Self or Other? The Eurozone Crisis in British Discourse
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Introduction

Britain has long been known as the 'reluctant European' and as the EU's 'awkward partner', at first not wanting to join the European Communities at all, later opting out of the Euro and frequently objecting to further transfers of power to Brussels. In this context, this paper examines cross-party British political discourse on the current Eurozone crisis with the aim of identifying if there has been a fundamental change in British attitudes to the EU since the onset of the crisis.

From a social constructivist point of view, social identities tend to be more open to change at times of crisis, known as *critical junctures*.(Marcussen *et al*, 1999: 5). It has frequently been noted, for instance, that the eurozone crisis has also been a crisis of European identity, with increased antagonism including a revival of old stereotypes between Northern and Southern Eurozone members (e.g. Droumpouki, 2013), and a general increase in Euroscepticism in public opinion across the EU. On this basis, then, a form of discourse analysis based on Foucault's concept of discourse and developed by Copenhagen School researchers such as Wæver ans Larsen is used in an attempt to establish whether the current crisis has had an important effect on British discursive attitudes to the EU.

Foreign Policy Discourse Analysis: An Overview of British Discourse on State, Nation and the EU

Foreign Policy Discourse Analysis is a form of discourse analysis developed by authors including Wæver (2002, 2005] and Larsen [1997, 1999] on the basis of Foucault's approach to discourse. For Foucault, discourses organize knowledge systematically and delimit what can be said and what cannot; the aim of discourse analysis based on Foucault is, therefore, to look for these rules (Wæver 2002: 29). Thus, discourse analysis 'does not try to get to the thoughts and motives of the actors, their hidden motives or secret plans' (Wæver 2002: 26); instead 'our investigation into meaning has to take place at the level of the language' (Larsen 1997: 13). Following Foucault, therefore, discourse is seen as forming a system which is made up of a layered constellation of key concepts. They are related in a hierarchical way, 'like a tree with roots, trunks and branches' (Larsen, 1997: 17). In the context of foreign policy, then, the underlying national discourse on state and nation acts as 'a constraint that shapes the foreign policy of this state, a kind of framework within which the foreign policy of a particular country can take place' (Larsen 1997: 21). When discussing a Member State's discursive attitude towards a specific EU policy, then, the analysis needs to explore three levels of discourse. Firstly, the dominant discourse on state and nation is examined,

Secondly, the relational position of the state/nation *vis-a-vis* Europe is examined. Basically, the constellation of state and nation constrains how Europe can be thought of (Wæver 2005: 37). Thus, political discourse should, in its narrative, present a logic of Europe which is compatible with the state/nation construction. Here, very general concepts of the EU are examined, such as whether the EU is primarily constructed as an intergovernmental organisation composed of sovereign states, a single market or a supranational entity (Wæver 2002: 37-38). For instance, the EU may be primarily viewed as a *problem-solving entity*, a *rights-based postnational union* or a *value-based community*. In the first view, the EU's legitimacy is seen as lying in its ability to provide pragmatic benefits, particularly economic and security advantages to its members. The second and third views are norm based in that they go beyond pragmatism and see the EU as founded on norms or values; the understanding of the EU as a rights-based postnational union, for instance, sees the EU as a union based on 'universal rights' such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The view of the EU as a value-based community, in contrast, perceives the EU as a community necessarily underscored by a deeper cultural identity, perhaps based on a common history and religious tradition (Sjursen, 2002, 2008) (Schmidt, 2009).

At the third level, the analysis focuses on concrete policies pursued by specific groups of actors, particularly political parties, who argue their positions with reference to levels 1 and 2. Thus, actors might contest each other at level 1 by arguing that their opponents do not offer an appropriate construction of state and nation, or at level 2 by arguing that their construction of Europe will pose a threat to the state/nation constellation, or by pointing out that they have fundamentally misunderstood the realities of the European integration project (Wæver, 2002: 37-41).

