe has no essential definitive qualities, it does not follow that it is both everything and nothing and is thus an empty conceit. It means instead that 'Europe' can be shaped to new purposes and that, in doing so, we are not obliged to equate existing conventions with the limits of our aspirations. Do we want Europe to be a supra-national umbrella organisation, equipped with the trappings of nation-states on a grander scale? Do we want it to be the legal guarantor of distinctive and independent states, of commonly-agreed values, or both? Do we want 'Europe' to be an alternative form of identity to the nationalist rivalry so prevalent in the recent past? At this moment of reassessment for Britain and the EU, these discussions are now needed more than ever. What is Europe now? What can we make it? Who shall we be? These are the real questions for public intellectuals, policymakers and voters.

## 4. Where Europe Begins<sup>1</sup> – on Movement, Refuge, and Migration

Dariusz Gafijczuk

Where and how does Europe begin? That is the question. There are distorted geographies, disputed political and cultural traditions, wars, spiritual commonwealths, empires, cultural avant-gardes, injustices, good intentions, wrong turns, extremist ideologies, gilded halls, and most of all, murky origins. The picture is familiar, and we could keep adding to it, filling page after page that would look like a manifest of a shipping container with a label 'Europe' on it. It might even be the same shipping container that until recently, was used by refugees in Calais for shelter, in desperate search for their 'Europe' as well.

The problem, of course, is that Europe is not so much a place (even its credentials as a continent, geographically speaking, are dubious) but a trajectory, a line of flight, as the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze would say. Always fleeing somewhere, Europe is a perpetual migrant in its myth, its geography, and its idea. Europe is born in transit, first seeking a conceptual and cultural refuge in various host societies around the Mediterranean and then moving further afield, eventually sending its people out into the world many times over as refugees, adventurers, explorers and colonisers who played the high stakes game of mobility. And it is important to remember that for centuries Europe was a 'net exporter' of its people. This is why, when Theresa May exclaims (as she recently did at the Conservative Party

---

1 I have borrowed this phrase from the title of a collection of short stories by the German-Japanese author, Joko Tawada (2002).

Conference) that 'if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere', she is wrong – both factually and philosophically. Europe, especially Britain, invented the notion of global citizenship.

Europe not only perpetually flees, but it seems to always begin somewhere else. And in myth at least, it starts with the act of kidnapping, forceful removal, abduction – an event that reappears consistently throughout Europe's 'real' history. Europa, daughter of the Phoenician king Agenor (in present day Lebanon), is carried off to Crete by Zeus who takes the form of a bull. On Crete she gives birth to Minos, thus begetting the Minoan civilization, the cradle of ancient Greece, and eventually all of Europe. In essence, Europa is forced into exile; she makes the best of the new circumstances, eventually finding a way to readjust and thrive (like millions of modern day immigrants) in the process remaking the foreign and initially hostile land at its very core. This again is a story repeated many times throughout Europe's 'documented' history. Think of the religious refugees such as the Puritans, in the 1600s landing on the East coast of what later became the United States and the carving out of America that followed; or perhaps closer to Europa's experience, think of the forcefully removed Africans, enslaved and settled on a new continent, and their impact on American culture and society.

It is interesting to note how different refuge and refugee protection was historically speaking. If we look at early modern Europe, we learn that refugee communities, such as the French Huguenots or the Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, were communities on the move, actively negotiating refuge and the rights and privileges associated with settlement, as well as responsibilities and restrictions, whether it was in Amsterdam, Bordeaux or London. They were courted for their special skills and perceived contributions to the host societies, and often they had their own diplomatic representatives lobbying and negotiating on behalf of the entire community. These were not 'the wretched of the Earth' of today, confined to camps, barred from entry, dispersed, but active political units with a considerable amount of capital, both financial and cultural. They were aware of what had been granted to whom and approached the negotiations accordingly. For instance, when the Huguenots lobbied the British Crown for protection and resettlement in the British colonies, they explicitly drew on the substantial rights and privileges granted to their brethren in another part of Europe (in Brandenburg-Prussia through the 1685 Edict of Potsdam), which assured the Huguenot communities the power to preserve jurisdiction and laws, administration, churches and schools, free land, and exemption from taxes for 10 years.

According to Zygmunt Bauman, Europe is an 'unfinished adventure' that is 'allergic to borders – indeed to all fixity and finitude. It suffers limits badly'. He continues: 'it is as if it drew borders solely to target its intractable urge to trespass'. And trespass it did. In its not too distant history, all sorts of boundaries were breached – physical, intellectual, cultural, moral, ethical, human. There was much to celebrate, and just as much, if not more, to despair about. This is why it is imperative to sound a different tone about refuge, migration and movement, so maligned today. It is imperative to counteract the deformed imaginations of cohesion based on the new politics of exclusion and disintegration. In short, we have to recalibrate the common perception that migration, coming and going, border crossings, are exceptional – that they only take place at a time of crisis, under some sort of emergency conditions, and that they are, more often than not, an existential threat. This is not the case. 'No European can be a complete exile in any part of Europe' – wrote Edmund Burke in 1796. In this, Burke was expressing a nascent idea of the freedom of movement, which, as it happens, is the core principle at the heart of the European Community, increasingly under assault from various reactionary, populist and xenophobic forces.

If there is one historical 'law', it is the law of movement. Permeability of borders and cultures is interminable. Territorial enclosures behind sealed borders are the exception. And here it is precisely the nation-state that constitutes the apex of such exceptionality. This has always made it grotesque, fanciful, inhospitable, and at its worst, murderous. Lived-in cultures are tainted, impure and mixed up. They live by 'mixing together again the various lines, trails, and skins, while at the same time describing their heterogeneous trajectories and their webs, both those that are tangled and those that are distinct [...] never believing in the simple, homogenous, present "man"'. The great royal houses and dynasties of Europe's past are exemplary specimens of impurity – their power depended on it. For instance, in 1910 the soon-to-be assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the multi-cultural Hapsburg empire, listed 2,047 ancestors in his line of descent of which 1,486 were German, 196 Italian, 124 French, 89 Spanish, 52 Polish, 47 Danish, 20 English, to name the main ones. A rootless cosmopolitan indeed!

So, once again let us ask: how does Europe begin? Peter Sloterdijk thinks that the first word spoken by Europe is 'rage': 'At the beginning of the first sentence of the European tradition, in the first verse of the Iliad, the word "rage" occurs'. Of course, this is not our world. We are not moved by the passions in a similar way; we are not hosts to emotive

energies, divine in origin, that breach our bodies and minds. We are individuals with a preloaded psychological make up, that then hopefully only needs the occasional tune-up. But I wonder, if in this age of mobility, we as people of today, have also lost the ability to be moved; moved by events, circumstances, injustices to the point of rage and outrage. And in this sense, perhaps this is the most crucial part of Europe: its heritage, that has been not so much lost as nullified, rendered impractical and impotent. After all, we have well established moral and, perhaps more importantly, bureaucratic pathways for channeling discontent, compassion and empathy; we have sophisticated media and outlets of communication, but do we have an organ, an emotive core that generates emotion not just receives or channels it, what the Greeks called *thymos*, that is ready to move heaven and earth if necessary in its cry for justice? In any case, there is something telling in the fact that Sloterdijk says 'the first philosophical psychology of Europe unfolds itself [...] within this horizon' of rage. As there is in the fact that, as Paul Virilio points out, we have moved away from the democracy of opinion and entered the very much discomfiting confines of the democracy of emotion and fear – their mutual administration. But these are not focused emotions like a deep seated outrage would be. These emotions are unhinged, unpredictable, quickly mobilized and then diffused – they are political technologies. They are effective in the quicksand of a political moment, but useless in the long term, from the standpoint of community building. And if periodically reignited in more and more intense formations, tapping the power of their entropic energies for quick political gain, they can prove calamitous. What we need today, perhaps moreso than at any other time, is the slow burn of focused outrage – is that possible? Can it convince? Galvanize? Move?

According to the Czech dissident and philosopher Jan Patočka, the present-day civilizational vertigo throws up the questions of Europe's beginnings. In other words, 'the question is, when we go down to the roots of our contemporary disequilibrium, whether we do not need to go to the very origins of Europe'. And those origins, as Patočka sees them, are traced through movement – what he calls 'blind-wandering' (*bloudeni*). This kind of movement begins with the figure of the foreigner, the founder of Western philosophy and, it is important to remember, a non-citizen who relied on the always uncertain hospitality of Athenian society, which we know was ultimately withdrawn. That blind-wanderer and mobile-stranger geographically and intellectually was, of course, Socrates. In this sense, already as an intellectual and emotional stance that perceives, that animates, mobility cannot

be avoided; it can only be embraced or one may attempt, in a futile effort, circumvented.

How far is this contemporary Europe from the one that reinvented itself philosophically, culturally, politically, even geographically, continually with every blind turn? Far practically, but perhaps closer than we think psychologically. The emotional scale measuring forms of migration – personal, cultural, and political – still defines our current horizon, maintaining what seems to be that most stubborn part of our social and cultural presence – the constant negotiation between proximity and distance. Taken at its most intense, modern culture does more than simply discard old for the new in the name of ‘progress’ (such as there is), but rebels against the principle of form as such – as Georg Simmel already observed at the dawn of the 20th century. Such culture and politics of shapelessness is both full of promise as well as danger. Most immediately, it is inscribed into the figure of the mobile stranger, who, as Simmel observed already in 1908, presents a unique synthesis of attachment and detachment, inscribed into the identity of someone who stays, but has not given up the freedom of coming and going. In this formulation, the stranger is a hybrid, intimate figure that embodies ‘the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship’. It is perhaps here, in this general logic of estrangement, where we can start building a type of new humanism for the future – where the possibility for a rehabilitation of movement can grow.

PART 2:  
EUROPE  
AS PRACTICE

# 5. European Others and Others in Europe? Entangled Migration Histories of the Postwar Era

Elizabeth Buettner

Does the history of cross-border migration unite or divide Europeans? If we consider the post-1945 era, mobility across state lines has been an important shared aspect of Europe's past and present. In countries embarking on reconstruction and economic recovery in the wake of wartime upheaval and destruction, the migration experience characterized not only the millions of refugees and other displaced persons who moved from East to West or within Central Europe. It brought labour into North-Western Europe – some of it professional, but most of it skilled and unskilled manual and service-sector labour – which played a fundamental role during what became an era of full employment and gradually a time still renowned for being France's *trente glorieuses* ('thirty glorious years'), West Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), or other national equivalents. Far more often than has been popularly acknowledged, postwar booms were fuelled by millions of foreign workers from Southern and Eastern Europe and Turkey. Some who left home to live and work where there were far better economic (and often political) opportunities stayed permanently; other migrants were temporary (perhaps labelled as 'guest workers') or cyclical, coming and going until they ultimately made decisions in favour of one place or another.

At the same time Europe was being reinvented in the aftermath of war, however, so too were Western Europe's global empires. After 1945, imperial powers initially struggled to hold on to most (if not all) of their overseas possessions but faced an uphill struggle. Not only did American and Soviet priorities during the Cold War limit their options: so too did demands from colonised populations for a change to the imperial status quo that led to many different forms of anti-colonial nationalist movements, some peaceful, others militant. Tactics to preserve what they could of their empires explain the emergence of new European governing practices and efforts to repress dissent as well as attempts to bind colonies and metropolises together more tightly. In hindsight, of course, the postwar era is rightly remembered as a time when losing empires – decolonization – ultimately reshaped Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean as well as Europe itself. But along the way, European colonisers experimented with alternative constructions of imperial states and peoples that stressed connectedness and shared attributes.

Thus, the era from the late 1940s to the early 1960s gave the Netherlands a new constitutional framework in its 1954 *Statuut* (Charter), which made the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles equal partners with full internal self-government and a common nationality within a tripartite Dutch Kingdom. France's empire became the French Union in 1946, when the metropole and its overseas possessions became a single entity and 'colonies' were renamed 'overseas departments and territories' or – like Algeria – juridically remained *départements* of France itself. Correspondingly, French Union residents received full French citizenship, regardless of skin colour. So did Africans and *mestiços* from Portugal's surviving empire. Having renamed their colonies 'overseas provinces' in 1951 to defend the notion that Portugal was a pluricontinental nation – one spanning the seas – rather than a coloniser, it became a multiracial nation as well 10 years later as it extended Portuguese citizenship to those across its far-flung domains, irrespective of ethnicity or birthplace. Britain too had its equivalent of this as it struggled to maintain what it could of its empire. The 1948 British Nationality Act aimed to strengthen British relations with its colonies and ex-colonies within the Commonwealth by formalizing migration and settlement rights for all subjects. Colonial and Commonwealth subjects were British citizens by law, and could freely travel to, live and work in the metropole – at least until racism in society and politics led to a series of restriction acts starting (but by no means ending) in 1962.

Portugal, France, and the Netherlands also reworked many of these inclusive mid-century policies once it was clear that times had changed and that decolonization was irreversible.

While they lasted, however, these end-of-empire restylings and citizenship policies turned declining and ultimately former imperial metropolises into the multicultural, postcolonial European nations they remain today. This is something that a number of Western European nations now share, and which distinguishes them from Eastern Europe. Millions of people, many of whom are now the second or third generation, have Algerian, Moroccan, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Jamaican, Cape Verdian, Angolan, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins – to name but a few – and have long been in Europe to stay, having often arrived as citizens.

