

**WORKING PAPER SERIES**

**No. 7**

**Representations of Europe and of the nation in political discourse:  
an analysis of nine cases  
November 2007**

*Atsuko Ichijo*  
*Kingston University*

<http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/bamber>

## **Contact Address**

Atsuko Ichijo, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kingston University, Penryhn Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT1 2EE, UK; e-mail: [a.ichijo@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:a.ichijo@kingston.ac.uk)

## **Author biography**

Atsuko Ichijo is Senior Researcher, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kingston University. Her publication includes *Scottish Nationalism and the Idea of Europe: Concepts of Europe and the Nation* (2004, Routledge), *When is the Nation?: Towards the Understanding of Theories of Nationalism* (co-edited with Gordana Uzelac, 2005, Routledge) and *Entangled Identities: Nations and Europe* (co-edited with Willfred Spohn, 2005, Ashgate). She is a member of the editorial team of *Nations and Nationalism*.

## **Abstract**

In what way do political parties across the European Union describe the nation and Europe? Do they diverge or converge in their ways of representation? What can account for variation or uniformity? The paper explores some answers to these questions by providing a comparative analysis of data from the nine countries that took part in the EURONAT project. Analysing representations of the nation and of Europe in political discourse is important since these are the images used by those who either are exercising power as government, or are in the position of influencing the government as opposition. Representations in political discourse have more immediate effects on what is actually being done (mainly as policies) in relation to the nation and Europe. The paper first explores the images of the nation put forward by various political parties in the nine countries and seeks to identify any emerging patterns. It then investigates the issue of Central and Eastern Europe. It concludes that the 'nation' is an always contested concept, and that Europe is presented in a similar manner using a very similar vocabulary by various political parties across Europe. This suggests that political parties across Europe are still operating in the conventional Westphalian framework which privileges nation-states over Europe. The continued dominance of the Westphalian framework in political discourse also suggests that a Europe-wide public space is yet to emerge.

## **Representations of Europe and of the nation in political discourse: an analysis of nine cases**

### **Introduction**

In what way do political parties across the European Union describe the nation and Europe? Do they diverge or converge in their ways of representation? What can account for variation or uniformity? Indeed, there has not been much research on this issue and there still remains a great deal to be discovered. The aim of this paper is, therefore, not to pursue a specific set of hypothesis, but rather to explore some answers to these questions by providing a comparative analysis of data from the nine countries that took part in the EURONAT project<sup>1</sup>.

Analysing representations of the nation and of Europe in political discourse is important since these are the images used by those who either are exercising power as government, or are in the position of influencing the government as opposition. Representations in political discourse have more immediate effects on what is actually being done (mainly as policies) in relation to the nation and Europe. Moreover, identifying the ways in which the nation and Europe are represented in political discourse will allow us to compare these with those images in media and ‘lay’ discourses. This is one of the possible ways to gauge the relationship between the state, civil society and the private lives of citizens, and the paper does not pretend to provide the definitive answers to the questions posed at the beginning.

This paper portrays the data collected by EURONAT’s nine research teams. Each team was assigned to collect party platforms from the general election nearest to 2002 and speeches made by political party leaders on the topic of Europe/the EU. They were also asked to examine the parliamentary debates on the Kosovo crisis and the military intervention in Afghanistan as well as on the 2004 EU enlargement. The data represents a wide spectrum of political orientation. More details as to how the data was collected and methods used to provide the country-based analysis can be found in the annex.

The paper begins by exploring the images of the nation put forward by various political parties in the nine countries and seeks to identify any emerging patterns. It then briefly investigates the issue of Central and Eastern Europe. It concludes with some observations from a macro point of view.

### **Representations of the nation**

From a macro-perspective, there is little variation in the ways in which the nation is represented by the political parties across the nine countries. The specific content of representations of the nation varies (for instance, Polish political parties may emphasise the longevity of Polish history, the Catalan nationalist/autonomist Convergence and Union highlights the Catalan language, and the right-wing Austrian People's Party tends to play up the idea of *Heimat* in their definitions of the respective nation). However, viewed together, each national setting demonstrates a similar set of characteristics which are used to describe the nation. For instance, to name but a few, these can be civic, ethnic, cultural, historical, secular, religious aspects. In other words, political parties of a particular country do not present a unified view of the nation along one particular axis.

One major issue here is that political parties often conflate the nation and the state. This may be a natural consequence of the Westphalian system. In this system, the central tenet of nationalism that a nation should have an independent state is held as paramount. Even regionalist/nationalist parties, which are supposedly working against the established nation-state's borders, appear to take this framework – the system based on the sovereignty of the nation-state – for granted. In fact, this is the very framework that shapes these parties' visions and programmes and, therefore, the way they talk about the nation are naturally similar to those adopted by the mainstream parties. Those parties which sometimes distinguish the people (the nation) and the state are populist or communist. For the populist parties, such as the Radical Agrarian Movement in Poland, the state is often manipulated by the elite who ignore the interest of ordinary people. For communist parties, the state is a friend of the capitalists and an enemy of the people, i.e., the working class. However, their

understanding of who constitutes the nation and the role it plays does not radically differ from those proposed by the mainstream parties.

Below, we explore some differences in the ways in which the nine countries depict the nation in relation to Europe. Broadly based on the grounded theory analysis, the data will be analysed along a few themes which illuminate the political parties' understanding of the power relationship.<sup>2</sup> These themes are geography, history, universality through uniqueness, small vs big, progress and development and Christianity.

## **Geography**

Reference to where one is located in the physical world is one of the surest ways of identifying oneself. With the exception of Poland and Spain, geography is explicitly used in one way or another by political parties as a device in depicting the nation. There are mainly two ways of using geography. The first is with reference to the geographical location of the nation-state. This is often employed in order to suggest identification of national interests with the EU's. The second is a more metaphorical use to depict the nation/state in a more abstract geopolitical space. The conflation of the nation and the state is inevitable in this type of representation due to the geopolitical implications of the physical location of the nation/state.