British nationhood is a primarily political, rather than ethnic, construction, centred upon Parliament and the monarchy. In the dominant discourse on state and nation, known as the 'Whig discourse', every Englishman is 'born free', although this liberty is described as hard-won. According to this discourse, the liberties once enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxons were withdrawn following the Norman conquest. Despite some earlier victories, notably the signing of the Magna Carta, the resistance of the English people to absolute rule and tyranny erupted during the Civil War and the settlement of 1688, the so-called 'Glorious Revolution', inaugurated a new age of English liberty (Larsen 1997: 38). Moreover, according to Wallace, the Whig interpretation of history is inseparable from the British commitment to a non-interventionist state, an open market and a free international economy (1986: 383).

According to the dominant discourse, the main vehicle for the resistance to absolute power and for harmonising and balancing interests was seen as the English, and later British, Parliament, an institution whose sovereignty was paramount and independence unquestioned, without reference to the British state, people or nation.

The monarchy has also played an important role; while Parliament represents internal sovereignty, the monarchy represents external sovereignty, in particular independence from Rome and the Pope and from the European continent since 1066 (Risse 2010: 82). Both of these traditionally represent national sovereignty, the former by defending individual rights and freedoms, the latter representing British sovereignty from Europe (primarily France) and the Pope. Thus, Britain has historically not seen itself as an 'organic' part of Europe, its self-image in the dominant discourse rather being that of a world power focused on its empire and, later, the Commonwealth. In contrast to the focus of British foreign policy on 'the open sea', the empire and later the Commonwealth (Larsen 1997: 52). Indeed, the terms 'Europe' and 'European' began to be used in the English language to define an outside, even alien entity, and the English began to define themselves in contrast to Europeans (Spiering 2004: 144).

It is thus perhaps not surprising that Europe has often continued to be constructed as Britain's Other, albeit a usually friendly Other. As Schmidt argues, the British political elite has, from the very beginning, 'defined EU identity in opposition to national identity' (2012: 174). While the British political elite saw co-operation among the Continental powers following World War II as a 'dire necessity', they saw the UK as different in that it could pursue other options, including continuing its association with the Commonwealth and cultivating the 'special relationship' with the USA (Spiering 2004: 137). In this context, the decision of the Macmillan government to make an (ultimately unsuccessful) bid for EEC membership in 1961 was an overwhelmingly pragmatic one; he presented it as a 'commercial move to protect national economic interest', while, in the later, successful bid for membership, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson justified accession as 'defending the national interest against interfering foreigners' (Schmidt, 2012: 174).

Thus, regarding European integration, Britain has been a reluctant European, the 'awkward partner', from the start, often appearing 'semi-detached' from Europe. In particular, in UK discourse there has been a persistent fear of the development of a European superstate which would threaten the sovereignty of the British Parliament, one of the bastions of British identity, while European economic policies, it is feared, reduce flexibility thereby threatening British competitiveness (Schmidt 2006: 18). Thus, Conservative discourse in particular has generally been supportive of 'free market' policies such as the Single European Act, while remaining sceptical of political integration. Despite her Eurosceptic tendencies, Margaret Thatcher, for instance, welcomed the development of the Single Market as a 'free enterprise *Europe des Patries'* (Thatcher, 1993: 536) while warning, in her 1988 Bruges speech, of 'a new superstate exercising new dominance from Brussels' (Schmidt, 2012: 174-175).

Such discourse is still evident among Conservative politicians today. According to Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, the Conservative Party would seek to limit what it views as future federalist damage by implementing laws to 'protect Britain's sovereignty'. These would include a 'Sovereignty Bill', according to which ultimate authority would remain with the British Parliament, which would also have to approve so-called 'ratchet clauses' and a 'referendum lock' intended to prevent further power being handed to the EU without a referendum (Cameron 2009). Cameron argued, in a 2013 speech that;

> We have the character of an island nation: independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty. We can no more change this British sensibility than we can drain the English channel. And because of this sensibility, we come to the European Union with a frame of mind that is more practical than emotional. For us, the European Union is a means to an end – prosperity, stability, the anchor of freedom and democracy both within Europe and beyond her shores – not an end in itself (Cameron 2013).

Thus, while European integration is seen in pragmatic terms – as a 'means to an end' – this end is not limited to economic and/or security benefits. In Conservative as well as Labour discourse the EU is also seen as a guardian of 'universal values' such as freedom, democracy or human rights although, as is discussed below, this comparatively benign view of the EU has been challenged on the hard Eurosceptic[ii] right, most notably by the increasingly popular UK Independence Party (UKIP).