Postwar/postcolonial Europe was thus demographically, culturally and economically remade via multiple migration waves from former overseas empires, as well as from Turkey and other European countries. European foreigners as well as ethnic minorities of extra-European origins all experienced discrimination of various kinds, whether on the grounds of nationality, their precarious socio-economic position, or ideas about racial and cultural distinctions that rendered peoples of many backgrounds allegedly suspect or inferior. Racism and discrimination might have been predicated upon colour difference or cultural difference, or often some combination of these, and it is highly significant that European foreigners fared better in both respects. Widespread notions that other Europeans, however different, were culturally and ethnically ‘closer’ to the native population and thus better able to assimilate were common. Whether we look at Britain, France, or other countries, it is relatively easy to find glowing statements about the potential of European foreign migrants (and especially their children) to integrate within the national community, even from commentators who were determined to criticise other forms of migration as a ‘problem’ and national danger. Or perhaps especially from these corners: praising Europeans’ successful or potentially painless assimilation often appears to have been pretext for condemning other groups as less desirable by comparison and justifying their exclusion and marginalisation.

Time and again, Western Europe’s postcolonial nations often expressed preferences for white European ‘others’ – even if they arrived illegally, and not speaking the language – to ethnic minorities who often possessed citizenship rights and might well have had common cultural

attributes that came from growing up in a colonial society. Shared citizenship and nationality could mean little in terms of political or societal acceptance as racism and the rejection of cultural difference (particularly if it concerned religious, especially Islamic, cultural difference) won out over xenophobia. Inclinations favouring Europeans over racialised non-Europeans were at times rendered explicit, but silence surrounding their presence and impact was even more apparent precisely because they were considered relatively unthreatening – literally unremarkable.

Spoken or unspoken preferences for Europeans over other newcomers can be seen – or not seen – in the history of European Volunteer Workers in late 1940s Britain, who never received anywhere near the negative attention accorded to ‘coloured’ colonial and Commonwealth arrivals; in France, where Portuguese workers were nearly as numerous as Algerians but generated nowhere near the same public hostility; in Belgium and the Netherlands, where labour migrants from Southern Europe never attracted anywhere near the same levels of opprobrium as either Dutch Surinamese or ‘guest workers’ from Turkey and Morocco; or later in Portugal, where communities from the former empire in Cape Verde, Angola, and elsewhere suffered racist exclusion from employers who seemed to prefer Eastern Europeans after the late 1980s. Germany’s ‘economic miracle’, meanwhile, involved labour input from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Yugoslavia, all of them far less developed lower-wage economies, but by the 1980s this postwar history of ‘guest workers’ from across the Mediterranean basin which had been intensely multinational in character had been racialised, with Turks the exclusive focus of attention. Across Western Europe, migrants and their descendants from the South of Europe were either welcomed or rendered invisible (because uncontentious), while those from the Global South were ‘problems’ to be either excluded at the border or intensely monitored and worried about from within.

Two main factors help account for this: European integration and the relentless spread of Islamophobia. As scholars are now addressing more thoroughly, Europe’s integration and the disintegration of European overseas empires are crucial dimensions of postwar history that were intensely interconnected processes, not phenomena to be studied in isolation. This is certainly the case with respect to Europe’s multiple histories of migration. Starting with the Treaty of Rome and the emergence of the EEC in 1957, freedom of movement (of capital, goods, services and people) became increasingly fundamental to the ideology

and aspirations of Europe's common market that ultimately became the European Union. EU citizenship extended from these core principles, coming into effect in 1993. These developments facilitated legal labour migration within a growing EEC/EU as more nations in Southern Europe joined in the 1980s – a time when anti-black racism continued and Western paranoia about Islam grew exponentially. Border-hopping or permanently resident Europeans of other nationalities became ever less problematic, while minorities of non-European origin faced ongoing and often increasing stigmatisation, regardless of their citizenship, birthplace and official right to belong.

But the new millennium brought new challenges. One came from enhanced anxieties about Europe's Muslim minorities with the series of Islamist terrorist attacks on Western targets during and after 2001. The other involved movements within Europe that took on new dimensions as 12 new member states, most in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, entered the EU in 2004 and 2007. But like postcolonial arrivals, however, Eastern Europeans now provoked extremely xenophobic populist responses. Common citizenship and labour rights and that of freedom of movement, and in this instance perceptions of relative cultural and ethnic proximity, have not protected Eastern Europeans from xenophobia and discrimination in recent years, just as was so often the case with late colonial and postcolonial migrants.

A deeper historical awareness of how targets of hostility and anxiety can shift is crucial, not least in times like ours when fears vacillate between focusing on Muslims and border-crossing Europeans (some of whom of course are also Muslim). Indeed, debates about today's migration 'crisis' reflect both of these at the same time, helping to account for some of their stridency. Not only are non-Europeans refugees 'invading' Europe from without, but once inside the EU their ability to travel elsewhere within its confines has created panic not only in Mediterranean points of arrival but in Northern, Western, Central, and Eastern Europe as well. If EU citizens can take advantage of open borders in an integrated Europe, so too can those who have entered, largely unwanted, from outside the continent. Within this tangled realm of migration anxieties, internal and external EU dimensions become inseparable.

We saw this in the first half of 2016 in the 'Brexit' debate as Britain headed closer to its referendum about whether to remain in or leave the EU. Migration was obviously central to this, as the EU is both the source of fellow EU migrants as well as non-EU refugees, who happen to be

largely Muslim and highly mobile. This was blatantly apparent in the scare tactics deployed by the 'leave' campaign as they circulated visions of Britain within an EU that might one day include Turkey and additional Balkan countries, and hence of a Britain unable to exclude millions more EU nationals. In the words of Vote Leave, by 2030 the EU would encompass 'a visa-free zone from the English Channel to the borders of Syria'.<sup>2</sup>

Seeking to exclude or otherwise marginalise other Europeans now appears to have become a defining feature of British national identity. While we can detect instances of xenophobia directed at European foreigners (typically Eastern and South-Eastern) in other countries, Britain's current negative fixation and 'othering' of Europeans appears more extreme, and most certainly a departure from its own history before the EU's enlargement starting in 2004. But mixed together with this are ongoing antagonisms vis-à-vis groups of non-European and often postcolonial origins. The 'Brexit' vote has revealed the toxic consequences of xenophobia against white EU citizens for the UK's long-settled postcolonial minorities as Britain's black and Asian communities reported a spike in racist behaviour following the 23 June referendum. Xenophobia directed at the EU cannot be cordoned off from racism targeting co-nationals or more recent refugees; European 'Others' and 'Others' in Europe have entangled postwar pasts and most certainly entangled presents.

---

2 Jennifer Rankin, 'Will staying in EU really lead to an influx equal to Scottish population?', *Guardian*, 20 May 2016.

## 6. The Crisis of 'the Crisis of Europe'

Albena Azmanova

It is not a dirty secret that there has never been a popular appetite for the idea of Europe – the European Union has been an elite project, and a highly pragmatic one at that. There is nothing very inspiring about the four European Freedoms – freedom of movement of goods, services, people and money – anyone ready to die for these freedoms must be out of their mind. It is logical, then, that citizen indifference has been one of the most persistent sources of the infamous 'crisis of Europe'. Just a few years ago, in 2012, I was invited to speak at a Battle of Ideas session in London on a panel entitled 'Is Europe Boring?' – the year when the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Well, Europe is no longer boring, and the UK's referendum vote in June put an end to the crisis of indifference. Brexit and the passions it stirred displayed that Europe matters – that it is a matter of intense importance to the formerly indifferent citizens. In a way, Brexit transformed Europe from a project of elites to a project of its citizens – it gave birth to a new Europe – whose existence is affirmed equally in the gestures of endorsement as in those of rejection. Conflicts, turbulence and affect, be it positive or negative, are symptoms of the existence, even of the vitality, of an entity.

However, Brexit created a curious situation which I would like to describe as 'crisis of a crisis'. A crisis is a state of extreme challenge to an entity's existence that marks a turning point with just two possible outcomes – either death or transformation. Shortly after the negative vote in June, it became clear that leaving the Union is not a solution to the concerns that motivated the 'leave' vote, and that exit from the Union creates more problems than it solves. As Britain acted on its

*Tanatos*, its death drive, it eliminated the death of the EU as a viable solution to the crisis – thus, it solved the existential crisis of the Union. How about the other solution to the crisis – transformation? The transformative power of crises is exactly how the integration of Europe was meant to proceed. To quote Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the Union: ‘I have always believed that Europe would be built through crises, and that it would be the sum of their solutions’. It is pragmatically and incrementally, but also by means of solving crises, that an ever closer union was to be built.

However, nowadays the road of transformations is blocked by radical disagreements (Eastern and Western member states oppose each other on social policy, and the North and South of Europe are at loggerheads on economic policy.) We are stuck. We are in a situation of radical ungovernability in which, as Claus Offe has observed, it is very well known what should be done to solve the crisis (e.g. large-scale and long-term debt mutualisation resulting in social transfers between member states and between social classes), yet these rather obvious solutions are considered politically unfeasible, nay, unthinkable. If what is well known is unthinkable, one is in real trouble. (This reminds me of the last years of the communist regime in Bulgaria when we were haunted by a sense that what is happening was neither right nor wrong, it was simply abnormal, and of us being stuck into what seemed like a perpetual abnormality.)

So, as Europe survived its existential crisis, it finds itself in a situation far worse – what I call a ‘crisis of a crisis’ – in which death, that is, the dissolution of the Union, is not an option, but neither is transformation in the offing.

I do not believe that a road ahead can be found in grand ideas such as the recently fashioned Global Foreign Policy and Security Strategy. Such grand visions tend to be divisive. But there is a path, the traces of which can be discerned in the reasons for the earlier tacit endorsement of the project, of the times when Europe was boring.

Publics endorsed their leaders’ experimentation in political and economic integration due to a broadly shared belief in the benevolent power of Europe. According to the narrative identity that the EU governing bodies have been actively generating, the integration of national economies ensured the prosperity-in-peace which Europeans have enjoyed in the second half of the 20th century. This is why the EU was awarded the Nobel

Peace Prize five years ago. Even if the causality behind that reasoning is questionable (we might have achieved both peace and prosperity without said integration), the belief in the healing power of ‘belonging to Europe’ rests on a more broadly shared notion – that such belonging enables nations to reach their excellence: belonging to Europe makes us no less British, Bulgarian, or German, it helps us be British, Bulgarian or German *at our best*. Let us call this Europe’s vocation for achieving national exemplarity.

This positive attachment to Europe as an uplifting force was tangible when the post-communist states of East and Central Europe were preparing to join the EU. Let me resort to the example I know best – that of my native Bulgaria. Bulgarians have always looked up to ‘Europe’ as a source of a superior manner of being modern (the word ‘European’ is used as a synonym of ‘civilized’ and ‘sophisticated’) – it designates a certain noble modernity. Joining Europe was meant to compensate certain ‘Balkan provincialism’ as well as a deficiency in being modern – *to be Bulgarian at our best*. This is a narrative that long predated the communist regimes. With the fall of communism, another dimension of attachment to Europe emerged – of course, people were seduced by the affluence of the West, but they also saw the EU as a force able to protect them from their corrupt political elites who were robbing them of their chance to become properly, nobly, modern. The EU was seen as a way of Bulgaria becoming *a democracy at its best*.

I believe this role of Europe in achieving national exemplarity is more broadly valid. For Germany, EU membership has helped cleanse the idea of national greatness from the toxins of chauvinism, thus gaining Germany the image of a benevolent power. For Britain and France, EU membership allowed cosmopolitanism without imperialism. It is this function of exemplarity that Europe has lost. The growing disaffection with Europe now in Bulgaria as well as in other new member states has much to do with the EU disappointing these hopes, as political corruption, mismanagement and impoverishment have increased since accession. Many Bulgarians now experience themselves as being ‘at their worst’, and do not hesitate to blame the EU for this. The same, I believe, goes for other member states – from Britain to Greece, the EU is being accused of bringing countries to their worst state. We should not blame this simply on politics of ‘post-truth’ – misinformation and manipulation of public opinion by the mass media and wicked politicians. There is an additional, overarching cause which I would like to address in some detail.

Some 20 years ago, the policy regime of the EU took the shape of what I would like to call a *socially irresponsible rule* – rule where political and economic policy objectives are pursued without regard for their impact on society. This is neither a matter of bad will nor of ideological commitments, but rather a matter of the institutionalised distribution of policy competencies in the EU. Let me explain.

The Single European Act was adopted in 1987, came into force in 1994 and thus inaugurated an integrated economic space – a single market among all member-states. Since then, the protection of this trans-European market economy became the core function of the EU decisional bodies. This is engraved in the distribution and stratification of policy competencies in the Union. The EU has an exclusive competence in ensuring the competitive nature of the single market, as well as in matters of commercial policy; EU law in these spheres has supremacy and direct effect vis-à-vis national legislation. The logic of market efficiency thus gained political hegemony in disregard of the social consequences of market efficiency – a job left to the member states. Thus on the level of EU decisional bodies, a *raison d'Économie* began functioning as a *raison d'État*. It is the very constitutional structure of EU policy that established a socially irresponsible rule in Europe.

There has been one distinct impact of this on European societies – they have been plagued by massive economic and social uncertainty. We have heard repeatedly that Brexit, and generally disaffection with Europe, is a revolt by the losers of globalisation. I do not believe this hypothesis is correct. Note, for instance, that the 52% of Brits who mobilised for exit from the EU united very strange bed-fellows: the 'losers of globalisation' saw the EU as imposing threatening to them open border policies, while the winners of globalisation (the political leadership of the Brexit campaign) deemed that the EU was preventing Britain from being a free-trading, deregulated, competitive entrepôt. Thus, taking back control meant different things to these very different groups. Yet the common denominator was regaining control to fight uncertainty.

What I call an institutionalised socially irresponsible rule – rule without regard of the social consequences of policies – is destabilising life-worlds; it is triggering risk-aversion instincts even among the winners of globalisation and is prompting people to seek, in vain, shelter in national economic sovereignty (which is often mistaken as a quest for more democracy). Telling in this regard is the nature of anti-immigrant sentiment (xenophobia), which is worth addressing.