### *Reference to the geographical location and its meanings*

The geographical location of the Czech Republic and Austria is emphasised in their respective political discourses. When describing the Czech Republic, and, by extension, the Czech nation, Czech political parties emphasise its geographical location, namely that it lies in the centre of the European continent. The importance of the Czech Republic is articulated in its role as a bridge between Western and Eastern Europe. The image of a bridge has both geographical and historical implications. It reflects the shared understanding amongst political parties that the Czechs have always been part of European civilisation in terms of culture, but that after World War II, politically and economically, the ties between Czechs and

European civilisation were severed. With the accession to the EU, the Czechs are now being brought back to the centre of European civilisation. In this representation, the identity of the nation-state is presented as in harmony with the European project mainly due to its physical location and partly because of historical legacy.

A similar view is aired by Austrian political parties, especially in relation to Enlargement. The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), in particular, points out that once the 2004 enlargement is completed, Austria's location would move from the fringe to the centre of Europe. This is taken to indicate that there would be a bigger role to play for Austria, mainly as a state but also as a nation in an enlarged Europe. The physical centrality of Austria is then projected onto the cherished Austrian tradition of neutrality. Here the image of a bridge is conjured up. In an enlarged Europe, Austria would literally be a bridge between Western and Eastern Europe. This would be a continuation of its historical mission to be a small, neutral nation between the two opposing blocs. ÖVP further emphasises the 'Habsburg' cultural legacy that is supposed to be shared with the accession countries from Central and Eastern Europe. This legacy assigns Austria with a duty to speak for the people in Central and Eastern Europe. In this formulation, like in the Czech case, the supposed significance of the nation is incorporated in the European project, thus producing a smooth and coherent view of the relationship between the nation/state and Europe.

In German political discourse, too, references are made to the country's geographical location. Germany is portrayed as being situated in the centre of Europe, between Eastern and Western Europe as well as between Northern and Southern Europe. However in German discourse, this centrality is not explicitly celebrated. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in particular warns against using this central position to extend the German sphere of influence to Eastern Europe. The centrality of Germany in Europe – both as the EU and the continent – is reaffirmed and underpins political parties' proposals to play a leading role in Europe and in the world, but the way this idea is represented is markedly less triumphant than the Czech and Austrian cases.

In Greece and Italy, too, the physical location of the respective nation/state is employed to project images of the nation-state. Discourses here do not revolve around

the centrality of Greece or Italy in Europe, but rather at being at the 'edge' of Europe. Greek political parties refer to Greece's location in the Balkans as well as South Eastern Europe to explain their understanding of the role Greece is destined to play. The Greek state and nation is portrayed as having the mission of being a source of stability and peace in the troubled area (the Balkans and/or South Eastern Europe), as well as of being a democratic model for Turkey. Greece's location as the border of Europe/the EU gives Greece a special mission which is high on morality. In producing this vision, the Greek nation-state's interests are entwined with those of the EU to effect a seamless identification of the Greek vision of the future with the EU's vision.

The Italian political parties also employ Italy's geographical position in detailing their view of the Italian nation-state to produce a similar impact. Italy is often depicted as a bridge between the EU and the Mediterranean region, thereby indicating the special role Italy has assumed in the EU. In this view, Italy is a beacon of civilisation to the under-developed or under-democratised world. The Mediterranean world has been expanded to include Islamic countries since the 9/11 incident; Italy is depicted as having historical links with Islam in the parliamentary debate. The image of Italy being a bridge between the EU and the Mediterranean world is therefore used to reinforce the view of Italy as a strategically important partner of the EU and an effective mediator.

#### *Metaphorical uses of location*

While political parties in the above five countries focus on the actual location of the respective nation-state, Hungarian political parties do not place much importance to Hungary's geographical location. In Hungarian political discourse, geography is a device through which to imply the incongruence of the nation and the state. That is to say the existence of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries frames the political discourse in Hungary. This particular use of geography was seen most notably during the parliamentary debates over the Kosovo crisis. In discussing whether to join the NATO allies in the military action against the Serbian forces, concerns over the safety of and possible repercussion to the Hungarian minorities in Yugoslavia were repeatedly expressed. This line of argument seems to have multiple

meanings. First it clearly reminds the voters that the Hungarian nation spreads beyond the current border of the Hungarian state, thus making the current internationally agreed borders less secure and fuzzier in the political map. Secondly, it reminds the audience what many Hungarians might consider as a historical injustice done to them, namely the settlement finalised in the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, allowing consolidation of the self-image as a victim of historical development. Thirdly, the extent to which the Hungarian minorities spread in the region could imply the ‘greatness’ of the nation in terms of its size and location – at the centre of a Hungarian-inhabited area, a quality that is now denied to the Hungarians.

In British political discourse, the idea of ‘being at the centre’ is often mobilised. Britain is described as sitting in the centre of what they portray as the most important relationship in the world, i.e., the EU-USA relationship. Being at the centre means being important and influential, which frames both the government’s and the opposition’s definition of Britain and the programme that Britain should follow. The image of a bridge is also conjured by British political parties. Britain is the bridge between Europe and the US. This is the understanding behind the claim that Britain is a global and efficient diplomat. Perhaps no longer the world power, but because Britain is in between two power/economic blocs, political parties can present a picture of Britain, a force that still matters in the contemporary world.

## **History**

If not geography, history is certainly a major factor in nurturing the unique characteristics of a nation. Somewhat surprisingly, the uses or appeal to history as a device through which to describe the nation are not as prominent as geography. This may be explained in reference to recent history in several countries. Spanish political parties tend to shy away from concentrating on the deliberation of the Spanish nationhood because of the long-casting shadow of Franco’s dictatorship. German and Austrian political parties have a similar reason for not focusing on history as something that distinguishes them from others. It is not too clear why history is not extensively mobilised in the Czech and Hungarian political discourses given the richness of material available in both countries<sup>3</sup>.

