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Ideological tensions expressed through and in relation to Europe

Eurocrisis in the Press

Eurocrisis in the Press
The politics of public discourse in Europe

By [Bart Cammaerts](#)*



The gains made by UKIP in the recent local elections have considerably scuppered David Cameron's attempts to bury the question of (and thus the debate about) the UK's relationship with Europe by promising a referendum on the matter in 2017 after winning another term in office; an extremely long time away in political terms. Part of the reason why Cameron cannot push ahead on this matter is that his coalition partner, the pro-European Lib-Dems, would never vote in favour of a referendum, nor

would the Labour opposition. However, another equally important part of pushing this issue away to the next parliament has to be that the position of the UK in Europe, as well as the populist sentiments which feed this euroscepticism, has always been the Achilles heel of rightwing Britain, the one highly emotional issue that could really split the Tory party.

While it is in the economic interest of the UK to be inside the EU, many on the right of the political spectrum cultivate the fallacy that somehow all the ills of this country are the result of ill-conceived regulation imposed on the UK by the evil and undemocratic bureaucrats in 'Bwussels'. This kind of nationalistic reflex is not uncommon; 'what we do ourselves, we do better' is a classic slogan of many nationalistic and populist parties across Europe and even in Scotland where the SNP applies a similar logic to Westminster.

Cameron said that Britain's current relationship with the EU is 'unacceptable' and furthermore he claims that the government will focus all their attention on working towards 'improving the EU and improving our relations with the EU'. The choice of discourse is interesting here. Improvements can mean many things; from a pro-European perspective improvements could for example mean more European integration in terms of social policy and financial regulation, the sedimentation of mechanisms of solidarity between North and South, more European coordination to tackle tax evasion or jointly collecting a tax on speculative financial transactions. My point here is that whenever the Conservatives speak about Europe they never quite make clear what it precisely is that they consider to be 'unacceptable' or what 'improvements' really mean in the context of a 're-negotiated' relationship between the UK and the EU.

What is often meant, but rarely said, is that 'improvements' actually mean lower contributions of the UK to the EU budget, less regulations for corporations in general and banks in particular, less protections for workers/wage-earners, more freedoms for business and those with capital, less taxes for the rich, more stringent and selective immigration policies, condoning torture in the fight against terrorism, violating citizens' rights to protest, opting out of the European Convention on Human Rights, withdrawing from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, etc. etc. All things I would rather classify as deteriorations rather than improvements...

Some time ago, I actually [applauded](#) the idea of a Brexit here and now, as 'an EU without the UK as a member would obviously make more radical, and some would argue more effective/necessary, solutions to the current eurozone crisis a more genuine political possibility'.

However, if we bring in a perspective that goes a bit further than 'British interests', as evoked by the Prime Minister, we must understand that the idea of Europe and European integration is being challenged today from the radical left to the radical/populist as well as mainstream right, from Northern to Southern Europe.

Some think the EU is not doing enough to protect its citizens from market forces and is failing to enforce social protections across the EU, acting in the interest of business and neo-liberalism, others believe the EU is too intrusive, imposing social and legal limits, stifling investment and diverting capital flows. Another current tension relates to the North/Centre of Europe somehow believing that they are subsidising the 'lazy' lifestyle of those in the South, whereas the North needs the South to consume their products, which is why the North (read esp. Germany) funded cheap loans to the South during the Boom years in order to keep exports to the South of Europe up.

If they are to survive under these ideological pressures and contradicting tensions, the EU as a set of institutions, but also at a political level – the president, the commissioners, the MEPs – must articulate in a much clearer way why they are relevant and which side they are on. If you ask me, the EU and its institutions should side unequivocally with citizens' and workers' interests over and above both nationalistic and corporate/financial interests.

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2 Responses to *Ideological tensions expressed through and in relation to Europe*



M. B. says:

May 18, 2013 at 11:15 am

The real populist propaganda is to call a country "nationalist" because of its democratic defence against the dictatorial self-elected and self-imposed EU.

The EU is in fact a private government with the function to politically secure the gross economical unbalance emerging from the Thatcherism-rooted free markets.

Hence all countries need strong democratic defence and protection of their own borders and markets against the EU-Germany imperial ambitions, but sadly too many in Europe are under the influence of the mass media-supported pro-EU populism and buy into the big Europe propaganda pushed via all these mainstream information channels.

The EU is a historically unique combination of economical, financial and political power without democratic legitimacy, and as such is a major threat against Europe's freedom, democracy and prosperity.

To be Eurosceptic or anti-EU is therefore based on above rational and pro-democracy considerations, – it is NOT based upon hatred of foreigners or immigrants. It is a rightful, rational defence against the dictatorial EU, against its self-elected founders, against its spineless, corrupt supporters, and against their overall dictatorial ambitions, which altogether, to put it bluntly, represent a historically unique combination of Hitler and Stalin.

For detailed analysis of the EU (USE) please read related posts on my blog, for example:

"The demo version of 'kratos': the sad moment when the totalitarian United States of Europe (USE) was born"

<http://familyhurts.wordpress.com/2013/04/19/the-demo-version-of-kratos-the-sad-moment-when-the-totalitarian-united-states-of-europe-use-was-born/>

and

"Breaking news from Europe and a Big Question"

<http://familyhurts.wordpress.com/2013/05/14/breaking-news-from-europe-and-a-big-question/>

Thank you in advance for your kind attention.

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[eusebio manuel vestias pecurto](#) says:

May 15, 2013 at 11:20 am

Na minha opinião o que se passa no governo do Reino Unido é que alguns membros do partido do poder têm um armário de europistas eles querem saber quem irá comandar o monopólio comercial dentro da UE enquanto não houver uma aliança inteligente e com políticas verdadeiras nunca veremos a mudança que muitos cidadãos querem ver

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