While the rise of xenophobia is usually a consequence of economic malaise and political turmoil (as in the Nazi Germany of the 1930s), the current wave of xenophobia arose in the affluent 1990s in conditions of robust growth, rising living standards and low unemployment. Importantly, the anti-immigrant sentiment was not triggered by the economic crises, *it preceded it*. However, the affluent 1990s were also the time of rapid economic liberalisation and open-market policies enacted under the EU agenda for global competitiveness. Populist leaders managed to mobilise unprecedented support, banking on the nebulous fears, rather than the distinct risks, the policies of open borders had unleashed. Thus, a new order-and-security public agenda of concerns emerged, with four elements – physical insecurity, political disorder, cultural estrangement and employment insecurity. It is this agenda that the new populist parties and movements have effectively endorsed as their political platform, while centre-left and centre-right political establishments remained trapped by their old ideological commitments.

The new populism is using the old language of xenophobia, but is driven by quite different motivation than the political chauvinism and cultural arrogance that defined the post-WWII far-right. The hostility to foreigners now is predominantly economic in essence. It is related to perceived threats to socio-economic wellbeing (especially job loss) brought about by the open border policies in the context of globalisation, for which the EU has been an active agent. ('British jobs for British workers' sums it up nicely.)

This means that the roots of disaffection and discontent across Europe have less to do with European integration itself, or with falling standards of living and growing inequality, as they have to do with a type of political economy that engenders a socio-economic insecurity to which most citizens are subjected. This has entailed the failure of Europe to play its role of exemplarity, of helping member-states be at their best. Rather the contrary: through the politics of uncertainty and fear the EU institutes, it renders its members at their worst.

If I am right that it is the *institutionalised insecurity* that is the culprit (more so than the rising inequalities and the social marginalisation of the 'losers of globalisation'), we need to embark on a counter-project which I have named a 'political economy of trust' at EU-level. It consists in a set of policies and institutions designed to counter economic insecurity, in defiance of much of the old ideological truths of the Left and the Right. Economic and social precariousness can neither

be fixed by labour-market deregulation and austerity policies, nor via a resurrection of the bureaucratic redistributive welfare state.

I cannot give here full detail, but let me mention just the two core ideas. Instead of providing short-term and ad hoc compensation to those who have lost their jobs due to globalisation with devices such as the European Union Globalisation Fund, the EU should redesign globalisation away from the *laissez-faire*, free market formula: the global economy is rule-based, we can have the rules we want, including high environmental and social standards. The first trajectory is that of a socialist globalisation.

In terms of internal market policy, we need to set in place conditions for voluntary employment flexibility. The new economy does not produce a lot of jobs – not only because jobs are being exported away, but also due to robotisation. Even when they recover, European economies are likely to find themselves in a situation of jobless growth. We need, therefore, to put in place the conditions for job sharing – a ‘universal minimum employment’ policy platform. A radical liberalisation of labour markets is necessary to allow the labour markets outside to get in. But this needs to be coupled with a trans-European social insurance, based on EU denizenship, as well as diminishing working hours and length of employment. A secure source of income will encourage those willing to exit the labour market to do so. Currently, studies show that even those who value leisure time stay in employment because they are haunted by financial and employment uncertainty.

A pragmatic synergy between radical economic liberalisation and a robust social safety net at EU-level would allow the return of socially responsible rule – rule that takes full responsibility for the social consequences of economic policy. Admittedly, it is not in the remit of what is currently *politically thinkable*. Hopefully, not for long. And hope, in contrast to optimism, as the playwright-president-dissident Václav Havel observed, ‘is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense’. To the extent that the idea of a political economy of trust *makes sense*, we need to make it also politically thinkable. And the British Academy is very well placed to do just that.

# 7. Ideas of European Failure

David Runciman

The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama popularised the phrase 'getting to Denmark' to capture what he thought was the goal of social and political development; that is, for states to get to a Danish-like level of tolerance, prosperity, democracy and well-being. Denmark often comes top of UN and other measures of well-being and happiness, and there is a vast 'getting to Denmark' social science literature about the processes of democratisation and development that might help achieve this.

There is also a lot of pushback against that idea, not just because it tends to neglect or ignore the ways in which these European states 'got to Denmark', by exploiting other parts of the world, but also from people who simply think it's absurd to have such a teleological and unidirectional notion of progress. A distinguished historian once told me that he thought it was laughable to assume that human beings either should or would prefer to live in soulless 21st century Denmark rather than vibrant 12th century Constantinople. So there is that long tradition, too, in European thought: not 'getting to Denmark,' but sailing to Byzantium.

In the 'getting to Denmark' literature there is a preoccupation with failure, but it's a specific notion of failure; it is failure to 'get to Denmark'. Fukuyama gave an interview recently in which he said that even Denmark has failed to 'get to Denmark,' because Denmark has not lived up to Danish standards of tolerance and transparency. The best-known popular book in that literature is Acemoglu and Robinson's *Why Nations Fail*. It is about why nations fail to cross this threshold to prosperity, toleration and openness. When David Cameron was asked before the last general election to name his favourite book, he said it was Acemoglu and Robinson's *Why Nations Fail*, which seems ironic now.

Yet there remains a big gap in the literature of state failure, because there is another question: not what it means to fail to 'get to Denmark' in Fukuyama's sense, but what it means for Denmark to fail. That is a totally different question. What does failure mean for the kinds of prosperous, stable, peaceful states that still make up the bulk of the European Union? I am aware that on the borders of Europe, particularly the eastern borders of Europe, this question might look like a luxury. However, in Western Europe – and I include the United Kingdom in this – it is the question we need to grapple with. I do not think we know how to grapple with it, certainly not in social science but also in our political imaginations, because the categories of failure that come out of the idea of democratic development do not apply. We need different notions of what it is to be a failed state.

Civil breakdown, and ultimately civil war: there are states suffering like this all around the world. We recognise the symptoms all too well: a rise not just of spasmodic, but of systemic violence; not just a lurch into authoritarian democracy, but a descent into military rule; not just moments of arbitrary rule, but the suspension of the rule of law. I think – and I hope I am not being naïve – that these prospects are vanishingly remote for Europe at the moment. On the other hand, Acemoglu and Robinson identify as a mark of failure what they call 'extractive politics', which means elites using power and political office as rent-seeking devices to extract wealth from populations. This goes on all the time in the most successful states in the world. In our societies it takes the form of financial extraction, yet these capitalist oligarchies are the regimes that we currently live in. So on the one hand, there is a notion of failure in the 'getting to Denmark' literature that is vanishingly remote for us (violent failure); on the other hand, there is a notion of failure in the literature that is part of our success (extractive failure). Neither helps us understand how much danger we are in.

What does it mean for our successful states to fail? I do not think we really have an understanding of how to answer that question. But we have some knowledge of why the prospect of civic breakdown is so remote for us. In the long history of how states have failed to 'reach Denmark', violence is the primary symptom of state failure. We live in societies that are by any historical standards the least violent in human history. It is a contentious idea, the decline of violence; some people reject it because it does not chime with their experience, since it feels like we live in such a dangerous world. However, while violence may be more visible in our world, partly because of new forms of communication,

it is in fact much less prevalent. That is certainly true of most parts of Europe, though less so as we reach some of its edges.

It is also true – and this is a neglected fact about our societies, particularly Western European societies – that they are incredibly old. By old, I do not mean that they have been around forever. I mean that they have old populations. The median age in Greece and Italy is approximately 45 years old. Societies that have failed in the classic sense – in the violent sense – have always been young, certainly much younger than this. I do not think we know what happens in societies that have our age profile when they go wrong, because we do not know what people who are older than for 45 do when their societies fail. We know what younger people do – what they do is violence – but not what older people do. I am over 45, so I am talking about my ignorance of myself.

One of the most striking facts about Europe is the staggering youth unemployment levels in places like Greece and Spain, where upwards of 50% of 18 to 24-year-olds are unemployed. That should be enough to cause a society to fail. The reason it has not is that there are not many young people in those societies. At certain points in history, and in certain parts of the world today, if the 18 to 24 age group were suffering on this scale, that would lead to civic breakdown; but not in societies where there are many more people aged 65 and older than there are aged 18 to 24. We have historical precedent for this. There is perhaps only one, and that is Japan since 1990. It has failed on some accounts, in the sense that Japanese politics and society have very little. Japan is a very elderly society with a higher median age even than places like Greece and Italy, and it has had lost decades of near-zero economic growth. However, it is monstrous in broader historical terms to call Japan a failed state. If in the great lottery of life you did not know where or when you were going to be born in human history, and you were told you are going to be born and grow up in Japan post-1990, you would consider yourself a winner, not a loser. Contemporary Japan is not a failed society. It is still a success.

There are narratives of failure coming out of some of the social science literature that are still pertinent for Europe. Take the decline of violence narrative, which is quite widespread now. The poster book for this – the equivalent of *Why Nations Fail* – is Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of our Nature*, which tells the story, in his terms, of how and why human societies have become much, much less violent. Most of the evidence he lays out is broadly persuasive, yet the story that he is

telling is a highly distinctive one. This is a slightly clumsy way of putting it, but what he is describing is our move to a world of 'long tail' violence; that is to say, the middle has been hollowed out.

If you read Richard Evans's recent history of Europe from 1815 to 1914 (*The Pursuit of Power*) – the great century of European peace – the levels of violence are just jaw-dropping right the way through. It is mid-level violence: pogroms and lesser massacres; governments oppressing their people, leaving tens, hundreds and sometimes thousands dead. That level of violence is what has disappeared. What we have now is a lot of micro-violence and the occasional threat of cataclysmic violence. This is the world created by the 20th century, which limited violence except for those periods where it exploded. Critics often say of Pinker's book, 'How can the world have got less violent over the last thousand years if the 20th century includes the First World War, the Second World War, and some of the genocidal consequences of the Cold War?'. To which he says those are isolated pockets of extreme violence in a long story of declining violence overall. They represent the other end of the 'long tail'.

If that 'long tail' story is true, what we are looking at currently is much, much less violence in sum, but somewhere in the background the lingering fear of total or systematic collapse. That makes politics very, very hard. It is very hard to know what to do in circumstances where a lot of the bad stuff is so small as to be almost invisible, and then looming over it is the prospect of systemic failure. I think some of our political imagination is trapped in that dynamic. I am not in favour of mid-level violence at all – who on Earth would be? – but what it has generated in the past is what we tend to recognise as meaningful political choices.

There is also what could be called the Silicon Valley critique of Europe, which relates to this idea of systemic failure. The Silicon Valley critique is that the reason Europe is failing is Europe can no longer accommodate failure. Europe has become so risk averse that we cannot put up with disruption. In Peter Thiel's extraordinary speech endorsing Donald Trump, that was the essence of his argument about the United States: the baby boomer generation cannot tolerate failure, which is why America has failed. Plenty of people in Silicon Valley have been saying the same thing, in even more extreme terms, about Europe: that Europe, and particularly the EU, is a political entity that is so risk averse, so trapped by the fear of systemic failure, that it cannot allow for disruption and experimentation. And for that reason, it is doomed to fail.

Again, there are long narrative histories that lie behind this way of thinking, such as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* or Niall Ferguson's *Civilisation*, which have tried to identify what Europe's strategic advantage had been in millennial perspective. On these accounts, European states have always rubbed up against each other in ways that created disruption. Bad ideas were experimented with and died, and good ideas flourished. This chimes with the Silicon Valley view of what we should be doing now. I think that view is grotesque and morally repugnant, because disruption in politics is death. That European story seen in millennial perspective may resemble the Silicon Valley view of how you get to Google – disruption, adaptation, the emergence of what Ferguson calls the 'killer apps' of Western civilisation – but in lived experience it means the killing fields of the 20th, 19th, 18th and 17th centuries. The idea that what Europe needs is more disruption on that scale seems to me to be mad.

Nonetheless, it remains a large part of the problem we face. We do not know how to fail, not least because the risks of catastrophe are genuine. There are two final points to be made. The first is that, in relation to ideas of 'European Union and Disunion', I think we can say of unions that they can both underpin and overlay Danish or UK-style peace and prosperity. Those are two distinct things. It is possible that a union that once underpinned peace – that is, if you pull the union out, the peace falls apart – comes to overlay it. That would be true of a union of this island: England and Scotland. In the 18th century, if you pulled that union out, you would get violence and social collapse. In the 21st century, if Scotland becomes independent, we will not get violence and social collapse. What once underpinned our prosperity now overlays it. That may also be true of the EU, but I think the story is too short for us to know for sure. I do not know if the EU underpins our peace and prosperity, and I do not know if it overlays it. We shall see.

Finally I do not think Brexit spells failure for Europe in the way that, say, France or Germany's withdrawal from the EU would. Even in that case it would not mean cataclysmic civic breakdown. Instead it would be a failure of the project. I do not think Britain exiting the EU is a failure of the project. However, it raises the possibility of further shocks, and shocks might trigger all sorts of effects, good or bad, we simply do not know. So even without anything especially bad taking place we still face the prospect of exacerbating the risk of something truly terrible happening. The risks we run make us more, not less, risk averse.

The real challenge here is that the likeliest thing to happen as a result of Brexit – or some other Brexit-level event – is that it limits our options. Avoiding systemic failure at all costs makes reform very, very difficult. In that context, the likeliest thing to happen is a kind of stalemate or stagnation, maybe even on a Japanese scale, but without Japanese cultural underpinnings. Twenty years of almost nothing changing but people getting progressively more irritated by politics, would in itself constitute a fundamental failure of democracy. Although it does not fit the ‘getting to Denmark’ model of state failure, I think it is our 21st century version of how democracy will fail.