Polish political discourse appears to be immersed in references to history and several political parties employ the historical framework in their depiction of the Polish nation. The '1000-year' history of the Polish state (in this case the distinction between the state and nation is clearly made) is used by the left-wing Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the right-wing coalition AWS and the post-communist agrarian Polish Peasants' Party (PSL). The AWS, in particular, flags up the historical framework and the nation is articulated in the context of 1000 years of shared political experience, territory and values. The historical context is important for the AWS because they believe the identity of Poland and Poles has acquired strength through history. Accordingly, the Polish nation is understood as a community of roots, and the AWS's representation of the Polish nation has a strong ethnic overtone in that it emphasises the history of living together, the language and shared values.

In Greece and Italy, history or historical legacy is used with a twist to describe the nation's European credential. The Greek New Democratic Party describes Athens, and therefore by extension, Greece, as the place of origin of European values, namely democracy, dialogue, and a peaceful solution of differences. It therefore wants the new European constitution to be signed in Athens to make it once again the symbolic place of origin for the new Europe. The then leader of the Italian right-wing Casa delle libertà (CL), Berlusconi underlines the Europeanness of the Italians by claiming that it was the Roman Empire that devised and implemented the law and the institution of citizenship to create a civic body (*cives romani*) out of different ethnic groups, the very principle upon which the EU is being built.

Appeal to history is frequently used in British political discourse. Overwhelming majority of references to history is made to the experiences of World War II, and especially to Britain's role as the sole defender of freedom and democracy against Nazi aggression. The wartime achievements of Britain as well as collective guilt towards the victims of the holocaust are used to define British people as those who are committed to democracy, human rights and, above all, freedom. The UK Independence Party uses this device to suggest that European integration is, therefore, a threat to British core values. The mainstream parties would use this framework to support the image of Britain as the reformer of the EU.

## **Unique quality – claim to universal values**

Geography and history are two obvious criteria to make the nation distinct. In addition, some political parties claimed that their respective nation/state has a unique quality which is, nonetheless, linked to universal values in order to elaborate their view of the nation within the family of nations on the globe.

As mentioned above, British political parties are perhaps most vocal in claiming a firm link between the nation and some universal values, in this case, between the British nation and democracy and freedom. The images of Britain standing alone in the face of advancing Nazis and Britain going to war for a principle (declaring war against Germany when the German army invaded Poland although ‘we could not do anything practical to prevent the Poles being overrun’ according to one MP) were repeatedly evoked most notably in the parliamentary debate over the Kosovo crisis. This led to the declaration that British people had a moral duty to not stand by but to go in, protect the innocent and punish the aggressor. What emerges from these debates is a representation of the British nation as an upholder and defender of universal values. This makes the British nation special and unique amongst all the nations in Europe and in the world. The emphasis on ‘standing alone’ in parties’ deliberations betrays a trace of the idea of splendid isolation.

Italian political parties are, on the other hand, keen on stressing the tradition of humanitarianism which is seen as a uniquely Italian quality. This was taken up by the Ulivo (UL) in arguing for the case of intervening in Kosovo and Albania with the NATO allies. The Italian tradition of humanitarianism, reinforced by the Catholic tradition, dictates the course of action – not to stand by as a catastrophe unfolds, but to act as the humanitarian leader in sending aid and not to hesitate in participating in military intervention in order to stop ethnic cleansing. This was presented as inherently Italian, thereby making the nation noble and respectable. In contrast to the rather isolated British self-image, the notable feature of this Italian connection to universal values is that it translates into an image of Italy leading other nations-states, thereby lending itself better to the idea of co-operation.

### **Small vs Big – power and status**

It is not only usual ‘characteristics’ that are employed to represent the nation. Some political parties employ a language of power in relation to Europe as well as the world in describing the nation-state. The reference to this aspect is evident in the Czech, Austrian, Italian, and British cases.

The Czech and Austrian political parties do not hesitate to depict their respective nation-state as small. Czech political parties fear that as a result of its size, the Czech Republic will become a second-class member of the EU. Therefore, they insist on the importance of equality amongst the EU member states. Although the importance of being an equal member of the EU appears both in Polish and Hungarian political discourses, it is not accompanied by an explicit self-portrait of a small nation-state. This may be due to the tendency in the Czech political discourse to equate the EU with a possible German dominance. Perhaps, one of the reasons why the Czechs are less enthusiastic about the European project than the Poles and Hungarians may lie in this publicly shared understanding of the EU. As if to reinforce this induction, Austrian political parties, on the other hand, do not express their concern over the status of Austria as a small nation in the EU. This probably reflects the self-confidence of a country in the First World, of a wealthy, established liberal democracy. Austria’s size is not seen as a deterrent for it to play a prestigious role in the European as well as global arena. Austria may even be able to mobilise its Habsburg legacy in speaking out for the nations in Eastern Europe. Hence, the country’s size does not undermine the confidence in the nation-state.

According to various Italian political parties, Italy is defined as a player capable of taking up a leading role both in the world and EU. This notion of being a ‘leader’ is backed up by several factors, namely its membership of NATO and G8, Italy’s position as a founding member of the EU and the country’s strategic importance of being situated in the Mediterranean basin. This triumphant image of Italy being an important country is then projected on to the programmes that political parties have produced for Italy. In many of these programmes, Italian national interests and the

EU's interests are presented as being congruent or complementary. This, in turn, may underpin the higher level of identification with Europe amongst Italians.

British political parties clearly define Britain as a global player, as a big nation-state. Their depiction is based on facts such as that of being a nuclear power, a permanent member of the Security Council, an influential member of NATO, a member of G8, a major member of the Commonwealth and a special ally of the United States. Because of the prestige Britain maintains in the world and in Europe, Britain is often represented as a global diplomat working tirelessly to bring peace and stability in both Europe and the world. It is noted that European ideals of peace and prosperity are aligned to British aspirations, yet this British self-image of being a global player does not lend itself well to enthusiastic identification of British national interests with the EU's. According to British political parties, the stage for Britain is bigger than Europe.

### **Progress and development**

What can be summarised as the theme of progress and development is also deployed in the representation of the nation-state, especially vis-à-vis Europe/the EU. This is an important technique in putting forward a programme for future. If the present situation is deemed to be unsatisfactory, a set of concrete actions to overcome the predicaments needs to be detailed.