Labour leader Ed Milliband's recent speech on Europe, at first sight, appears to provide a completely different analysis of the British 'character' to Cameron's. He argues that the benefits of being an EU member state, in addition to the economic and strategic benefits;

> are also about the character of our country. I believe in an outward looking Britain. A confident Britain. A Britain that wants to learn from how things work elsewhere. Because we can hold our own with the best in the world. Not a Britain that shrinks away. Turns inward. Or a Britain that feels threatened by working with other countries (Milliband, 2014).

However, while the Labour Party in recent years has been more pro-European than the Conservatives, it also continues to insist on a primarily intergovernmental EU, and to promote flexible labour markets rather than the social welfare model supported by some continental socialists (Watts and Pilkington 2005: 232-233). Gordon Brown, for instance, focused on the importance of 'British values … in persuading a global Europe that the only way forward is inter-governmental, not federal; mutual recognition, not one-size-fits-all central rules; tax competititon, not tax harmonisation, with proper political accountability and subsidiarity, not a superstate' (Gifford, 2010: 39). Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, for example, saw active involvement in the EU as vital for Britain's interests, rather than due to any deeper sense of European identity: 'If we want to stand up for Britain then we have to be in Europe, active, constructive, involved all the time. We have to negotiate tough and get our way, not stand aside and let other European countries make the decisions that matter to us' (Blair 2000).

As Diez Medrano puts forward, then, the dominant British narrative on Europe is ambivalent between portraying European integration as a threat to national sovereignty and Great Power status on the one hand and as a

necessity for economic and geopolitical reasons on the other (Diez Medrano, 2003), roughly corresponding to what Larsen refers to as the 'interstate co-operation' and 'essential co-operation' discourses (Larsen, 1997: 62-64). Despite these variations, however, it should be emphasised that mainstream British discourse on the EU tends to be sceptical about deeper integration and rejects the idea a European 'superstate', preferring an intergovernmental EU to a federal one. Furthermore, it tends to see the EU in pragmatic terms, rather than in terms of a deeper 'common European identity'.

British Political Disourse on the EU in the Context of the Eurozone Crisis

While not a member of the Eurozone Britain was particularly hard-hit by the financial crisis of 2008-2009, and, due to its close trading and financial links with the Eurozone, has also been affected by the economic and financial crisis in the Eurozone. At the time of writing, despite an unexpectedly strong return to economic growth in the second half of 2013, the country's economy is still smaller than it was pre-crisis (*The Telegraph,* 2013). Although unemployment levels have remained relatively low, the crisis has hit large sectors of the British public hard; the increase in low-paid or even zero-hours contracts, slow wage growth compared to inflation and austerity measures mean that the size of the so-called 'precariat' has grown considerably (Savage, 2013) (Bongiovanni, 2012: 249-250).

As in many EU countries (Serricchio *et al*, 2013) the economic crisis may have contributed to an increase in euroscepticism among the British public, notably reflected in the rise in popularity of the 'hard' Eurosceptic UKIP, which, in the 2009 European Parliament elections, came second beating the governing Labour Party into third place (Whitaker and Lynch, 2011: 359). One consequence of the rise of the UKIP and the general increase in Euroscepticism has been that the Conservative party has promised a referendum on British exit from the EU in 2017 should it be re-elected in the 2015 general elections (Fox, 2014). Meanwhile, the Labour party has also stated that, in the event of its coming into government, it would carry out an in/out referendum in the event of a proposed treaty change which involved a significant transfer of powers from Britain to the EU (Milliband, 2014).