We, Western Europeans, live in Denmark – that is, the Denmark of the mind. We live in societies that are by historical standards so peaceful, so prosperous and so secure that we do not know how to think about the alternatives. Because we have built something really valuable, we are very frightened of doing some of the things that might bring it crashing down, which makes it very hard for us to reform it. Our problem is that the shock that might allow us to reform it threatens to destroy it, which means our desire to avoid destroying it prevents us from reforming it. That is the trap we are in.



PART 3:  
THESE ISLANDS  
AND EUROPE

## 8. These Islands

Onora O'Neill

The first thing I should say something about is the phrase 'these islands'. Where does that phrase come from? It is a term that we used in Ireland, north and south, particularly during the period of the Troubles, because of its complete neutrality. The traditional term had been 'the British Isles'. That was not beloved in all quarters, so we started, in my family and many others, referring to 'these islands'. Of course, when abroad, we then had to refer to 'those islands' and I think people thought, 'What do they mean by "those islands"?' That is the origin of the phrase, and so it is, like all phrases used in this discussion, quite a political phrase: but it captures something that is important.

I am no geographer, but I think geography is very important to the understanding of what is going on in this discussion of islands. As we all know, the water is the easiest route to travel initially, rather than the land. Many of the stories about our early history that people in these islands grew up with are about the water. Think of Niall of the Nine Hostages; think of St Patrick himself, a Romano Brit enslaved and taken to Ireland, then traveling to Rome for ordination, back to Ireland and so on. Think of St Columba and the formation of the Celtic Church, which had such a profound effect on the conversion of Northern Europe. Think of St Brendan the Navigator and all those islands of birds. It is a long story, where the water is the thing that links, but seemingly not in this case; where the water is seen as dividing. I think that is interesting.

My field is not international relations but philosophy. I have, however, been struck by Kissinger's *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, which is very much about the centre and the periphery, as opposed to about islands and mainland, and his suggestion that European history is marked by either weakness in the centre, in which case the periphery starts to encroach, or the amassing

of power at the centre (of which the great examples of the modern era are Napoleon and Hitler), in which case the periphery exerts itself to avoid being overwhelmed by the centre.

Let us look at the question: is the centre too powerful or too powerless now? Where are we still in this sort of pendulum? I do not know, and it is tempting to caricature it as the peoples versus Herr Juncker, but maybe that is not the way to caricature it. I am very struck by the number of people around, including in this country too, who fear that the European Union may be not too successful, but actually a failed project.

Could it be that the EU lacks the powers to reform itself in the ways that are needed? Can the EU reform itself? Can it live with a currency that has condemned the Mediterranean nations to a very difficult economic future, though of great advantage to Germany, which is now the one of the workshops of the world? Does the EU have the possibility to reform itself? I think particularly of the League of Nations between the wars, where ultimately the institution did not seem to have the possibility to maintain or reform itself.

I want to make a very few remarks of a more philosophical sort on the much used notion of 'identity'. In my youth, nobody would have understood the current use of the phrase. We had a phrase that was quite clear; it was 'sense of identity'. What is your sense of identity? People would say what their sense of identity was. For some of us, it was complicated. People like me, with an Irish, a Scottish, a Welsh and an English grandparent had to tell quite a complicated narrative about our sense of identity, but the phrase 'sense of identity' was clear.

What does 'identity' as now used mean? It seems to me, to this philosopher, historically to be an appropriation of the French use of the term 'identité'. Secondly, it apparently is used to run together what one feels about oneself and what one is. Those are surely different things. I think we are seeing a new development in the interpretation of 'sense of identity' if we look at the sexual politics of today, where people talk about their 'identity', and do not use the phrase 'sense of identity'. It is my identity 'as a lesbian', my identity 'as a heterosexual', and 'the most surprising thing that is happening to this terminology is that it is now taken that identity is a matter of choice. Now, can one have it both ways? Can identity be something weighty and that matters, and that is not the sort of thing that we should take lightly, because it is 'who I am' and, at the same time say it is a matter of choice? I do not think one can

have it both ways. Down in the bowels of the arguments we are hearing there is tremendous confusion between the question of whether 'identity' is 'sense of identity', whether identity is a matter of choice, and confusion about the reasons when and why we need to take claims about identity or about sense of identity seriously.

Now let me come to something much more concrete: the Common Travel Area between the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom and some other bits. The Common Travel Area seems to me to be one of the first things that has come to the surface in the debates, post-UK referendum, and for good reason. It is, first of all, older and, secondly, stronger than the Schengen area. The relationship between citizenship, movement and borders within these islands – you see how useful the phrase is – dates from the 1920s. (Before that, it was one state.) The Common Travel Area is stronger than Schengen, because not merely are those of us who are citizens either of the Republic or of the UK entitled to move without passports, to work, to travel, to live in either country; we are also entitled to vote in whichever country we live in and that is an absolutely fundamental difference. Indeed, we are conscious of the Irish vote within parts of the UK, as a potent political force. The relation between the Republic of Ireland and the UK is something stronger, older and, I have to say, deeper in our marrow than the relations between other European states.

In the former Soviet Union, they used to have a phrase 'near abroad'. Well, I think the Republic of Ireland, for most of us living on this island, is not merely near abroad. It is not really abroad. We have not merely history, which of course includes animosity, but we have law. We have a habit of working, of moving, of travelling to and fro. What is to happen if Brexit is carried through to the Common Travel Area? How do you have a land border of the EU running across the island of Ireland, and maintain the Common Travel Area? Would it not mean, as people phrase it (not very nicely) that there was a back door into the United Kingdom, via the Republic of Ireland, for any European citizen entering the Republic of Ireland?

The head of UKIP in Northern Ireland said before the referendum, 'I support patrols, active patrols'. Those of us who have lived on the island of Ireland or have close ties, know what that means, because we have had two periods in which that border has been reinforced. One was during WWII, when it was to a considerable extent reinforced, but there was no external pressure on it, because German submarines basically ensured that there was no migration into the Republic during those

years or very, very little. (Indeed, sometimes it was also British submarines.) I vaguely remember that, before my brother's birth in 1944, we could not return to Northern Ireland but had to move to relations in Wiltshire, because of what was going on in the Irish Sea and the consequent prohibition on travel. That was one period. The other period was during the Troubles in the 1970s. We knew what 'active patrols' meant then.

The Government has been at pains to emphasise that this is not what will happen. The Prime Minister, the Taoiseach and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are agreed this far: the Common Travel Area will be maintained. Reassuring, but I have little idea how they think this is to be done. When you think about it, it is not simple to have that land border of the EU across the island of Ireland, but to maintain the open borders between the Republic and the UK, let alone between the Republic and Northern Ireland.

The one answer I have had from somebody who has held ministerial office is that it would be done by passports. So I have a question: who has to have a passport and when do they have to show it, for what purposes? It is no good saying that illegal migrants have to have passports and have to show them when they do something, because you do not, *ex ante*, know who the illegal migrant is, so it cannot quite be that, can it? To date, I have not been able to see a clearer answer than that anybody, man, woman or child, would need a passport and this passport would need to be shown when travelling, when seeking employment, when registering for medical treatment and for a host of other purposes.

The Conservative Party historically has been deeply opposed to ID cards. In a way, a requirement for passports is more acute because, today, to be effective ID cards have to be biometrically complex and expensive. I think of all the families, in Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Dublin, who go to and fro because this is the Common Travel Area and we work here and we work there. Are they all to have passports and how is this to work? Have the government addressed this question?

There is a separate and equally difficult question, to which I have seen no answer at all so far and that is about the movement of goods. I do not think this has been thought through, and I think it is something on which those who think that they will maintain the Common Travel Area while exiting the EU owe the peoples of these islands an answer.

# 9. These Islands and Europe

Helen Wallace

Since over the years I have written quite a few pieces on the entanglement of the UK with the European Union, I thought I should check myself for consistency. So I went back 20 years to my professorial lecture at the University of Sussex: it was entitled 'From an Island off the North West Coast of Europe' and it was delivered in 1996. The abstract reads as follows:

*British history cannot be understood except as part of the European history. However much the physical separation from 'the Continent' offers by way of comfort, the Channel is too narrow to permit real isolation. Yet British politics in recent decades has been marked, even scarred, by controversy over how close an engagement to accept with the 'European project'. The politics of Europe refuse to go away or to settle down. Fluid definitions of what 'Europe' means seem only to make it harder for us as islanders to come to terms with the 'mainland'.*

So it seems not so much has changed. But of course, the context has changed in the light of Brexit, both for the EU as a whole and for the UK. So let me make a few remarks about the context before turning to these islands. Three big things have I suppose changed since 1996. First, the process of globalisation has developed apace with numerous consequences including the declining weight of Europe in the international economy and the migration surges of recent years, as well as the impact of the 2008 financial meltdown. Second, the world has become more dangerous, with Russia as a maverick power and the terrible travails in the EU's Middle Eastern backyard, with the consequential refugee surge. Third, domestic politics have been disrupted by the rise of populist parties, many of them Eurosceptical, and in many European

countries. These factors mean that we now have quite some range of potential scenarios that might develop in Europe.

Traditionally, one recurrent scenario has been a big leap towards a political union in the EU, though maybe not carrying with it all of the current membership. This scenario looks to me somewhat improbable. At the other end of the spectrum we now have to consider a disintegration scenario, for which there are some troublesome indicators – personally I hope that this is not a likely scenario! Perhaps more plausible is that we could see the continuing development of persistently varied degrees of integration across the continent with a leading – mainly eurozone – group flanked by other European countries linked to the core but more followers than leaders. My preference was always for a different version of this – namely a EU with less promiscuous ambitions and a tighter focus on the key issues for transnational collaboration, more flexible, more pragmatic and leaving more space for a country such as the UK to play an influential role in some key policy areas. Alas Brexit rather knocks this scenario on the head. And we should note that the role of Germany in influencing what happens has become even more critical than before.

So I come to where these islands fit into the picture, for which I need to do some reprise of the past before commenting on the current situation. Several themes have repeatedly underpinned the UK's place in the European family. For the founder members of the EU – and for many (maybe most) subsequent joiners – membership was the best option. For the UK it was always at most a second best option (except for the few British pro-Europeans who were clear enthusiasts). The language of UK membership has across the years been the language of 'on the one hand', but 'on the other hand'. For most member states membership has been tied to a kind of national project: for the founders both a security anchor and a way to economic regeneration; for the Southern and Eastern Europeans a democratisation anchor and a way to economic transformation; for the many of the former members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) a route to being embedded in the wider European family. In contrast for the UK membership has been essentially transactional and satisfying.

To put this another way – for most EU member states membership of the EU and its core aims provided a means to escape from the shadows of the past and to invest in strong aspirations for a better future. Hence the gradual extension of EU policies and commitments has

been viewed through a lens of making the future more predictable and less uncertain. The building of reciprocity underpinned by the shared jurisdiction of European law was largely seen as an essential factor to provide guarantees of mutual engagement. In contrast the UK debates about the EU have been permeated by nostalgia for a period when the UK walked taller and was more proudly independent and self-reliant. In this context, the reach of European law into what one Foreign Secretary (Douglas Hurd) called the 'nooks and crannies' of daily life became widely viewed as irritating and intrusive.

To put this yet another way – the evolution of the EU has been marked by a debate between *deep* integration and *shallow* integration, with periods of negotiation around treaty changes where choices were made as to whether, where and how to deepen integration. Typically, the UK has found itself arguing the minimalist rather than the maximalist case; with the one striking exception of the Single European Act in 1986 when the then UK government pressed so hard – and so successfully – for tighter rules to achieve a single European market. The frequency of treaty reform initiatives over subsequent years served to reinforce UK resistance to deeper integration.

The disinclination of the UK – under both Conservative and Labour governments – to embrace some of these central policy initiatives and reforms took the UK on a path of exceptionalism, seeking opt-outs from new commitments. Thus the UK chose not to adopt the euro, and the UK vigorously resisted joining the Schengen area. The intensity of British reluctance to both of these commitments grew with the problems of the eurozone from 2008 onwards and then again with the surges of migrants and refugees of recent years. Increasingly the UK seemed to be outside the mainstream; what might have been profiled as a couple of exceptions (however important) turned into a recurrent inclination to look for the exception – or even better the opportunity to issue a veto. This was illustrated vividly at the European Council of December 2011 when the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, blocked an agreement to develop plans to stabilise the eurozone under the normal treaties and through the regular EU institutions.

Yet there is a paradox in the story – actually and demonstrably UK governments have left their fingerprints all over EU policies and practices. They have been in positions of crucial influence on at least three of the big achievements of the EU. As we saw above, it was the UK government (under Margaret Thatcher) which was the keenest advocate

of developing the single European market, an objective that meshed well with repeated British insistence that the EU should be rather liberal than protectionist in international trade. It was UK governments that contributed so pragmatically to the development of the Union's common foreign and security policy from idea to substance. It was the UK government of the mid-1990s that pushed vigorously for the EU to accept so many countries from Central and Eastern Europe as welcome candidates for enlargement, probably the EU's biggest foreign policy achievement in the aftermath of the Cold War. And the paradox is this – those same UK governments never took political ownership of these important achievements in the debate at home in the UK, with the result that it is much easier to find references to what 'they' forced on 'us' than to what 'we' forced on 'them'.

This brings me to nowadays in the light of the referendum and its consequences. Among the most striking features of the UK/EU referendum story is the contrasting way that the narratives in the debate have developed.