As expected, this is a theme often taken up by political parties in the accession countries. In these cases, the recognition that the nation-state is somehow behind EU standards is subtly hinted, if not explicitly acknowledged. In Hungary, the concern is expressed over the government target that Hungary has to catch up with the EU's level of development by 2015. That the Hungarian society needs catching up and EU membership is seen as a means of achieving this goal are officially sanctioned views. The Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) also depicts the EU as an enabler for a small nation like the Czech Republic for the future. A similar representation of the EU as a means to achieve an end is circulating in Poland, thereby which suggesting that the state of affairs for Poland is far from ideal.

Greek political discourse is mostly centred around the idea of ‘underdevelopment.’ Greek society is depicted to engage with introspection (PASOK) or being plagued by misery and corruption (New Democratic Party). As any communist party would do, the Greek Communist Party describes the Greek state as being not run by the Greek people. The coalition of the Left and the Progress Party (Synapismos) maintains that Greece is in need of reform in order to meet the challenges posed by globalisation. Although none of these parties denies the positive qualities of the Greek nation-state, they present a bleak assessment of the current condition of the Greek nation-state. This assessment is then linked to the need to be integrated in the European project which, according to these parties, will enhance not only the economic standing of Greece but also the state of civil society, democracy and human rights in Greece. This depiction of the Greek nation-state is, therefore, entrenched in a view of the EU which stresses its progressive – both economically and socially – elements, thus succeeding in linking Greek national interests with the success of the European project.

The Spanish political parties use ‘Europe’ as a criterion to evaluate the current situation of Spain in several areas. While the conservative People’s Party (PP) utilises this criterion to illustrate how well Spain is doing, the PSOE uses it like the Greek parties to point out the lack of progress in Spain.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the PP may refer to the economic union (euro) as a chance to demonstrate Spain’s capacity to confront a complicated and utterly new challenge while PSOE would use the EU to highlight the area where Spain needs to improve. Common with the Greek case, the EU has been incorporated as a positive measuring rod against which the nation/state is evaluated in the Spanish political discourses. What is interesting here is that in the case of Spain this internalisation of the European dimension co-exists with its traditional Atlantic orientation.

## **Christianity**

The themes explored so far are, by and large, secular in their nature. Is religion, then, important at all in the representation of the nation in the beginning of the twenty-first

century? Reference to Christianity as an aspect of the nationhood/statehood is found in a few cases. It is absent from the British, Czech, Greek and Spanish cases which may suggest that political discourse is more secularised in these countries than others.

Christianity is highlighted mainly by Christian democratic parties such as the CDU in Germany, OVP in Austria and the UL in Italy. While these parties refer to the Christian tradition or the tradition of humanism - that is ultimately based on the development of Christianity in Europe - in order to articulate what the respective nation stands for, they generally refrain from defining the nation as exclusively Christian. On the contrary, almost all of them are eager to be seen as inclusive (even the Austrian populist FPÖ emphasises the importance of respecting cultural diversity). Hence, the nation's boundaries are not necessarily set along religious lines. Christianity is seen as the backbone of the 'core values' upon which a nation is built. Not surprisingly, as will be discussed below, these parties also tend to refer to Christianity when defining Europe as discussed later.

In Hungary, the right-wing, populist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP) mentions Christian morality as being part of Hungarian values. However Christianity does not feature too prominently in representations of Europe. In Poland, the notion that the Polish nation is a Christian one is explicitly expressed by parties across the spectrum, thereby underlying the continuing influence of religion and of Catholicism in particular. Moreover, rather than used to determine who is the true Pole and who is not, Christianity is mobilised to illustrate the context in which 'Polish values' have been formed and maintained. In the Polish case, the Christian aspect is carried into the depiction of Europe as well. The close association between Christianity, the nation, and Europe facilitates an identification of Poland with Europe. What emerges from this survey is a broad tendency among political parties to use religion in public discourse. However, it should be noted that religion is not clearly used as the criterion of exclusion and on this point political parties in this study converge.

It is another truism to state that identity is a relational concept and practice. In this section, the analysis of the representation of the nation provided by political parties in the nine countries has focused on the representation of national identity vis-à-vis Europe/the EU. None of the factors surveyed appear to determine the ways in which

national and European identities are intertwined. Two observations can be made from the above discussion. First, the ways national interests are aligned to Europe's (and/or the EU's) interests appear to be significant in conditioning the level of public support for the European project, and therefore the degree of identification with Europe. The Spanish and Greek cases are a case in point: the degree of incorporation of the European dimension in public discourse is so deep that any representation of the nation/state is imbedded in the European context. However, the alignment of national interest with the European ones is not the sufficient condition as the Czech case shows. Secondly, the use of characteristics of the nation in public discourse is another important factor. The geographical location, history, the link to universal values and so on can be employed to highlight the interconnectedness of the nation with European countries as found in the majority of cases, but the same dimensions can be deployed to emphasise the difference from others as seen in the British case.

### **Representations of Europe/the EU**

The ways in which Europe is represented show more similarity than the ways the nation is described. First of all, in all nine national contexts, Europe and the European Union are more often than not used synonymously, thus, allowing the political parties to conflate two different images to aid their objectives. Secondly, the vocabulary employed to talk about Europe shows a high degree of resemblance among the nine cases. In the following, various representations of Europe/the EU as propagated by political parties are explored.