However, as Schmidt notes, in the early days of the economic crisis, Britain appeared to have left behind its days as an awkward partner and took on a leadership role in Europe. In contrast to his relatively Eurosceptic position during the Lisbon treaty negotiations, Prime Minister Brown called on the Member States to take concerted action immediately following the onset of the crisis provoked by the collapse of Lehmann Brothers, and was a strong advocate of neo-Keynesian economic stimulus in response to the crisis (Schmidt, 2012). With the onset of the Greek debt crisis in late 2009, the Conservative opposition began to use the example of Greece as a warning of what could happen to the UK if it did not impose austerity measures. As Cameron warned, shortly before the 2010 General Election, 'Greece stands as a warning to what happens if you don't pay back your debts … You can't go on borrowing at this level forever' (cited in Knight, 2013: 156). Similarly, Vince Cable, the treasury spokesman of the Liberal Democrats, argued that, without a change of government, 'the country risks following Greece into crisis' (Knight, 2013: 156).

In contrast, Labour politicians have generally supported a neo-Keynesian approach to the crisis, in favour of increased state intervention to promote economic growth As Ed Balls and Peter Mandelson, for instance, argued;

> the single currency needs to survive and succeed - and we are worried that Europe has so far identified only half the solution. There is a real danger that binding countries into ever larger cuts and tax rises to meet the new structural deficit and debt targets will become self-defeating, economically and politically (Balls and Mandelson, 2012).

In this context, the Greek crisis has been used as an example of the negative effects of austerity measures. As Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls argued, for instance, 'if you try to go too quickly on austerity as you see in Greece, it doesn't work, if you look at the British example as well' (Balls, 2013). This discursive conflict between a neo-Keynesian approach and a neo-liberal approach is not limited to Britain but, more generally, has been a Europe-wide feature of discourse on the economic and financial crisis (Schmidt, 2014: 191-192). In this sense, then, it is perhaps possible to speak of the 'Europeanisation' of British discourse on the economic crisis.

In general, the approach of the Conservative/Liberal coalition government has focused on strengthening co-operation within the Eurozone while emphasising that Britain is to remain outside such integration. Ironically, then, the crisis 'turned British ministers into champions of further European integration' (Hewitt, 2013: 218). The government supported, for instance, the Commission's proposal to move towards a common banking union across the Eurozone, which would allow central authorities to intervene when a bank got into trouble with the aim of avoiding taxpayers having to bail it out later on. However, perhaps in the tradition of Churchill's support for a United States of Europe that would exclude Britain, Cameron emphasised that the UK would largely remain outside such a union, and would not contribute to bailing out eurozone countries in difficulty; 'Because we are not in the single currency we won't take part in the profound element of the banking union. I wouldn't ask British taxpayers to stand behind the Greek or Spanish deposits. It's not our currency, so that would be inappropriate to do' (BBC, 2012).

Similarly, Labour politicians have advocated deeper political integration in the Eurozone in order to combat the crisis. Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Ed Balls, for instance, pointed out that, 'Navigating your way through this [the eurozone crisis] is very, very difficult, you've got to have a plan for growth and jobs, a credible deficit plan

and political agreement to implement it' (Balls, 2011). Later, Balls and former Chancellor Peter Mandelson argued that;

> At the heart of Europe's problems is the fact that the eurozone does not have the institutions or political machinery to project confidence in its own future. So, first it needs a new political settlement. It needs a European central bank that is willing explicitly to stand in the way of sovereign contagion from the periphery. It needs an active European stability mechanism that can meaningfully support short-term sovereign liquidity and the recapitalising of the European banking system. And it needs a system of collective economic decision-making among eurozone countries that ensures that everybody plays by the rules. That is why we have both argued that some form of fiscal union is now inevitable (Balls and Mandelson, 2012)

However, while Conservative politicians were supportive of moves to calm the crisis, the prospect of deeper integration in the Eurozone has also provoked concern that it would take decisions that might threaten key British interests (Knight, 2013: 220), in particular the maintenance of London's position as a financial centre. This eventually resulted in the Conservative-Liberal coalition vetoing moves towards closer integration in the Eurozone, including the Fiscal Compact to achieve monetary discipline and, later, the proposed banking union (Beck, 2013: 42). In the negotiations for the Fiscal Compact, for instance, Cameron declared that he would not sign a new treaty unless it included a protocol reasserting national control over further European fiscal competency and financial regulation, and provided protection to the City of London, a move that eventually left him isolated (Gifford, 2014: 523).