First and most obviously, the 'leave' campaign had an easy time developing its oppositional narrative: EU membership was presented as the worst option. The argument about 'change' morphed into the case for a nostalgic reversion to how things used to be for the UK as an autonomous country: free of the overbearing influence of European courts; head-on opposition to 'deep' integration and no truck to be had with much by way of 'shallow' integration; as well as the recurrent theme that the UK is 'bullied by Brussels' – outvoted and disadvantaged by 'them'. This line was bolstered by the xenophobic calls to 'take back control of our borders' given the numbers of EU citizens in the UK, and moreover this also generated a mood of opposition to the eastern enlargement of the EU as a strategic mistake. In addition, the substance of the single European market was reduced to a litany of complaints about excessive regulation and very little mention was made of Europe's role in the world beyond some very general remarks about the rising BRICs and the Anglosphere. All in all then, here was a narrative of 'them' and 'us'.

Secondly – and perhaps less obviously – the 'remain' campaign had a narrative that was almost entirely transactional and anchored around what were thought to be convincing definitions of economic self-interest. The tone was that EU membership would be fine as long as the EU could be reformed. Scant mentions were made of the wider roles of the EU either at home or abroad. Little acknowledgement

was given of the extent to which the UK had been influential within the EU on key issues – no sense here of shared ownership of the European process.

So here we have two quite different narratives: one about identity and the other about interests. Mostly the two narratives were on different trajectories. The identity narrative was flanked a bit by a counter-transactional set of assertions about the money that would be saved from EU budget contributions and made available for numerous worthy causes. The interest narrative made little response to the identity issues. As we know, it was the identity narrative that proved the more appealing – although not by a huge margin.

In a lecture that I gave in Berlin in September 2015 I argued that there would be a competition in the referendum campaign between an ‘open’ UK and a ‘parochial’ UK, and another between a ‘European Mainstream’ UK and an ‘exceptionalist’ UK. And so there was: parochial trumped open and exceptionalist trumped mainstream – except that of course the politics were not quite so binary and the political and economic geography of the UK also played a big part. Preferences for an open and mainstream UK predominated in London, Scotland and Northern Ireland, mediated by the specifics of the Scottish and Irish situations. Preferences for a parochial and exceptionalist UK predominated in Wales and most of non-metropolitan England, mediated by socio-economic and regional factors given that voters in less affluent places were not much convinced by the economic interest and transactional arguments. So the pattern was of a dis-United Kingdom on several dimensions.

It is almost certainly a disadvantage for the UK that those other Europeans by and large have a good grasp of the English language and have been listening closely to our UK debates. It remains to be seen how they will interpret these in the light of their own images of the UK as a partner as they engage with the Brexit negotiations. And it remains to be seen how the inheritance of half a century or so of UK ambivalence about the EU will shape the UK’s stances in those negotiations.

# 10. Turning Inward: Brexit, Encroachment Narratives and the English as a 'Secret People'

Patrick Wright

I spent much of 2016 going back and forth between two parts of England and wondering, increasingly, as the 'Brexit' referendum campaign divided them into camps of contrary and perhaps irreconcilable opinion. For much of that time I was at home a mile or two outside Cambridge – an area that was strongly in the 'remain' camp. The local squire is a socially liberal man whose response to the referendum was to fly a huge European Union flag from the top of the manor house. We have got booming science parks, international schools as well as universities and a rapidly expanding biomedical campus, acres of expensive new housing and many other signs of prosperity and educated confidence about the future. Catch sight of a Polish food shop in this part of England and you just might mistake it for a delicatessen catering to the cosmopolitan tastes of the prospering middle class. As for politics, I remember the question of a visiting plumber: 'what kind of town is it,' he mused of Cambridge, 'where the Vote Labour stickers appear in the windows of the biggest houses?'

When not at home in Remainland, I have been researching on the Isle of Sheppey, which lies on the outer reaches of the Thames estuary in North Kent. Sheerness, which is the unofficial 'capital' of Sheppey, is a small, once naval town built on low-lying marshland and surrounded by relics of an imperial and military history that retains very little purchase on the present. The naval dockyard around which the town developed was closed with proportionally huge job losses in 1960. If the mural

recently added to the seaside park is to be believed, the most telling legacy of Sheerness's cancelled naval history is the curse (and, of course, dark tourist attraction) of a partly sunken Liberty ship which remains stuck on a submerged sand-bank where it got stranded in 1943, near the main shipping channels, still packed with a huge cargo of bombs that are judged too dangerous to move. 'Welcome to Sheerness,' the mural proclaims: 'You'll have a blast'.

One of the few national companies that has recently put money into Sheerness High Street is Wetherspoons, which has opened a well-used pub, the Belle and Lion, in which pro-Brexit beer mats were provided to confirm customers in their decision. It was impossible to miss the same message while working at the microfilm reader in the public library. Unlike its equivalents in Cambridge, Sheerness library is not a place where people speak in hushed tones if at all. Residents come to this fine establishment to talk as well as to read, get warm or attend advice sessions on the presentational skills necessary in the search for employment. The fields and windows of Sheppey were well planted with posters announcing UKIP's slogan 'we want our country back'. There was graffiti too, sourly proclaiming that Warsaw is not the capital of Sheppey. It was, however, these unrestrained conversations in the library that revealed the strength and passion of the support for Brexit in places that have born the brunt of George Osborne's 'austerity'.

I heard no discussion here of the fine points of the question – of exactly how, say, the powers of the EU were divided between the European Central Bank, the European Commission or the European Court of Justice. Neither was there any bandying of acronyms to distinguish between the EEA and EFTA, or between Brexit and the 'Fleksit' variant advocated by the Conservative Bow Group. Instead, the conversations were driven by an overwhelming sense of grievance: an enraged patriotism, in other words, itself shaped by a sense of abandonment and betrayal that was often expressed in the traditional terms of estuarial geography. The enemy may certainly have included bureaucrats in Brussels (which one geographically shaky drinker in the Belle and Lion thought could be dealt with by sending a gunboat up the Seine) and Polish workers and other immigrants who had found their way across the Channel. However, the referendum was also embraced as a chance to hit back at powerful interests upriver in London – rich bankers, no doubt, but also the politicians and bureaucrats who had presided over recent decades of perceived misrule. 'They've given us a vote,' as one man proclaimed to the nodding group at his table, 'and I'm going to use it.'

In the weeks after the referendum, I tried to understand the Brexit rebellion with the help of Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin's *Revolt on the Right*, the book that launched the idea of the white working class as the 'left behind' who were increasingly moved by the appeals of UKIP and the 'radical right'. I don't doubt the claim that the white working class has been particularly hard hit by 'deindustrialisation' and the more recent combination of globalisation and 'austerity'. In the wider Brexit debate, however, this idea of the 'left behind' has come to stand in the way of adequate understanding. As a motif that has so quickly gone into extraordinarily wide circulation, it imposes an abstract identity on people who are actually different and far from supine in their attitudes (it is, as I was robustly informed when I tried it out on a drinker in the Belle and Lion, another 'insult' aimed at people who might be better respected as the 'stayed behind'). It creates a sense of blameless victimhood where questionable qualities may also be involved, including wilful ignorance, xenophobia and more or less violent bigotry. It obscures the social diversity of the pro-Brexit vote, reducing it to what was surely only one of its constituents, namely the white working class. In the wake of the referendum, it has become customary for the cause of the 'left behind' to be twinned with condemnation of an equally generalised 'liberal elite' in which defenders of post-war social democracy are corralled together with bankers and plutocrats and declared responsible for the consequences of economic and social policies they may actually have long opposed.

The referendum may have squeezed the idea of the 'left behind' into a million articles and speeches around the world (the phrase was soon enlisted by the Trump campaign), but it is not just in Sheerness that some Brexiteers have opted for a more resistant idea of the English people. Their preferred text is a poem named 'The Secret People', written by G.K. Chesterton and first published in an obscure literary magazine named *The Neolith* in 1907:

*Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget;  
For we are the people of England, that  
never have spoken yet*

The poem shows England's long-suffering common people oppressed by one alien 'elite' after another, from the invading Norman conquerors to the bureaucratic Lords of the modern State. It is, effectively, a poetically simplified history lesson, sustained by the thought that the English – for so long used, betrayed and put upon – may one day rise

up in even fiercer wrath than was displayed by the French and Russians in their earlier revolutions. The poem was quoted by diverse journalists immediately after the referendum: Libby Purves in both the *Times* and the *Sun*, Richard Littlejohn in the *Daily Mail*, Andrew Marr in the *New Statesman* – all of them joining Catholic websites and the blogs that hailed Chesterton as the true prophet of Brexit.

If Brexit spoke for the not quite lost solidarity of the ‘people’ in this distinctly Chestertonian way, it was also presented as a recovery of the national landscape from the dismal grip of ‘Europe.’ Immediately after the referendum, Allison Pearson of the *Sunday Telegraph* joyfully recited a list of evocative English place names, imagining liveliness and vigour flowing back into ancient English settlements as they escape from the EC’s version of the old Norman yoke. A few months later Daniel Hannan, the Brexiteering MEP for South-East England, felt moved to write about the ‘beautiful melancholy’ of the English autumn, quoting C.S. Lewis, *Watership Down* and an ancient Anglo-Saxon maxim, in an article for the *Telegraph* that seemed to imply that the English autumn had rarely been so beautiful as it was in the wake of the referendum result. In another post-Brexit contribution, this one recorded for the BBC website, he found a different way back to the traditional English countryside, likening the day of Brexit to the experience of a man who had spent 44 years trapped in ‘a dark and cramped room’ but was suddenly now free to step out into a sunlit ‘meadow.’ Hannan (whose life as MEP for South-East England surely can’t be that miserable) would not be alone in yearning for a recovery of English nature. The director general of the National Trust, Dame Helen Ghosh, had already spoken out at the beginning of August 2016, welcoming Brexit as an opportunity to ditch the subsidised monocultures of the Common Agricultural Policy and return to a more variegated English countryside in which species decline might be reversed and considerations of wildlife and environment given new priority. If Brexit gave new hope to England’s remaining ‘meadows’ as well as to its upland moors and woodlands, it might also help to protect the national landscape from invasive immigrants. On the *Today* programme in early November 2016, the Chief Executive Officer of the conservation body Buglife could be heard pointing out the threat posed by an invasive Brazilian flatworm, fortuitously named the Obama worm, which has spread through Europe and is now arriving in the UK hidden in pot plants imported from Holland and emerging to destroy native earthworms and snails. Mr. Shardlow’s concern was entirely reasonable, but I sensed a hint of Brexit-fired optimism in the enthusiasm with which he looked forward to the possibility of restricting plant sales to British nurseries.

If the liberation of the English landscape is one theme within Brexit's associational field, so too is a recovery of the national past. While still dizzy with their unexpected victory, the Brexiteers were quick to reach out for historical bearings, laying claim to historical traditions that, before their victory, might well have been raised against them. They were, perhaps, on safe ground claiming the legacy of the Peasants' Revolt, in which lawyers and other well-heeled 'experts' did indeed find themselves in trouble. However, they also signed up the suffragettes (the historian, Andrew Roberts, made that claim a day or so after the vote in the *Sunday Telegraph*) and even the 19th century abolitionists who campaigned against slavery in the British Empire (that was Daniel Hannan again). The memory of the Second World War was enlisted by the Brexiteers – Priti Patel stood by and smiled at the *Sun's* photographer as RAF veterans pleaded with voters that they should not 'give away everything we fought for'. Additional historical resonances were found in the fact that the referendum coincided with the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. Poppies were worn with particular vigilance by politicians when Remembrance Day came round in November.

Many Brexiteers invoked the memory of British power – it was there in references to the imperial past, in the often recited claim that the world needs us more than we need them, and in musings about the renewal of the Commonwealth from which, as I was reminded by an old fellow in The Belle and Lion, 'we' once imported our staples (including the 'beef, bread and butter' that once furnished working class tables). Yet the Brexit campaign was also characterised by a resurgence of English identity, hauled out of its silencing merger with the British state and displayed in all its regional variety – was, with some reason, presented as a return of the repressed. Under Gordon Brown's leadership, which came to such a humiliating end in 2010, every emphasis was placed on asserting a modernised and socially progressive idea of 'British' identity against the claims of Scottish nationalism. In speeches drafted by Michael Wills, then the MP for Swindon North, Brown set out to fashion a new British patriotism from the 'connecting thread' of democratic values that George Orwell, writing in 1940, imagined might (just) be strong enough to rally the people of both Britain and the empire to the war against Nazism. Brown's 'new Britain' offered a 'patriotic alternative' to Scottish independence based on justice, liberty and fair play, with the NHS at its centre – it found its best witness in 'Isles of Wonder,' Danny Boyle's show for the opening of the London Olympics in 2012. While designed to be inclusive and multi-cultural, a resurgent sense of Englishness would find little accommodation in this vision. Anyone who pushed

beyond the modestly powered and largely unwanted 'regional assemblies' offered as consolation to members of the silent English majority who might have felt irked by the devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, was likely to be viewed with suspicion – as if they were fellow-travelling members of Nigel Farage's UKIP or Nick Griffin's BNP, which did indeed produce a magazine called *Identity*. A good few such English patriots were faced down by John Prescott, a Deputy Prime Minister who was sent out to order these muddled upstarts to look at their passports and accept that there was no such thing as English nationality. Gordon Brown met his English nemesis in April 2010, when he was recorded dismissing Maureen Duffy, a long-standing Labour supporter in Rochdale, as a 'bigoted woman' after she questioned him about immigration. A comparable embarrassment returned to haunt Labour in 2014, when Emily Thornberry (an MP who, as the tabloids know well, lives in Islington) was obliged to resign as Shadow Attorney General, having tweeted a superior comment attached to a picture of a white van parked outside a working class house in Dartford, Kent, that was heavily draped with English flags showing the Cross of St. George.