### **Europe or the EU?**

'Europe' and the 'EU' are, more often than not, used as synonyms by political parties. However, there are some instances where the distinction between Europe and the EU is made in a rather implicit manner. Interestingly, communist parties distinguish Europe from the EU more often than other parties. For example, in the Czech Republic, the Communist Party praises 'Europe' for having a long history, for nurturing values of tolerance and respect, and describes Europe as prosperous. Europe is where human rights are respected and cultural diversity is found. Moreover, it is

where modern science and rationalism were born and have developed. The Party also appreciates Europeans for their intellectual capacity and hard work. For the Czech Communist Party, the EU is a form of capitalist exploitation and symbol of social injustice and the US domination. Crucially, it portrays the EU as not being capable of fulfilling the European ideals. This analysis blames the EU's perceived malfunctioning on the capitalist system and on multinationals, thereby exonerating the 'innocent' masses. The masses are then invited to join the Party in building an alternative future, a future that they deserve. The Communist Party in Italy presents a similar analysis contrasting an image of Europe as the cradle of civilisation, to that of the EU as a capitalist, neo-liberal enterprise. The implication here is that the people of Europe are failed by the EU, that they are wronged by the 'system'. Just like in the Czech case, they invite the 'wronged' people of Europe to create something better. It can be deduced that for the adherers of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the distinction between Europe and the EU can be a useful tool when presenting their diagnosis of the present and their visions and programmes for the future.

The distinction between Europe and the EU is also implied in some Christian democratic parties' view of enlargement for instance. The CDU and CSU in Germany hinted that Europe and the EU are two different things. For them, the EU was not quite Europe since there are some countries which share 'common European values' but are not yet members of the EU such as Switzerland and Norway. Inherent to this representation is the division of labour between Europe and the EU. Europe is a community of values while the EU is a set of pragmatic and practical arrangements. Political parties often conflate these two to suggest that the European project is ultimately a moral project. However, when faced with a crucial question of membership, some parties are prepared to put forward a more essentialised representation of Europe.

### **Economic Europe**

The most dominant representation of Europe/the EU is centred on its economic aspect. Many political parties, mainly on the right, portray the EU as a primarily economic entity. The People's Party (PP) of Spain represents the European integration project as an economic one and regards the euro as a symbol of the monetary union and the

common security policy. Accordingly, the PP advocates market liberalisation and improved competitiveness of the EU in the globalised world.

Globalisation features prominently in this representation of Europe/the EU. The Greek PASOK sees the EU in the global, capitalist socio-economic context and expects it to be at the forefront of economic and technological development. The German FDP also presents the EU as a necessary economic entity in the globalising world and, like the PP of Spain, emphasises the importance of the euro as a mechanism to guaranteeing the future of Europe. The Hungarian Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) also describes the EU as a free market, but to them, the EU is still too restricted as a market and they call for even more liberalisation and deregulation.

The Czech Civic Democratic Party is critical of the current state of the European project since, as they see it, the original aim of the project is to build an open and free economic zone. In other words, they see the EU taking on a less economic stance, and that worries them. The implication here is that the EU as it stands is not necessarily good for the Czechs because it does not provide them with the right environment and skills. The Italian CL also sees Europe/the EU as a primarily economic entity but does not share the Czech critique. The CL associates the EU with competitiveness, generation of wealth and creation of jobs. Europe is, therefore, seen as being good for Italy.

While liberal-leaning parties tend to focus on the image of the EU as a competitive market in the global stage, parties with socialist tendencies describe Europe/the EU as social market economy. Globalisation also constitutes the background to this representation, but the focus is not on Europe/the EU as a willing and successful participant in the globalisation processes but as an alternative model to construct and run modern society. The images deployed in this line of argument are implicitly contrasted to the US model of society and, to some extent, the so-called Anglo-Saxon model of market and society. The British Labour Party, therefore, cuts a lonely figure amongst the fellow socialist parties since their representation of Europe as social market economy is markedly less forceful than their continental counterparts'.

In the social market economic model, Europe/the EU stands for both economic prosperity and respect for workers' rights, social justice and welfare (for example, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and the SPD of Germany). This social aspect is deemed as both desirable and dispensable since it is envisaged to create more cohesion among the member states and, above all, European citizens. In fact, the Greek PASOK even presents the EU as a world progressive movement that encourages democratisation and, at the same time, guarantees prosperity and respect for human rights. According to PASOK, this is a new, European model, a model of which any European citizen can be proud of in the wider world. The contrast to the 'cut-throat' capitalism of the USA is obvious.

### **Political Europe**

The representation of Europe/the EU as a political entity is rarer than that of an economic entity. This is not too difficult to predict given the inherent contradiction between the Westphalian ideals of the sovereign states and the implication of a political union in Europe.

While it is common to associate the idealistic view of Europe with some of the political parties of the EU's founding members, an equally optimistic view is voiced by Czech political parties. The Czech Social Democratic Party describes the European project as unique in the long history of Western civilisation, and also as a successful one. For them, European integration is a political concept of mutual relations and co-operation among European nations, based on each member state's voluntary decision. This suggests that the party overcomes the contradiction between the nation-state and European integration mentioned above by focusing on the voluntary nature of the EU. It is a community of the willing and, therefore, it is even nobler. The Coalition also regards the EU as a respectable political project in which both big and small countries give up part of their sovereignty willingly. It is therefore possible to support political union based on the principle of self-determination.

The United Left (IU) of Spain describes the EU as an unfinished political project and calls for the creation of the 'United States of Europe'. The IU hangs its hope on the Social Charter which will, according to them, bring a political Europe by making

Europe a space of rights and liberty as well as a space of social rights. A less radical line is followed by the UL of Italy. The UL describes the EU as a political entity which gained even more robustness after the signing of the Amsterdam treaty. The UL evaluates the political aspect of the EU highly because the unified legal and normative system across the EU territory is desirable and necessary to resolve disputes among the EU citizens. It would also guarantee the protection of the EU citizens within the territory. These parties solve the dilemma between the sovereignty of the nation-state and European integration by calling for a decentralised, federal structure in the EU and focus on the subsidiarity principle. In this way, according to the parties, the nation/state can have it both ways: equal rights and better protection for the citizens and the right and power for the nations-states to run their own affairs.

### **Europe of values**

In discussing Europe/the EU, political parties often bring ‘values’ into focus; that is Europe/the EU is often described as representing values. These values are largely ‘positive’ ones, a fact that indicates that European integration retains its ideological character in that it serves to set a particular worldview organised around a particular set of values.