Thus, while it has emphasised deeper integration to overcome the crisis, Conservative discourse has also focused on safeguarding Britain's interests as a non-member in the face of increased economic and financial integration in the Eurozone. Regarding treaty change, Cameron, presenting deeper integration in the Eurozone as a potential threat to the Single Market, argued that 'Our colleagues in the EU need to know that we will not agree to a treaty change that fails to protect our interests … Our requirements will be practical and focused but euro-zone countries should not mistake this for any lack of steel' (cited in Knight, 2013: 222). In a later speech, he argued that;

> Our participation in the single market, and our ability to help set its rules is the principal reason for our membership of the EU. So it is a vital interest for us to protect the integrity and fairness of the single market for all its members. And that is why Britain has been so concerned to promote and defend the single market as the eurozone crisis rewrites the rules on fiscal co-ordination and banking union (Cameron 2013).

Similarly, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, complaining about 'discriminatory treatment of non-eurozone Member States' (Osborne, 2014), expressed his fears that decision-making without the UK in the area of economics and financial services was already taking place;

> And we've already started to see the Eurogroup discussing EU directives privately before involving other Member States – like they did over the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive last June. It means there's a very real risk that badly thought through legislation will be imposed on the UK (Osborne, 2014).

Despite Labour's comparatively more pro-European stance, its discourse on the Eurozone crisis has much in common with that of the Conservatives in this context. In a 2012 speech, Labour leader Ed Miliband also expresses concern that Britain will be 'left behind' in a multi-speed Europe; 'I believe we must work to ensure that this more flexible European Union, where some countries pursue deeper integration and others don't, still benefits all' (Miliband, 2012). Here, again, a pragmatic rather than a normative approach to EU integration is also revealed; it is seen as something primarily for the *benefit* of the Member States concerned.

Conservative politicians have also argued that, while Britain intended to remain outside the Eurozone, instability in the Eurozone was against British interests as it was having negative effects on the British economy, driving it towards a double-dip recession. However, while instability in the Eurozone would certainly have a knock-on effect on the British economy, Labour, have also accused the government of using the Eurozone crisis as a 'smokescreen' for their own failure to address the crisis at home, as, for instance, in the following speech by Ed Milliband;

> They have done nothing as the economy flatlined. Now they are making a second fundamental mistake by blaming the eurozone crisis for our economic emergency and using that as an excuse for doing nothing. Our growth stalled and problems started before the eurozone crisis escalated. But David Cameron and George Osborne are still sitting on their hands at home refusing to admit they are wrong (*Daily Mail,* 2012)

Despite this, Labour politicians, like the Conservatives, have also emphasised the importance of 'saving' the Eurozone, and have focused on the importance of the Single Market. As Milliband argues, for instance,

> We need to drive forward the completion of the single market in digital, energy and services. I am pleased to say the CBI has agreed to help develop proposals about how to complete the single market. And make it easier for British firms to take advantage of the opportunities the single market provides (Milliband, 2014).

Similarly, in the context of Cameron's proposal to hold a referendum on a possible British exit from the EU, Labour politicians have largely put forward pragmatic, rather than justice-based or value-based, arguments in favour of Britain remaining in the EU. As Milliband argued in a 2014 speech, for instance;

Our country can tackle the major problems of the world far more effectively inside the European Union than it can on the outside …Because the only way to respond to problems that cross borders is with countries working together. Not standing apart. So the case for Britain's place in the EU is about our strategic influence in the world. But it is not just strategic. It is also economic. The economic case for membership is overwhelming. Our membership of the EU gives Britain access to a market with hundreds of millions of people. With 21 million companies. Generating 11 trillion pounds in economic activity. Almost half of all overseas investment in the UK comes from within the EU. Directly providing 3.5 million jobs. And much of the rest of the investment into our country comes because we are part of the single market (Milliband, 2014).

Labour discourse, then, emphasises the importance of European economic co-operation in a globalised world in which dynamic emerging economies are becoming increasingly dominant. As Miliband, for instance, argues; 'There are problems in the world today that are simply too large, too international in scope for any nation state standing alone to deal with. And to believe otherwise is just to hark back to a bygone age that is not coming back' (Miliband, 2012). As Hay and Smith (2005: 129) note, it was the advent of New Labour that introduced the notion of globalisation as a logic of external economic compulsion into British political discourse.