While the Brexit campaigns have rightly been condemned for its appeals to xenophobia, and for the lies, misrepresentations and sheer opportunism of its leaders, there is more to be said than that. To the considerable extent that this resurgence of English identity has been engineered by partisan politicians, campaigners and journalists, it has also been activated by the deployment of allegorical narratives that work by simplification and polarisation. In these encroachment narratives, the traditional nation and its way of life is typically squared off against a vividly imagined and probably advancing threat – be it immigrants, bureaucrats, Europe, 'experts' etc. Where the reality addressed is likely to be complex and full of nuance, encroachment narratives of this kind press that reality into a brutally simplified and prejudged opposition between good and evil. They often defend a traditional idea of community against modern forms of society and political organisation. They tend to favour common sense and instinct over long words, abstract knowledge and expertise. They make a virtue, particularly in the English context, of insularity and shrinkage. They champion the small, the grounded and the localised, as opposed to the large and mobile sweep of internationalisation and cosmopolitanism. They are highly resistant to any possibility of compromise or synthesis between their opposed terms.

I am not making the standard post-structuralist point that narratives are more real than reality itself. However, in the present populist climate, we surely do need to understand their power in shaping understanding of modern political realities. While polarising encroachment narratives are well suited to the age of Twitter, we should recognise both that they have long been used instrumentally on both sides of the political spectrum, and also that they themselves form part of a characteristically English mode of thought that the Brexiteers appear eager to reinstate in the present. In earlier times as now, however, they have also proved highly problematic in their articulation of political realities.

Encroachment narratives abound in the writings of William Cobbett (1763–1835), the campaigning journalist and furious defender of the beleaguered Georgian countryside, whom Raymond Williams would place among the founders of a characteristically English idea of culture, and whose name now appears as a proto-Brexiteer in blog posts. He conducted his ‘rural rides’ as the agrarian revolution proceeded in the 1820s, producing a fulminating account of England as he saw it at this moment of transition. As Karl Marx would observe not long afterwards, Cobbett placed too much expectation on parliamentary reform as the cure of diverse ills, and had little understanding of the new capitalism whose consequences he was observing with such furious dismay. As G.D.H. Cole would assert much later, he also lived before it became apparent that the urbanisation and industrialisation, which Cobbett saw as entirely hellish, would eventually open new possibilities of working class politics. As it was, Cobbett raged against everything he could blame for the destruction of the traditional rural community: the Reformation, the national debt, tea drinking, decadent MPs sitting for rotten boroughs, the genteel fashion for mahogany furniture, sofas and picturesque views in which the countryside was dissociated from utility, the abolitionists (accused of being more ‘concerned’ about distant slaves than about native English labourers) and, as some of Cobbett’s admirers still struggle to accept, Jews. The list is long, varied and disconcerting, even after Cobbett has bundled up everything on it to produce the overwhelming biblical monster he named ‘the thing.’

Polarised allegories also feature strongly in the writings of G.K. Chesterton, who may well appeal to the Brexiteers not just as the author of ‘The Secret People,’ but as the man who turned being a ‘Little Englander’ into a positive virtue. At the beginning of the 20th century, as during the ongoing discussion of Brexit, that phrase circulated as an insult that scarcely anyone was happy to tolerate. It was used by Tory imperialists

to denigrate Liberal politicians who opposed the British Empire's assault on the independent Boer republics in the Second Boer War of 1899–1902. There were noisy 'pro-Boer' rallies in Britain, in which the government was fiercely condemned for rounding up women and children and starving them in 'pestilential camps' – allegedly for the commercial gain of the 'Stock Exchange contingent'.

For the rising journalist and writer Chesterton, however, 'Little England' was to be embraced as a badge of honour marking a return to true democracy. An anti-imperialist who would be dismayed by the British State's conduct in Ireland, as he had been over its pursuit of the 'white man's war' in South Africa, he was all for 'making the world small'. Within a year or two of the Boer war he was arguing against Rudyard Kipling, whom he engaged as the poet of British imperialism. In his poem on 'The English Flag', Kipling had asked 'what they can know of England who know England only', but Chesterton countered with a different question, 'What can they know of England who know only the world?' 'There is nothing large about painting the map red,' he declared, condemning Kipling as a cosmopolitan globe-trotter whose knowledge was abstract and bound to convert every unique place into nothing more than another 'destination'. Chesterton's Little Englander may never have travelled, but he knows how to see the world in a grain of sand. He has a grounded and intensive outlook, localised and commonsensical, physically confined and yet familiar with the big questions about life, love and stars in the sky, etc. '[Kipling] thinks of England as a place. The moment we are rooted in a place, the place vanishes. We live like a tree with the whole strength of the universe'.

Having converted 'Little England' into a virtuous and positive cause, Chesterton went on to adjust the idea of the encroaching State. Having earlier opposed the military state defended by Jingoistic Imperialists, within a few years he was defending England against the monster that he and his friend Hilaire Belloc named the 'servile state' – a more domestic instrument with which Liberal and Christian reformers, and also Fabian socialists such as George Bernard Shaw, imagined disciplining and improving the lives of the British working class. Considering how extensively anti-statist feeling has migrated to the right in our time, it takes an effort of will to realise that this argument originated as a dispute between two variants of socialism. On one side were the Liberal reformers and leading Fabian socialists, future-orientated people like the Webbs and George Bernard Shaw, who championed the state as an instrument of social progress. On the other was G.K. Chesterton,

a guild socialist who was convinced, as he wrote in the *Daily Herald* in 1913, that 'the darkness comes from above rather than below', and who judged the state to be an alien and alienating force imposed on the English working class by an elite acting in a spirit of 'evil innocence'.

Although Chesterton is now hailed as a Catholic saint-in-waiting, his poem 'The Secret People', so much loved by the Brexiteers, was written by a man who would continue to believe that 'the socialist movement was the biggest and best thing that happened in my youth' and, as he also wrote in the *Daily Herald* in 1913, to believe that 'the Trade Union as the only really English institution of modern times'. Yearning for an English version of the French Revolution, he declared himself in favour of 'the rise of all honest men against a system that has a disease of dishonesty'. His views were condemned at the time by the Liberal barrister and future government minister C.A. McCurdy, who recognised Chesterton as 'a syndicalist in his hatred of the state' and worried that his was a 'vision of war' rather than of social improvement.

There is much more to be said about Chesterton and the way his thinking developed in the years before the First World War, but the point to be made here is that, like Cobbett, he adopted some deeply unsavoury positions in the course of his defence of England's 'Secret People'. Indeed, if the pair of them can be embraced as forebears of Brexit, this is at least partly because the anti-semitism to which both subscribed demonstrates the dangers of organic thinking when applied to human societies, while also anticipating the hostility to immigrants that was deliberately stirred up and aggravated by Nigel Farage and some other Brexiteers as they invited the people to 'Take Back Control'. This is definitely not the recovery of England that Tom Nairn imagined in the late 1970s, when he placed a quotation from Chesterton's 'The Secret People' at the head of a chapter of *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), hoping that the English would one day reclaim their political identity from the British state, thereby opening the space in which a new Scottish nation might also emerge.

# 11. The European History of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland: a Post-Brexit Reflection

Kylie Murray

I would like to begin by inviting you, in this post-Brexit era, to imagine a scenario where Scottish leaders approach the figurehead of a European political and economic union, stating that Scotland identifies principally with Europe. The Scots are seeking an intervention from this European power because England is claiming constitutional jurisdiction over Scotland. While this narrative may sound like a plausible account of some recent post-Brexit events, what I am actually describing is something that happened in the late 1100s. After the Archbishop of York had claimed that the Scottish Church came under his authority, Scotland approached the Papacy at Rome. In 1192, Pope Celestine III issued a bull, known as the 'cum universi'. The document specifically stated that Scotland was a 'special daughter' of the apostolic see, with no intermediary. The Scottish Church was deemed an independent entity from that of England's, but equally a member of a larger European community and subject only to the Pope. I mention this landmark moment in Scotland's history because it shows us that the tension between Scotland's European and British identities is not new, although it remains highly topical and endlessly fascinating. Europe's role in articulating Scotland's identity is a rich, colourful and longstanding one. My focus is on how and why medieval and renaissance Scotland was so invested in European-ness. I present two case studies which I think are exceptionally engaging and relevant to us in these post-Brexit times.

The first concerns Scotland's myth of origin which claimed Greek and Egyptian foundations for the Scots. How and why did this happen? Mythical stories of beginnings and origins were known and deployed across Europe in the Middle Ages. But in Britain they were fiercely contested and give us intriguing insight into how the peoples of medieval Britain thought of themselves in relation, and often, in opposition, to each other, through the medium of European ancestry.

The English origin myth circulated extremely widely from the 12th century onwards, especially when Geoffrey of Monmouth recounted it at length in his Latin *History of the Kings of Britain*. The myth was frequently invoked during periods of Anglo-Scottish conflict as evidence of England's sovereignty over Scotland. It sought to locate England's roots in classical antiquity, by arguing that Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, was the eponymous founder of Britain following the battle of Troy. The inheritance of the island was divided up between Brutus's three sons and, in a particularly Anglo-centric turn, the largest and most valuable piece of land went to Brutus's eldest child, Locrinus – this land was what became England. Brutus's second son, Albanactus, inherited 'Albany' or Scotland, whilst the youngest son, Camber, inherited Wales. This narrative outlines a clear hierarchy of value and power within the island of Britain. No wonder every English monarch who invaded Scotland, from Edward I in the 13th century to Henry V in the 15th, took recourse to these sorts of accounts as part of their campaigns.

Scotland responded with a counter-mythology, recognisably framed within the same antique 'European' parameters. But their origin myth sought to refute and subvert England's classical Trojan roots. According to this counter-myth, Scotland also took its name from an ancient European founder, this time a woman. Scota was an Egyptian princess and daughter of a Pharaoh. Since she belonged not to the Classical world, but the Biblical one, Scota's antiquity superseded Brutus'. But in addition, she married Gathelos, a Greek prince, in around 1500 BCE, 300 years before Brutus was even born. This combination of Scota's enhanced antiquity in comparison with Brutus', and her scriptural associations was seen to confer divinely ordained authority on the Scots. For according to the legend, with its Biblical resonances, Gathelos and Scota set sail westwards from Egypt with their people, the 'Scoti', arriving first in Spain, then Ireland, before finally finding their 'promised land' of Scotland.

Some variations of the myth state that they brought with them a sacred 'Stone of Destiny' on which rulers of their people should be crowned. And here we get a sense of how compelling and how vivid the European foundation legend was for medieval Scots. For the Scots sought to represent this myth through a tangible, material object. The Stone of Destiny, or Stone of Scone as we also know it today, was a prerequisite for Scottish coronations for centuries, and the fact Edward I removed it from Scotland and installed it in Westminster Abbey as *the* ultimate war trophy, shows that these origin myths were seen to shape and validate identities to a remarkable degree. Following our European theme, we should reflect for a moment on the fact that one of the most integral and defining artefacts of Scotland's national identity to date was imagined to originate not in Scotland, but on the other side of Europe, and to have reached Scotland essentially via descendants of Greek and Egyptian founders. Edward I's attempt to suppress Scotland's European identity was an acknowledgement of the authenticating power that that identity had. Yet, the harder he attempted to assert English sovereignty over Scotland, the more vigorously European Scotland's national consciousness became.

By insisting on a continuous line of kings, originating with Gathelos as *the* primordial ruler, Scotland was articulating that its genealogy, its roots, its primary affinity lay not with England, or Britain, but with Europe. The most assertive references to this are found when Scottish autonomy is at stake in the Middle Ages, especially during the Anglo-Scottish Wars of Independence in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Consider, for example, the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, sent to Pope John XXII in a curious echoing of the 'cum universi' of 1192 with which I began this paper. As part of its statement and justification of Scottish independence, the Declaration contends that 113 kings had ruled in Scotland since its foundation, which the Declaration describes as 'the line unbroken by a single foreigner'.

Scotland's affinity with the Greeks, as a response to English identifications with classical Troy, is especially revealing here since the Greeks were adversaries and ultimately conquerors of the Trojans. The Scots legend, then, eclipses the Brutus myth and overturns England's imperialist agenda in multiple ways, as we've seen. Scotland's origin myth represents a desire to align with Europe while rendering English rule irrelevant on supposedly historical and constitutional grounds. Such myths of ancient European identities thus become a vividly politicised

and competitive medium in Britain, attempting not merely to describe historical events, but also to prescribe them.

Such integral openness and receptivity to European culture is a defining feature of our second case study, the remarkable rise of Scotland's universities and intellectual culture in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I turn now to some brief examples of how Europe shaped Scotland's universities, leading thinkers and even the advent of print in Scotland.

By 1500, Scotland had three university foundations, all profoundly influenced by European intellectual culture. The University of St Andrews owed its foundation in around 1410-13 to Henry Wardlaw, bishop of St Andrews, royal tutor to James I of Scotland and a graduate of Oxford and Paris. Glasgow University's foundation in 1451 was brought about by William Turnbull, bishop of Glasgow, who had studied at St Andrews, followed by Leuven in Belgium and Pavia in Italy. In 1495, King's College, Aberdeen came into existence through the efforts of William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen and graduate of Paris and Orleans. Curiously, a second, protestant University – Marischal College – appeared in Aberdeen in 1593. It is not often acknowledged that where England only had two Universities – Oxford and Cambridge – until the 19th century, by 1600 Scotland had twice that number. Outward looking Scots who spent time in Europe were playing a huge part in this flourishing of education. For although some Scots studied in England, there was a far stronger and indeed longer tradition of Scots heading to continental universities, and not only to study, but also to teach.