What are the values that are associated with Europe/the EU by political parties? Typically, democracy, rule of law, human rights and peace are cited immediately. The political parties in the new member states such as Poland tend to stress democracy which is seen as being almost synonymous with the West and the EU. Socialist political parties of old member states would add social market economy as a value that is represented by Europe/the EU.

In many cases, parties call Europe/the EU a community of shared values, without specifying what these values. It is often implied, however, that these values are related to the Christian tradition. This is evident in the Italian UL’s and the Austrian OVP’s reference to ‘Christian humanistic values’ and ‘the spirit of Christian humanism’. If they are not implicitly linked to the Christian background, they can be linked to specific national values as seen in the formulation by the New Democracy of Greece. They hold values such as democracy which have originated from Greece,

thus bringing the influence of the Classical period in the European project to the forefront.

This leads to another representation of Europe: Europe as Christendom. Reference to Christianity when discussing Europe is almost non-existent in the British, Czech, Greek and Spanish political discourses. This representation of Europe emerges most frequently in the debate on enlargement. The Polish right wing parties put an emphasis on the Christian heritage when portraying Europe which, combined with their self-definition of the Polish nation-state as a Christian one, legitimises their place in Europe. Poland has always been in Europe and her accession is not a question of 'returning', but rather of formalising this long-held status. This claim is not contradicted by the political parties of the old member states: Poland is no doubt European. Christianity is flagged up as a boundary-defining element when possible membership of Turkey or other Muslim nations is raised in discussing the prospect of the EU enlargement. The German CDU and CSU and the Italian CL are more explicit than others in insisting that the EU should be limited to those countries that share common, for instance Christian, values. Other parties are less forthcoming in opposing to the possibility of, say, Turkish membership, but several Austrian parties seem to share the understanding that Europe is in the end Christendom.

### **Negative Europe**

Negative representations of Europe are roughly divided into two groups: Europe as a superstate and Europe as a capitalist conspiracy. The former is often propagated by right wing or liberal leaning parties while the latter is, as easily expected, a pet motif for communist parties.

The idea of Europe as a superstate is based on the perception that the EU is a huge bureaucracy riddled with unnecessary regulation and is, therefore, inefficient. Another understanding that accompanies the 'Europe as a superstate' thesis is that the EU infringes the fundamental principle of the Westphalian system of national sovereignty. The Czech Civic Democratic Party seems to be more concerned with the former and sees the EU developing into a protectionist 'Fortress Europe' which they oppose. The British Conservative Party tends to focus on the 'red tape' aspect, too,

while the UK Independence Party is clearly concerned with the question of sovereignty, and advocates withdrawal from the EU on the basis of protecting the UK's sovereignty. There is a wide range of variations of this view. The Hungarian Fidesz-MMP considers that the EU advances its own interests at the expense of Hungarian national interests. The Lega Nord of Italy calls the EU a new form of fascism since it does not respect popular sovereignty, and the Polish LPR portrays it as a new form of imperialism in which the rights of weaker nations are violated.

A great deal of negative assessment is imbedded in the view of Europe as the capitalist conspiracy expressed by communist parties across the nine countries surveyed in the EURONAT project. The Austrian KPO denounces the EU for being both a capitalist enterprise and for contradicting the Austrian tradition of neutrality. The German PDS does not hesitate to describe the EU as a capitalist empire, while the Greek Communist Party brands the EU project as a lie, a scheme concocted by the oligarchic plutocracy of Europe and multinationals at the expense of the Greek people and advocates the immediate withdrawal of Greece from the EU.

Some communist parties, on the other hand, try to portray the EU as a useful tool in starting social change. The IU of Spain believes that the EU in its current form damages the rights of workers but concedes that it is the only alternative to full-fledged globalisation. While denouncing the EU as a neo-liberal project, the Italian RC nonetheless sees the EU as an alternative form of world class solidarity in the late capitalist era. These two parties' lines suggest that there is a way to accommodate the Marxist-Leninist worldview in the capitalist, neo-liberal European project.

### **Place of Europe**

Since identity is always relative, the identity of Europe has to be expressed in relation to 'the other'. Data collected for the EURONAT project suggests that it is the US that is the most significant for Europe/the EU in the political parties' view. This probably reflects the nature of the period when the data collection took place in that it was marked by the attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings on 11th September 2001. The idea of civilisation is, therefore, often mobilised in describing both the identity of Europe itself and its relationship with 'the other.' Reflecting now the infamous 'Old

and New Europe' to a certain degree, political parties in Britain, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Spain, in particular, described Europe as part of 'Western civilisation;' that is to say, 'Europe plus the US'. Greek political parties and communist parties across the nine countries, on the other hand, are keener to portray Europe/the EU as a counterweight to the US, an actor in the international stage contributing to the building of a multi-polar world.

Political parties' representations of Europe/the EU show a degree of convergence along the ideological line. Regardless of which member states they represent, liberal leaning parties tend to focus on the economic Europe and dislike practices and measures that get in the way of their pursuit of market liberalisation which, in their view, would lead to the furthering of democratisation. Some right wing parties represent the EU as an emerging superstate that would infringe the right of an independent state. Christian democratic parties are more concerned with the Christian tradition of Europe while social democratic parties are keen to represent Europe as a new model for marrying capitalism and social justice. Communist parties across the nine countries display a similar understanding of Europe/the EU. The majority of them see Europe/the EU through the prism of national interest and Europe/the EU in general is used to illustrate their political programme for the future.

### **Eastern Europe or Central Europe? Or Central and Eastern Europe?**

The distinction between Eastern Europe and Central Europe is not clearly articulated by political parties of the old member states. The British political parties, for example, stick to the most politically correct expression of 'Central and Eastern Europe' but this is used in an undifferentiated way, either as a bigger market for the UK or as a potential source of insecurity. Other parties of the old member states also represent Central and Eastern Europe as a threat – as a source of instability due to the economic unevenness between western and eastern parts of Europe, and as a source of uncontrollable immigration. Neither Central Europe nor Eastern Europe are differentiated but are rather put into the same category; one which is inferior to Western Europe both economically and sometimes socio-culturally.