However, in the context of the Eurozone crisis, similar arguments have also been expressed by Conservative politicians. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, for instance, points out that; 'As a father of two young children, I don't want to turn to them as we see the latest Chinese scientific breakthrough or Indian innovation and say "That used to be us. That used to be Europe' (Osborne 2014). In this speech, Osborne notably identifies a *European* 'us' in contrast to an Asian 'them'; there is, then, some sort of European identity expressed here despite the generally rather Eurosceptic discourse of the Conservative party.

'Hard' Eurosceptic Discourse

The discourse of hard Eurosceptic parties such as the UKIP and the now defunct British Freedom Party (BFP) has also focused on EU integration as a threat to British sovereignty and freedom. The increasingly popular UKIP was founded in 1993 'To campaign for the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Not because we hate Europe, or foreigners, or anyone at all; but because it is undemocratic, expensive, bossy – and we still haven't been asked whether we want to be in it' (UKIP 1993). The UKIP, while operating within the party system, has generally exploited its outsider status, appealing to voters disillusioned with the mainstream parties (Gifford, 2014: 521) on questions such as immigration and the economy as well as European integration (Ford, 2013), and has recently seen its popularity rise to the extent where it captured 139 seats and a quarter of the vote in the 2013 local elections (Gifford, 2014: 521). .

Ironically, the rise of the UKIP can partly be understood as a product of political Europeanisation, not only because the EU is the main issue on its agenda but because it can be seen as part of a Europe-wide rise of populist radical right parties, including the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Danish People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party and the True Finns (Ford, 2013), and has been open to transnational alliances with such parties (Gifford, 2014: 522).

However, an analysis of UKIP discourse on the UK and Europe suggests that it seems to share in the dominant Whig discourse on state and nation; it depicts Britain as a country with a long tradition of freedom;

The roots go back seven, eight, nine hundred years with the Common Law. Civil rights. Habeas corpus. The presumption of innocence. The right to a trial by jury … The idea of free speech was a reality in England when Europe was run by princes with tyrannical powers. Throughout Europe, England was known as the land of liberty. Here you had the possibility of dissent. Of free thinking, independent minds and actions. That's us. UKIP belongs in the mainstream of British political life throughout the centuries (Farage, 2013).

As in, for instance, Conservative discourse, the EU is described as a (potential) superstate, and thus a threat to the sovereignty of the British Parliament which, for UKIP leader Nigel Farage, has been 'reduced to the level of a large council' (2013). However, in UKIP discourse the EU is depicted in dystopian terms as a kind of 'evil empire', and is often compared to a totalitarian Communist regime. According to Farage, for example, 'the EU resurrected the evil system that the people of Eastern Europe had lived under before' (Farage, 2010). Similarly, Paul Weston, BFP leader argued that;

We are watching a genuine dictatorship in the making. These people have no regard for democracy, and their socialist ideology is simply a softer version of the Communist ideology that murdered over 100 million people over the last century while simultaneouslydestroying the economies and societies of the nations it infected … (Weston, 2012)

Thus, for Farage, the only way the British people can reclaim their freedom and prosperity is through exiting the EU; 'We know that only by leaving the union can we regain contol of our borders, our parliament, democracy and our ability to trade freely with the fastest-growing economies in the world' (Farage, 2013).

The eurozone crisis, in particular, has been used in Eurosceptic discourse to emphasise that Britain should 'decouple itself from a project that was … a proven economic and political failure' (Gifford, 2014: 520). In particular, the EU has been described as dictatorial in the context of the current Eurozone crisis. In this sense, the crisis-hit countries of the Eurozone periphery, Greece in particular, have been described as becoming 'protectorates' of the EU and losing their status as free, democratic countries completely. Farage, for instance, remarked to Commission President Barroso during a European Parliament debate on the eurozone crisis that;

You have killed democracy in Greece. You have three part-time overseas dictators that now tell the Greek people what they can and cannot do. It is totally unacceptable. Is it any wonder the Greek people are now burning flags and drawing swastikas across them? Frankly, unless Greece is allowed out of this economic and political prison you may well spark a revolution in that country (Farage, 2011).