To touch upon just two examples, the logician George Lockert from Ayr who taught at Paris University was prior of the Sorbonne in the early 16th century, before becoming rector of St Andrews in the 1520s. His near contemporary, John Mair from Haddington, was one of the most seminal theologians, philosophers and historians of 16th century Europe. An associate of Erasmus, Mair had spent time teaching at the Sorbonne and lectured across Europe before becoming principal of Glasgow University and provost of St Salvator's College in St Andrews, where he taught John Knox.

Yet the movement of Scots to Continental Europe and back again was not the only route by which Scotland accessed European ideas. In the 1530s, the Abbot of Kinloss in the far north of Scotland recruited the Italian humanist Giovanni Ferrerio to overhaul the curriculum for pupils

at Kinloss and nearby Beaulieu. Conversely, numerous Scots travelled to Continental Europe and remained there. The celebrated neo-Latinist, Florence Wilson of Elgin, who graduated from Aberdeen in the early 16th century, is a key example. He found himself acting as Cromwell's agent in Paris, before teaching in the South-East of France in the 1530s. He later wrote a philosophical treatise on the tranquility of the mind, the *De animi tranquillitati*, in which he described his homesickness for Scotland and reminisced about his happy student days there. Yet Wilson's Latin work was firmly intended for a broader European audience, printed as it was in Lyons in 1543.

The printed text is an especially compelling medium for providing insight into Scotland's European engagement. Firstly, Scots could contribute to wider European audiences through this form, as we see in the example of John Vaus, Aberdeen's first Latin grammarian from around 1510 onwards. His grammatical commentary, the *In Primam Doctrinalis Alexandrini*, was first printed in Paris in 1522 by the well-known humanist printer, Badius Ascensius, who published numerous further editions. But Vaus' first foray into printing reflects a landmark moment for the emergence of print within Scotland. For Vaus is the probable author of the Scots translation of Aelius Donatus's *Ars Minor*, a ubiquitous Latin grammar: we think, the earliest Scottish printed fragment. Only one leaf survives, dating to around 1507, but it looks to have been published by the well-known printer Andrew Myllar, who was himself a Scot. Based in Rouen, Myllar was James IV's book-supplier from 1503 onwards. But he also appears to have learned the printing trade while there. He is thought to have printed this leaf either shortly before or soon after his return to Scotland. Because by 1508, Andrew Myllar had settled in Edinburgh and established Scotland's first printing press with his new partner, Walter Chepman. Andrew Myllar, as a Scot who learned his printing trade on the Continent and then introduced it to Scotland, is following in the footsteps of those Scots who studied on the Continent and returned to Scotland to found universities or to run them.

What, then, can we conclude from medieval and renaissance Scotland's engagement with Europe? At the most fundamental and profound level, Europe clearly shaped Scotland. In ways which are often now overlooked, Europe was central to some of Scotland's landmark cultural beliefs, moments, institutions and achievements, whether we are thinking of the Stone of Destiny, Scotland's universities or the emergence of print. What should we make of the tension between Scotland's British and European identities, seen here from the 1100s onwards, and which

have been acutely focused once more by the Brexit vote? As Scotland begins to ponder its possible membership of the EU, despite the UK's referendum outcome, it is worth reflecting on Scotland's broader European backdrop. For Scotland's outward looking relationship with Europe was not mediated by or dependent upon England. Scotland's European links have long been rich, powerful and abiding, and will clearly go on being so, whether we refer to that relationship by a specific name such as 'EU membership' or not.

## 12. History and Attitudes towards Europe: Germany and Britain

Ian Kershaw

Although Brexit flowed from a number of short-term causes, these drew on long-established and widely-held negative attitudes towards Europe. And although Germany now faces new challenges spawned by recent events, its continued overwhelmingly strong pro-European stance is again rooted in a lengthy history. Germany and Britain continue as they have been, in many respects, ever since the first postwar steps towards European integration, to stand at opposite ends of the spectrum in attitudes towards Europe. While what eventually turned into the European Union had, from the start, long-term supranational aims, it has at every stage been driven by national interests of the member states. There was certainly a good level of idealism behind the European project even if this has faded badly in recent years. But idealism, often consciously evoked to win mass support, has always clothed hard-nosed national interest. The EU amounts to a constant balancing act of national interest, with supranational organisation and ambitions.

In Germany (until 1990 of course West Germany), both idealism and national interests were powerful interlinked components of the commitment to the European project. Both flowed directly from the experience of Nazism and war. 'Never Again' was a strong emotive driving force towards the vision of a peaceful and united Europe which would erase past enmities. Pragmatic national imperatives were paramount. Rapprochement with France, through the Coal and Steel Community set up in 1951, offered the chance to remove Allied control of coal and steel production, prevent any further thoughts of dismantling industrial installations, bring back the Saarland to Germany, which eventually

took place in 1957 and, above all, regain sovereignty and establish German equal rights with other countries. The beginnings set the pattern. The economic miracle encouraged West Germans to see their own prosperity and political stability as wedded to what, at the Treaty of Rome in 1957, became the European Economic Community. The EEC was widely viewed as the essential guarantor of West German interests, as well as the basis of a Europe that had learned the hard lessons of the past. Idealism and national interest continued to reinforce each other. Membership of the Six, as it then was, offered economic and political advantages to West Germany and ever closer union, it was felt, would widen and deepen the acceptance of liberal democratic values. It would also bolster European identity and better enable Europe to hold its own in a world increasingly dominated by superpowers.

From the outset, Britain's trajectory and the attitudes it fostered were diametrically opposite. Britain had emerged from the war impoverished but victorious. It felt itself still to be a great power. Its history, not just its recent history, did not foster any sense of wanting a close identity with former enemies on a ruined continent. Churchill famously advocated a United States of Europe in his 1946 Zurich speech, but he did not foresee Britain being part of this. Britain's refusal to join the Coal and Steel Community, then in 1957 the EEC, proved an insuperable obstacle to the united Europe that the USA wanted as a bulwark against Soviet Communism. Britain's attachment to the Commonwealth, which attracted three quarters of the country's exports in 1956, turned it away from continental Europe, but saw it anchored to declining markets. By the mid-1960s, only a quarter of the United Kingdom's total trade was with the Commonwealth, but Britain was failing to benefit fully from the expanding intra-European trade which had more than doubled during the 1950s.

When Britain finally succeeded, after the double French veto in the 1960s, in joining the EEC in 1973, it was amid deep economic and political difficulties and a prevailing sense of national decline. Britain remained, in many ways, a semi-detached member of the club it had just joined. Edward Heath, the then Prime Minister, was among a fairly small number of enthusiasts mostly otherwise to be found in the Liberal Party. In his own party and beyond there were many, especially of the older generation, who could not be reconciled with the end of empire and the fact that Britain's status had been reduced, in effect, to that of a European medium power. Much of the Left was opposed to an organisation perceived as a rich man's club. In one way and another, most of

the British population were, at best, indifferent towards the European Community. The press, in the main, reflected and reinforced negative attitudes towards Europe. Those who favoured membership of the EEC did so generally because of the perceived economic advantages of a free trade area, but little more. Europe was a balance sheet. The European Community was tellingly referred to, for years afterwards, as 'the Common Market'. Would Britain be economically better off inside the European Community or staying outside? That was the only question for most people when Britain joined and the main consideration in the referendum of 1975, confirming Britain's wish to remain members of the European club.

Britain did not generally feel part of Europe in any idealistic or emotional sense. And, indeed, in some significant ways its historical development *had* set it apart from continental Europe. The country's centuries-old parliamentary sovereignty, its traditions, its ancient institutions and legal system, had not been interrupted by invasion and occupation. Its modern history had looked to overseas empire rather than European size, other than being twice, in recent memory, forced to fight in European wars. Everyday life emphasised the differences. Britain's dual-decimal coinage and system of measurements, decimalised to many people's regret in 1971 to facilitate European trade, reminded people on a daily basis that they were not like the countries of continental Europe. The sense of distinctiveness was enhanced by Britain's geography as an island on the edge of the continent, looking across the Atlantic more readily than across the English Channel. People spoke, and to some extent even do today, of 'going to Europe'. They had to get on an aeroplane, board a ship or, since 1994, travel through a long tunnel to reach the continent. They then encountered unfamiliar languages that they seldom felt the need to learn, since they presumed, increasingly correctly, that nearly everyone spoke at least some English. They would then have to eat continental breakfast, not their usual traditional British. France, 20 miles off the South English coast, was foreign. Australia, 12,000 miles away, was not.

All this was subsumed, more than anything else, in a powerful narrative of Britain's centuries-old unimpeded sovereignty whose complete independence would brook no inroads from any source. Politicians, Conservative and Labour, though not Liberal, and the majority of ordinary citizens therefore needed a good deal of persuasion to accept, for the most part grudgingly, being genuinely a part of a European community. Joining the free trade area was one thing, but there was little or no

enthusiasm for turning economic integration into ever-closer union, even if pro-European feeling did indeed gradually start to take hold, especially among the well-educated sectors of society, in big business circles and among the younger generation. In British attitudes to Europe, the late 1980s proved a key juncture. Jacques Delors, the dynamic newly-appointed President of the European Commission, wanted to use the Single European Act of 1986, which Mrs Thatcher's Government had played a significant part in instigating, as a step towards accelerating the drive towards political union. Mrs Thatcher's abrasive stance, demanding 'our money back', had already raised hackles in Brussels. In her Bruges speech of 1988, Mrs Thatcher fundamentally ruled out the aim of European political union, but she also said, less well remembered, that Britain's 'destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community'. The speech marked the beginning of sustained opposition, mainly in the Conservative Party, to Britain's membership of the European Community. By 1990, Europe was dividing her party and her Government. Europe was the issue that brought Thatcher's fall in November 1990, but she remained the champion of the powerful and vocal minority of anti-Europeans who could depend upon extensive press support. After the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which turned the Community into a more overtly political union, Britain's role in Europe became an even greater festering sore at the heart of British politics.

Germany meanwhile under Helmut Kohl, a true disciple of Adenauer in his aim to cement his country's bonds with the West, was embracing the prospect of closer integration, partly out of idealism, but mainly from national interest. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the unification of Germany stirred anxieties about Germany's place in the new geopolitical realities of Europe. The French President, François Mitterrand, was anxious to bind in Germany to Western Europe. Kohl saw the advantages of being bound in, both to assuage anxieties and to head off any new nationalism at home. The result was the decision to press on towards monetary union, a step eventually realised with the launch of the Euro in 1999. Germans were not asked whether they were prepared to lose their beloved D-Mark, the very symbol of postwar prosperity. They have never had a referendum on any aspect of Europe. The British are unique in having had not just one but two on the very question of whether to stay in Europe at all. Despite being an initially unpopular decision from above, Germans nonetheless came to accept their Government's political as well as economic reasoning for the introduction of the Euro. The move has served Germany very well indeed. The country is the biggest winner from the process of European

integration and from the establishment of the Euro. Europe is a project that has worked for Germany.

There is little perception of it having worked for Britain. Since the onset of the Eurozone's lasting crisis in 2008, much of the British population, and quite especially in England, has increasingly seen the EU as a negative entity. The widening of the EU, bringing economic migrants from Eastern Europe to Britain, and most recently the refugee crisis, have greatly compounded that feeling. Meanwhile, Britain's own problems have of course mounted since the bank-crash of 2008. A direct line can probably be drawn from the bank-crash through austerity politics to Brexit, with Brussels and immigration from the EU serving as the scapegoats for ills and policy failings that mainly lie closer to home. The propaganda of the 'leave' campaign before the referendum – retake control, regain independence, end payments to Brussels and keep out unwanted immigrants from the EU – was able to build upon and magnify the deep-seated and extensive animosity towards the EU that has actually been present from the beginning.

Britain's negative obsession with the EU has always seemed strange to Germans. British animosity towards migrants from EU countries who, as most economists agree, bring benefits to Britain seems incomprehensible. Alongside regret, at least amongst the political elite, there is much puzzlement at Britain's decision to leave the EU, a decision that seems certain to weaken Britain and probably the EU too. It seems to many Germans perverse to weaken Europe, when the dangers and fears so evident today speak in favour of strengthening our collective ties. It *does* seem irrational to risk serious damage to the British economy, to Britain's standing in the world and even to risk the breakup of the United Kingdom for so little return beyond the beliefs and hopes of Brexiteer ideologues that it will all turn out right in the end. The Brexiteer perception, shared in the referendum by over half the population, that Britain's national interest lies outside the EU, rather than using the EU to advance it, is the sharpest contrast between British and German attitudes toward Europe. Here, above all, Britain and Germany stand at opposite ends of the spectrum.

# PART 4: REFLECTIONS

# 13. What has held Europeans Together and What is Dividing them?

Patricia Clavin

This wonderful range of papers collectively underline that what has held Europeans together has also divided them. Rather like a child's kaleidoscope, change over time reconfigured identities – local, national, regional and international – that produced new connections and new fractures. The papers by Gerard Delanty and Elizabeth Buettner, among others, emphasised the importance of communal identity and state coherence to the history of European unity; a sense of vulnerability can fuel division at the local, national and/or international level/s between different groups. Paradoxically, the same sense of vulnerability in other groups will encourage a will to co-operate.

This is a history rich in the paradox of outcomes: even at what might be regarded as the peaks of European unity, there are groups who are, or believe themselves to be, excluded. As Wolfgang Streeck and David Runciman illustrate, the disaffected can form new alliances that embody and represent a different vision of Europe. Similarly, although it has not been the subject of much attention in these contributions, major European wars, though characterised by immense suffering and loss, brought Europeans together as well as divided them.

I want to confine my reflections to three themes: firstly, how we tell the story of European division and union; secondly, the nature of security; and thirdly, the quest for justice.