Hungarian political parties appear to make a clear distinction between Central Europe - to which Hungary belongs - and Eastern Europe, and proceed to describe the former as the Hungarian sphere of influence. The Czech CSSD bluntly represents Eastern Europe as poor and insecure while some Polish parties use the image of underdeveloped Central and Eastern Europe in order to differentiate Poland from others in terms of being the first to embark on the road of building democracy and free market economy.

The EURONAT investigation shows that the categories of Eastern Europe and Central Europe are not clearly differentiated in the public discourses of the old member states. The participation of the political parties from the new member states in the discussion of the future of Europe may bring a sharper distinction between Eastern and Central Europe.

## **Conclusion**

From the above analysis one can begin by saying that the categorisation of Western and Eastern nations first proposed by Hans Kohn does not appear to have a potent explanatory power (Kohn 1945). In 'Eastern' countries images of the nation projected by the political parties do not cluster around the 'ethnic' theme, but rather, they vary to a large degree. In the 'Western' cases – Britain, Spain and Italy, defined as 'Western' because, according to Kohn's formulation, they are located west of the Rhine - the ethnic overtone is certainly weak amongst the major and mainstream parties, although it has been identified in the regional/nationalist parties in Italy (Lega Nord) and Spain (Basque Nationalist Party). This apparent absence of ethnic themes is explained better in reference to recent history than in the ways the respective nation was originally built. In the case of Britain, designated as a classic case of a Western nation in that the nation preceded the state and that the nation is conceived as an association of willing individuals, what seems to be even more relevant in this respect is the fact that multiculturalism has taken roots in British public discourse. Indeed, it is certainly not 'a done thing' to connect Britishness to whiteness or any other racial or ethnic categories in contemporary Britain, a proof of which can be seen in the overwhelming public opposition to the British National Party. In the Spanish case,

the collective revulsion towards the dictatorship years somehow discourages the Spanish-wide political parties to present explicit images of the Spanish nation in public discourse and, therefore, the emphasis on the values of democracy and freedom comes to forefront. The Italian case poses an interesting problem in this regard. Although it is geographically located in Western Europe, state formation preceded the nation building in Italy as famous dictum ('We have made Italy, now we have to make the Italians' - Massimo D'Azeglio) shows. Despite the efforts made by the elite since unification in 1861, it is widely acknowledged that the sense of Italian ethnicity or nationhood remains weak. Moreover, the lack of any ethnic overtone in the depiction of the nation by political parties appears to reaffirm that Italian ethnicity is still under-articulated so that it does not serve as a useful political tool to mobilise the voters.

What is more important in this bird's eye perspective on the material collected is as follows: the truism that the 'nation' is an always contested concept is supported by our research in the realm of public discourse because of the plurality of views presented in each national context. At any given time, a number of visions of the nation are offered in public, and political parties are constantly fighting to win the support of people to their visions.

The ways in which Europe is represented show more similarity than the ways the nation is described. First of all, in all nine national contexts, Europe and the European Union are more often than not used synonymously, thus, allowing the political parties to conflate two different images in order to support their objectives. This may be a deliberate strategy taken by the parties (as seen in the idea of 'Euro-creep' in which various aspects of the EU are introduced into everyday life without attracting attention, thus achieving a sort of encroachment in the end) or a reflection of the everyday use of these two words.

Secondly, the vocabulary employed when talking about Europe shows a high degree of resemblance among the nine cases. With the exception of Spain, there is always a party or two which depicts the EU as an emerging super-state or as a potential threat to national sovereignty. A typical example would be the Conservative Party of the UK, but it is not alone. Very similar views are expressed by Lega Nord (Italy), albeit

more of a fringe party than a mainstream one, the Christian Social Union (Germany) and Civic Democratic Party (Czech Republic), Fidesz-MPP (Hungary), and the League of Polish Families (Poland).

The rather old-fashioned view that the EU is a capitalist conspiracy against the working class can still be traced in the majority of the nine countries studied. This is the view propagated by political parties of a communist persuasion, such as the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the former Communist party of East Germany (PDS), the Communist party of the Czech Republic. In Poland, the EU is demonised as the enemy of farmers by the agrarian Polish Peasants' Party (PsL), thereby reflecting the specificity of the Polish context in the accession debate.

In any of the nine countries, we find at least one political party that emphasises the economic aspect of European integration, and of Europe as an economic entity. There are also parties, mainly of the socialist or liberal persuasion, that see the EU as a secular project, while other parties, especially those belonging to the Christian democratic camp, try to draw voters' attention to the perceived common Christian background – Europe as Christendom. The vocabulary with which 'Europe' is talked about is, therefore, shared across the nine countries.

A few words about the relationship between the representation of the nation and those of Europe. As observed in various places in this paper, it is fair to say that the representation of Europe put forward by the political parties are largely conditioned by those of the nation. The overall tendency is that a political party selects images of Europe/the EU to satisfy its need to promote its position as *the* voice of the nation (or the nation-state). Given that all the political parties are operating in the Westphalian system, this is not surprising. In fact, the analysis presented in this paper confirms that there is no truly European political party emerging if we define a European political party as a political grouping that gives priority to the European framework in its articulation of what the world is and what needs to be done. This in turn suggests that there is no coherent ideology of 'Europeanism' emerging in today's Europe. It also suggests that the main production of the ideas of Europe is taking place outside the conventional political arena. Political parties are obviously not the exclusive producers of the ideas of Europe, and in the analysis presented in this paper,

they emerge more as the consumer than the producer of these ideas and images of Europe.

Another interesting finding in this regard is that the view put forward by the communist parties show more consistency than those by any other political groupings/alliances in regard to the relationship between the nation, Europe and the EU. In their views, Europe and the EU are clearly differentiated and the relationship between the nation and Europe and between the nation and the EU are also set out in a clear terms, and this is repeated in many countries. The universalistic nature of the communist ideology clearly underpins the level of coherence shown by various communist parties in their views of the nation and Europe.