Another, related, issue questioned by the British Eurosceptic right has been the resignations of Papandreou in Greece and Berlusconi in Italy and their replacement by technocratic governments. Weston, for instance, described Papandreou's sucessor Lucas Papademos as an 'EU placeman in a previously democratic country' while Berlusconi's replacement by former Commissioner Mario Monti and 'a cabinet of bankers and academics' was implied to be undemocratic in that 'not one of [them] represents a single Italian political party' (Weston, 2012).

In this context, the EU's economic policies are seen as German-dominated, thus encouraging allusions to the Nazis. Farage, for instance, argued that 'We are now living in a German-dominated Europe, something that the European project was actually supposed to stop' (Keating, 2011). Notably, the trope of the EU as a German-dominated quasi-Nazi regime is not limited to these parties' discourse but is also part of a broader discourse on the Eurozone crisis prevalent in the Southern European media and, to a lesser extent, politics (Droumpouki, 2013) (MacMillan 2014). In fact, it can be argued that the scope of such discourse roughly corresponds with what Bongiovanni calls the Europe of 'decline and impoverishment' including 'the southern part of the continent, the arch stretching from Portugal to Greece, but also comprisisng Ireland, France and the UK' (Bongiovanni, 2012: 5-6).

However, in common with the dominant discourses exemplified by Labour and the Conservatives, the UKIP also recognises that it is unrealistic to 'go it alone' in an increasingly competitive, globalising world. However, the UKIP argues that this problem can be overcome with the creation of a Commonwealth Free Trade Area, which would, in the UKIP's view, be a much more culturally compatible and economically and demographically dynamic group than the EU, and without the political contstraints of the latter. According to its 2010 Manifesto, then,

UKIP will seek to establish a Commonwealth Free Trade Area (CFTA) with the 53 other Commonwealth countries … Commonwealth nations share a common language, legal and democratic systems, account for a third of the world's population and a quarter of its trade, with the average age of a citizen just 25 years. India, for example, will soon become the second largest world economy and Britain should not be tied to the dead political weight of the European Union, but retain its own friendly trading and cultural links (UKIP, 2010)

Conclusion

In conclusion, mainstream British discourse on the EU in the context of the Eurozone crisis does not appear to be significantly different from earlier discourse. The issue of sovereignty, and the fear of a European 'superstate', continue to be an important in the discourse. In the context of the Eurozone crisis, while both the coalition government and the Labour party have advocated closer integration among the Eurogroup in an attempt to overcome the crisis, they have also expressed fear that such integration could lead to decisions made in the absence of Britain which could nonetheless affect the UK.

Another enduring similarity with pre-crisis discourse is the predominantly pragmatic vision of the EU in mainstream discourse. The EU, then, continues to be depicted as a problem solving entity whose main purpose is to provide benefits, both individually and collectively, to the Member States. There continues to be, then, little sign of the EU being perceived as a 'value-based community', founded upon a common European identity based on shared cultural, historical and/or religious roots. Instead, the EU is primarily conceived of as being 'in the interests' of its members. In particular, mainstream discourse in the UK has continued to focus on the need to develop the Single Market further in order to increase Europe's competitivity *vis-a-vis* the rising Asian economies in an increasingly globalised world.

Perhaps the main development in British discourse in recent years is the challenge posed by the rise of hard Euroscepticism, in the form of parties such as the UKIP, but also within the Conservative party itself. At the level of discourse on state and nation, the discourse of parties such as the UKIP actually has much in common with the dominant Whig discourse in that Britain is depicted as an inhereently free, fair, sovereign country. In this discourse, however, the EU is viewed as in direct opposition to these values; it is only, then by exiting the EU that Britain can once again find the freedom it deserves. Hard Eurosceptic discourse emphasises this sense of threat by comparing the EU to dystopian, totalitarian states such as Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Third Reich. It still remains to be seen whether such discourse resonates enough with the British public to lead to a vote for Brexit in the event of an in/out referendum.

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[ii] Hard Eurosceptics reject EU membership as a matter of principle, in contrast to soft Eurosceptics, who, despite opposition to certain EU policies and to a federal Europe, continue to support EU accession (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008: 7-8)