## What Makes a Period One of Unity, Another One of Division?

We tend to associate the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century with nationalism and imperialism. But it was also a period when internationalist ideas of organisation, transnational co-operation and European union flourished. They culminated in the founding of the League of Nations in 1920. It was the world's first government international organisation, but despite its global claims, it was dominated by European powers and European concerns. Throughout the Cold War, we told the history of this organisation as one of the failure of US leadership, and characterised its vision of international relations as atomistic and competitive: the competition between nations could only be positive and benign if protected and tamed by international law. (And the League's efforts at this failed.)

The League enshrined the principle of state sovereignty and presented nation states as the pillars around which international life should be organised (a notion which came to challenge the legitimacy of empire). But two other innovations were as important to the history of an institution that was an important precursor of European union: the creation of an international bureaucracy, and the stress on the economic and social dimensions of peace and security.

It is not just ideas, but practices that have been important in uniting and dividing Europeans. Borders, for example, are defined as much by bureaucratic practices as physical frontiers or fortifications. The League of Nations embodied this trend and worked hard to develop the practical basis for ordering nations and peoples. It established the world's first international bureaucracy; its largest internal section was the Economic and Financial Organisation. It was the first time international statistical information was collected and disseminated on a Europe-wide scale. It was tedious work and the information was patchy, but it gave scientists and statesmen the first effective, comparable snapshot of nations and regions. It formed the basis on which states and the territories, it was hoped, could be co-ordinated and made to co-operate.

This technocratic approach represented the conviction that the world could be directed by using figures, numbers and statistical categories. The emergent social sciences were also caught up in this project, and a generation of young men and women were socialised into the habits of international co-operation: Jean Monnet was one of the League's leading bureaucrats, and it was his experience at the League that

informed his functional approach to European union that is more usually associated with the period after 1945.

The EEC was not the only successor institution of the League, so too, was the UN, the WHO, the UN FAO, and the IMF. European disorder had spawned the ideas and practices of global governance. European disunity of the interwar period contained within it the genesis of unity; and Europeans, for good and ill, played a critical role in shaping the practices and ideas associated with global governance.

When trying to understand the bureaucratic, functionalist approach to European unity after 1945 it is worth remembering that it was a reaction to two world wars; to the fact states had wielded so much power; and to the failure of open diplomacy. League officials, enthusiastic at first about a practice that would make foreign policy democratically accountable, grew frustrated. The primacy of state sovereignty (particularly the power wielded by big states) and open diplomacy hampered their ability to do deals. Instead the League provided the ideal opportunity for extremist politicians, such as Mussolini and Hitler, to grandstand.

## The Nature of Security

If states guarded their national sovereignty closely in the interwar period, a succession of economic crises meant they had to turn to one another to help. Although the League of Nations was at first prohibited from engaging on economic and social questions, the challenge of post-war dislocation, reconstruction, inflation and then deflation, meant the organization built institutional capacities in much the same way as the Eurozone crisis has generated unseen and little understood power inside the European Central Bank and the Bank of International Settlements.

Onora O'Neill and Albenaz Azmanova have underlined that security does not simply mean protecting people and property against violence and the assertion of territorial control. It is often forgotten that the League of Nations enjoyed a popularity among the general public that no other regional or international organisation has had since. This was not simply to do with pacifist sentiment. It was because the League came to advance what it called a programme for 'Positive Security' which stressed the links between economic and physical well-being (living standards, better health, types of social security). It evoked a bottom-up approach

to the problem of conflict. Positive Security also shares a remarkable similarity with ideas of Human Security, which emerged in the 1990s, that critiqued Strategic Studies' negative and 'fearful' stress on hard security that had evolved during the Cold War.

## The Search for Economic Justice

Many of the bureaucrats at the League and social scientists associated with a variety of internationalist movements that advanced social and economic programmes to advance European solidarity, saw the rise of extremist right-wing movements who threatened European peace as motivated by the quest for economic security and justice. (They were less concerned with questions of race, imperialism or state failure than subsequent commentators.)

For me, understanding the quest for economic justice reasserts the importance of the political economy because of the presumptive interaction of group interests, political choices and economic conditions that underpin it. The importance of the political economy has been underlined by a number of papers in this report. A focus on the political economy reaffirms inequality as a central preoccupation of political life, and our need to better understand how economic conditions relate to questions of security, broadly defined.

As a phenomenon that operated transnationally – and one with clear human security implications – factors of the global political economy are central to the formulation of human security. It also challenges the way we write the history of international relations, which, when it comes to the history of conflict in Europe in the modern period, tend to be national stories around a road to war that are stitched together into an international narrative. There is no sense of shared problems or challenges; but rather grievances and fears.

This worries me all the more because we are coming to realise that the experience of high levels of economic growth associated with the years after 1950 may be a historic exception. At the same time, the impact of the 'Great Recession' and the present crises in Ukraine, North Africa and the Middle East remind us afresh how trade, financial flows, access to raw materials, ethnic solidarity and 'hard' security all inter-link; and the degree to which societies' search for security, in all its manifestations, is transnational. The paradoxical history of Europe's

internationalism in the age of nationalism (European unity in times of disunity) can perhaps help us understand the very real and pressing challenges for our own age.

# 14. Europe Through the Looking Glass

Ash Amin

In the mid 2000s, still a time when the tide of European public opinion had not quite turned into an anti-immigrant swell, I argued that the idea of Europe fashioned by the architects of the European Community, celebrating Christian humanism, liberal democracy, and the rule of law and reason, was out of step with the reality of Western Europe as globally indexed, multicultural and multi-ethnic.<sup>3</sup> I sided with the view that this vision ignored constitutive colonial and postcolonial geographies (cf. Elizabeth Buettner's contribution), tended to serve elite interests (cf. Wolfgang Streeck), and treated non-European peoples and values on its shores as out of place. It strayed far from the founding narrative of Europa as an adventure of refuge, migration and search, as outlined here by Dariusz Gafijczuk. Though I had no quarrel with the intrinsic merits of individual principles such as the rule of law or liberal democracy, I saw their enrolment into the narrative of Europe as exclusionary and divisive.

I argued that if Europe needed an integrating idea – above existing as a regulatory bureaucracy, a single market or an arena of policy disputation or engagement – it needed to be more cosmopolitan and plural in its cultural reference points and also presented as a journey of becoming based on open encounter and curiosity, not return to mythological origins. I suggested that the narrative of Europe should be unshackled from its colour-coded humanist and Enlightenment moorings, and seek

---

3 Amin A (2004) 'Multiethnicity and the idea of Europe', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1, 2: 1–24.

to defend more general civic ideals such as sympathy and hospitality as the cultural commons of a Europe of multiple faiths, peoples and lifestyles.

How unrealistic this suggestion seems now amidst resurgent nationalism across Europe, with its 'nativist' yearning for ethnic nation and closed borders in the face of austerity, welfare uncertainty and the fraying of borders by globalisation. Now migrants – their presence, needs and rights – are cast as the prime threat to national security, well-being and cohesion, and Europe is cast as the unruly space that allows this threat to grow. This is certainly the sentiment behind the Brexit vote, but it also marks the public mood orchestrated by powerful xenophobic forces in a number of other countries including Poland, Hungary, Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands, each blaming Europe to a lesser or greater extent. Against this charged background, the illuminist credentials of the post-war idea of Europe seem essential, if the cold hand of the law and liberal rights and the moral compass of Christian humanism were able to confront the xenophobia arising from the perception that the future hangs on immigration. Keeping the universal principles of belonging in play might help to quell the nativist desire for community better than my original suggestion in favour of shared human and civic values. I have been left wondering if my suggestion to focus on shared human and civic values was naïve.

Yet, thinking on both humanist and civic lines presupposes that a positive narrative of Europe stands a chance of reaching the hearts and minds (of those who are not already cosmopolitan). In the heated current debate on Europe, public mobilisation for or against affiliation has been left largely untouched by any idea of Europe, with affects shaped by a host of other structures of feeling and narratives of community. Typically, these have been shaped by the experience of lived and imagined community, with public orientations towards Europe tightly bound to feelings, and persuasive stories of nation: its myths, provisions, ties and obligations. This is implicit in Ian Kershaw's reflections on the differences on Europe in between Britain and Germany; the latter's national shame over its early 20th century impetus to look outwards, and in contrast to Britain's legacy of wariness towards Europe based on its imperial hangover. It is more explicit in Patrick Wright's observations on how the historic fable of England as the nation of the small, grounded, and autonomous resurfaced during the referendum in favour of Brexit, projecting Europe as a threat to all of this.

If narratives of belonging surfaced during the referendum, which they did in spades, they were in essence about *nation* – its state, subjects, identity, values, borders – with judgements of Europe refracted through the affects of home, reworking the ‘facts’ of European membership. It may be true that the ‘leave’ campaign played on negative emotion while the ‘remain’ campaign appealed to reason (though it is striking how little was said of the accrued benefits of membership and how much of the putative costs of exit). But I doubt that at the moment of voting, the decision to ‘remain’ was any less than the one to ‘leave’, that ‘animal spirits’ prevailed over rational calculation, that one voter was guided by fear and the other by fact. Might it not be that situated concerns – largely tacit – about the kind of nation and society Britain is, was and should be played a significant part in voter behaviour across the social and regional spectrum? Wasn’t Europe the lightning rod of this broader rumination, its detail quickly receding into the background of social anxiety over the state of our nation and its future in Europe?

This seems certainly the case with the ‘leave’ vote, with its publics ultimately less interested in what membership would add or take away, than in the offerings of a nation sensed to be overcrowded, broken and elitist, neglectful of an indigenous population left out of the calculus. It was sentiment around these ills that prevailed, and Europe was held responsible for all or most of them regardless of their actual connection with the rules and consequences of membership (one wonders, for example, why the sentiment was not directed at government policies or corporate practices that have increased economic, welfare and spatial inequality and alienation). Europe became the totem of all that stands in the way of the homely – the ‘old’ nation summarised by Patrick Wright, free of immigrants, distant decisions, foreign influences, cold bureaucracy and usurping elites.

I believe the publics of the ‘remain’ vote can be seen along similar lines even though the ideas and or sentiments of nation and home were less clear. Here too, Europe became totemic, the focus of desire for an open, urban and cosmopolitan Britain, without much attention paid to the real offerings and subtractions of union. For example, the destabilisations of a corporatist and neoliberal Europe in recession and unable to do much about migration, did not force any rethinking, perhaps because the sentiments behind the ‘remain’ vote were also about nation – one facing forwards and outwards, aware that well-being will not come from xenophobic closure and nativist nostalgia.

If such is the character of structures of feeling, we begin to explain Wolfgang Streeck's surprise at discovering that in Britain 'the question of EU membership has become a question of collective identity, even of moral decency, national as well as personal'. Britain is probably no exception, as I have already hinted, even if in other countries such as Greece, Spain or Portugal, 'Europe' may not tap into deep anxieties of nation or personhood (though the resurgent right in France, Poland and Hungary has succeeded in inflaming such anxieties). The stories of nation and national belonging are ever present, always wedged into the debate on belonging in Europe. And in Britain – perhaps I should say England – the nativist story is becoming commonplace, the measure of the good society, irrespective of the fate awaiting migrants, minorities, internationalists, liberals and probably also majorities left out in the cold by hard policy choices forced by the economic and political turbulence of Brexit.

The implication of this is that a positive narrative of Europe will have to draw on a felt cosmopolitan narrative of nation, one that can build public trust in the belief that an open and plural society is best able to provide for the many in a turbulent and uncertain global environment. Such a narrative will benefit from measures of universal care, social and regional justice, fair trade and public deliberation as proposed by Albena Azmanova and Gerard Delanty in their contributions. In the past, the combination of open society and welfare universalism has succeeded in making a compelling and widely accepted case. There is no reason why it cannot do so again, updated in today's language and sensitive to today's circumstances. But it is clear that a reimagined cosmopolitan culture of "unity in diversity" in Gerard Delanty's words, requires considerable material improvements to welfare as well as active social mobilisation around this idea.

Through this new looking glass, both nation and Europe become harnessed to the same societal project, the nation no longer the sole bearer of affective community, and Europe not reduced to the hand of cold transactions. In this project for the cohesive and inclusive society, Europe and nation belong to the one and same narrative of prosperity and social progress through pluralism and mutuality, with considerable attention given in public and policy culture to building strong sentiments around these values. Here, Europe returns as another space in which the politics of a nation-sensitive cosmopolitanism is played out, proposed as idea, desire and pragmatic settlement.

Of course all this presupposes that Europe can avoid becoming a constellation of "failed states" as David Runciman discusses. But if the current trends of nationalism, institutional stress and socioeconomic inequality persist, are we so sure that Europe, and for that matter the UK, will not fail?

Europe is increasingly seen as a space of intrusion, instability, uncertainty with an anxiety undermining confidence in the ideas and institutions of European belonging. Europe has lost its lustre as a place of progress, security and solidarity. It may return in a kinder form when the age of insecurity passes, or if it can be shown to be the answer to fear. The contributions in this publication engage with the tropes of European belonging, past and present, and with the work done by narratives of union and disunion. Narratives are, and have always been, a touchstone of practices of inclusion or division and judgements of the familiar and strange. The Brexit outcome amply confirms this: the 'leave' campaign played on affects of nation, its boundaries, and its outsides to great effect, certainly more so than the 'remain' campaign, which focused on the colder facts of costs and benefits of Europe. Looking ahead, sentiments of belonging may turn out to be key for managing our uncertain and fearful age, when the propositions of future society invariably filter through them, and all the more so when instituted precepts of society and its order falter.

ISBN 978-0-85672-620-0

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

10–11 Carlton House Terrace

London SW1Y 5AH

+44 (0)207 969 5200

Registered Charity: Number 233176

[www.britishacademy.ac.uk](http://www.britishacademy.ac.uk)

Follow us on @britac\_news



BRITISH  
ACADEMY

*for the humanities and social sciences*