In short, an overall assessment is that representations of the nation and of Europe by political parties are very similar across the nine countries studied. This observation leads to two further speculations. Firstly, the fact that our research has confirmed that there are a multitude of views of the nation and Europe suggests that these nine countries are now fully-fledged pluralist democracies, at least in their appearances, where different views are aired and fought for. This suggestion probably has more relevance to the new member states than to the old member states, and lends its support to the view that European integration encourages the growth of democracy in general. Secondly, the simple fact that every national team could identify political parties' views of the nation and Europe, and the relationship between the two indicates that public discourse has not moved on to the post-national phase. The nation (or the state, more often than not) as articulated as national interest is still the major reference point for the political parties in detailing their analyses of the situation and their suggested courses of action. Both pro-Europe parties and Eurosceptic parties argue their case based on their assessment of whether or not Europe is favourable for the nation. The sign that pursuing a European agenda for Europe's sake is becoming the main trend amongst political parties is non-existent. The emergence of the long-awaited-for European public space has, therefore, not materialised.

However intriguing these speculations may be, they are issues that lie beyond the scope of this paper. What we are concerned with is that although the manner in which

political parties represent the nation and Europe do not differ so much, support for the European project and the feeling of being European differ a great deal. We would need to come closer to each case and examine the relationship between political discourse and public opinion more carefully to see why this is the case. In this endeavour, the concept of ideology as worldview providing a coherent framework might turn out to be a useful tool. This is, however, yet another agenda for future research.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> The nine countries are: Austria, Britain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Greece, Poland and Spain.

<sup>2</sup> Grounded theory analysis is a qualitative method aiming to capture the ‘emergent’ – the insights that emerge from the repetition of observation, note-taking and categorising. This is not a method for hypothesis-testing and therefore is suitable for the purpose of this paper which seeks to identify underlying patterns in the vast amount of data. For more on grounded theory see Glazer and Strauss (1967).

<sup>3</sup> Although the Czech Social Democratic Party refers to the long tradition of Czech knighthood to emphasise the longevity of the Czech nation, therefore the sacred nature of the Czech sovereignty, but this practice was found rather exceptional.

<sup>4</sup> The analysis was undertaken before the shift of government in 2004

## References

Glaser, Barney and Strauss, Anselm (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine  
Kohn, Hans (1945) *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York: Macmillan

## Annex

Notes on data collection and methods for analysis

### Austria

Party programmes (2000-2002), speeches by key figures (2000-2002), parliamentary debates (on the Nice Summit of 2000, Eastern enlargement, the Kosovo war of 2000 and Afghan war of 2001) of the Austrian People’s Party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria, the Freedom Party of Austria, the Greens and the Communist Party of Austria.

Method of analysis: four major dimensions of Germany collective identity were selected: Europe and European integration in relation to the German nation; the Eastern enlargement of the EU; the common European currency, and European military integration. These dimensions were then analysed according to ethnic-territorial, cultural-religious, political-institutional, socio-economic, and military-geopolitical components.

## Britain

### Data:

2001 Election manifestoes from Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and UK Independence Party collected from each party's web site except for the Conservative Party; political speeches on European affairs made by leading politicians from the four parties between 1997 and 2000 collected from each party's web site; parliamentary debates in the House of Commons over the Kosovo crisis (1999), the Afghan campaign (2001) and enlargement between 2001-2002 collected from the electronic version of the *Hansard*, the official record of the parliamentary debates. Method of analysis: Critical discourse analysis with a view to identifying various representations of the nation and Europe.

## Czech Republic

### Data:

Party platforms released between April 2001 and March 2002 of the Czech Social Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the Coalition of Freedom Union and Czech Christian Democratic Union. Opinions expressed by the Czech party leaders published in the Czech newspapers between March and May 2002; Parliamentary debates on the Kosovo and Afghan crises and the EU enlargement.

Method: a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis backed up by the qualitative falsification of hypotheses technique.

## Germany

### Data:

Party programmes (2000-2002), speeches by key figures (2000-2002), parliamentary debates (on the Nice Summit of 2000, Eastern enlargement, the Kosovo war of 2000 and Afghan war of 2001) of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Free Democratic Party, the Greens and the Party of Democratic Socialism.

Method of analysis: four major dimensions of Germany collective identity were selected: Europe and European integration in relation to the German nation; the Eastern enlargement of the EU; the common European currency, and European military integration. These dimensions were then analysed according to ethnic-territorial, cultural-religious, political-institutional, socio-economic, and military-geopolitical components.

## Greece

### Data:

Party platforms for the September 2002 General Election of the PASOK, the New Democracy Party, the Communist Party of Greece, and Synapsimos; speeches by the key figures of the four parties, parliamentary debates on Kosovo and Afghan crises and the EU enlargement.

Method: Qualitative discourse analysis to identify representation and conceptualisation of the nation and Europe

## Hungary

### Data:

Party platforms (1998-2002) of the Hungarian Socialist Party, the Hungarian Citizens' Party, the Alliance of Free Democrats, and the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life; parliamentary debates (1998-2002)

Method: Discourse analysis focusing on self- and ingroup- categorisation.

Italy

Data:

Party platforms for the May 2001 General Election of Casa delle Libertá, Ulivo, Northern League, Rifonazione Cammunistica; Parliamentary debates on the Kosovo crisis (1999), the Afghan campaign (2001-2002), Eastern enlargement, Nice and Laeken Summits (2001-2002).

Method: The data were analysed qualitatively with a view to highlighting how the nation, Europe and the EU are defined and related to one other in the party discourse.

Poland

Data:

Twenty-four party leaders' speeches and party manifestoes that dealt with Polish identity in the European context, three parliamentary debates in which all the party leaders took part.

Method: Critical discursive analysis paying particular attention to the dimension of topicality.

Spain

Data:

Party platforms for the 2000 General election and 1999 European election of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, the People's Party, the United Left, Convergence and Union, and the Basque Nationalist Party; speeches by key figures, parliamentary debates on the Kosovo and Afghan crises, and the EU enlargement.

Method: combination of content analysis and contextual analysis facilitated by Atlas/ti.

(9962 words including references)