Black or White? European Identity in British and Slovak Political Cartoons in the Time of Eurozone Crisis

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A friend in need is a friend indeed.
proverb

Abstract

After twenty years of research, discussions about European identity almost belong to the folklore of European Studies, yet the concept still seems to pose more questions rather than give definitive answers. Discourse analysis has become the tool of choice for many scholars of identity, who paid plenty of attention to the official EU documentation, public speeches of its representatives, newspaper articles. However, only little interest has been given to the *visual mode* of discourse – the images and *imaginations* of EU identity that are being communicated through the media. Constructivists focusing on European identity analysis, rely almost exclusively on textual and verbal discourse. But discourse as such is not limited to verbal acts alone; images and photographs, portraits and graphic manipulations, including *political cartoons*, constitute an integral component of an identity narrative. Thus the aim of this contribution, based on a sample of political cartoons from the daily print of United Kingdom and Slovak Republic, is *to analyse the imaginations of European Union's identity as portrayed in the political cartoons of four newspapers*.

To this end, this paper develops a specialized political cartoon specific methodology of discourse analysis of meanings communicated by the cartoon images. First, the empirical results presented below deal with concurrency of discourses of European topics in the studied newspapers. Second empirical part examines concepts directly related to the content of identity construction: political representation, personification of the European Union, member state's relationship with Europe and the Other.

Key words: political cartoon, European identity, Eurozone crisis, United Kingdom, Slovak Republic

Introduction

In times of crisis, loyalties are put to the test. Even as we speak, Europe[1]'s foundations are being shaken to the very core. So far, neither economic experts nor European leaders have the solution to overcome the Eurozone debt crisis, what is clear however, is that European Union (EU) is not the same as it was two years ago, and indeed it would never be the same again. We are witnesses to the process of reformulation and renegotiation of European Union's rules, norms and values, a process that will ultimately determine the fate of the Union and its citizens. While Lisbon treaty ratification crisis, over a complicated and long legal text and only one mandatory referendum (in Ireland), might have been considered a crisis of the elites, European sovereign debt crisis affects virtually everyone in Europe, from the German taxpayer to the Hungarian mortgager. The question then is: what consequences will the crisis have for European identity? It is still too soon to draw conclusions, but already we can see a shift in discourse of popular perception of the European project, only reluctant solidarity between the member states and among the EU citizens. In other words the Eurozone crisis has laid bare the fragile foundations of political and social integration. Despite the flowery declarations by political elites, European public is not a 'community of fate'. It is still a *Gesellschaft* rather than *Gemeinschaft*, and European integration is a project endorsed more by elites than the general population (Hooghe 2003). The ongoing crisis only helped exacerbate this fact.

On a more positive note, animated discussions of the contemporary crisis have at least two relevant consequences for the European project and European identity research. First, the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis constitutes the latest of

issues that is being debated simultaneously across all EU member states[2], bringing to the fore ideas of European community of communication and European public sphere with renewed interest. Taking into account the interdependence of European economies, the speed of developments, grave seriousness of the issue, the negative impacts on economic stability and overall uncertainty, we can also observe that the Eurozone crisis is, thus far, the most prominent Europe-wide topic with an unprecedented number of actors taking part in the discourse: ranging from professional economic and political elites, scholars and academics, entrepreneurs, media commentators to general population discussing the crisis on social networks, in cafes or protesting in the streets. Second, the potentially destructive consequences of the Eurozone crisis open up room for scapegoat hunting and emotionally heated rhetoric. On the one hand, the crisis prompted strong defense of European values, principles and dedication to the European project, on the other hand, it has lead to escalation of populist nationalistic rhetoric, ultimately putting European values into an open debate with alternative values and visions. This is good news. Silent European leaders in the aftermath of failed referenda on European treaties have failed to rally support for the European project. The present day crisis offers a chance to present and explain arguments why European integration should (not) continue.

Working from a premise that during times of crisis perceptions of political objects 'are contested, negotiated, reformulated and reorganized' (Triandafyllidou, Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2009: 5), the *goal of this paper is to develop an operational methodology of political cartoons and analyse the contents of European identity discourse in a sample of political cartoons from two member states with a very different relationship to Europe*. One, an old, big, insular, influential and traditionally euroskeptic member state that is not a member of the Eurozone and whose citizens do not feel as citizens of the EU[3] - United Kingdom. Two, a new, small, Central-European and still a rather eurooptimistic member state, that belongs to the Euroclub as of January 2009 and whose big majority of citizens feels as citizens of the European Union[4] - Slovak Republic (European Commission Eurobarometer 75, Spring 2011: 52).

There are multiple reasons for writing this particular paper: firstly, as the economic crisis unfolds, we have a chance to observe the ongoing transformation of European polity (including its citizens' relationship to it), put differently, we can watch European public sphere at work live. Secondly, my goal is to contribute a different analysis of the raging crisis and its impact on European identity, an analysis based on political cartoons, instead of political speeches (or macroeconomic data). The aim is to find out who emerged as the leader of Europe, (*who or what personifies European leadership*) and, using the Self/Other framework, assess the possibilities of *identification* with this 'hero' narrative. Are these perceptions shared across Europe? The scope of the paper does not allow for a full-fledged transcontinental study of meanings and perceptions, so to spark a discussion I've picked two countries, each of which illustrates a very different relationship to the European Union. Also, by submitting this paper, I would like to contribute to a still underdeveloped field of European Studies – analysis of visual material with political content.

The paper will proceed in four parts: after brief theoretical introduction, methodology and operationalization of political cartoon discourse analysis will be explained, followed by the empirical results focused on personifications of Europe and Self/Other relationship testing. The paper will conclude with a short summary of results and suggestions for further research.

Identity, loyalty and discourse

This paper is written from a social constructivist perspective. Working my way from a premise that human collectivities[5] are imagined, *invented* where they haven't previously existed (Gellner 1964 in Anderson 1991: 6 original emphasis) I assume that European Union too is a collectivity too populous to make face-to-face contact between its inhabitants possible, therefore it too is in need of imagination, today perhaps more than ever, to support the idea of community – a *Gemeinschaft* – to boost loyalty and solidarity among its citizens to prevent disintegration and chaos[6].

What I'm looking for in this paper is an idea of *Gemeinschaft*, a common European identity defined as: 'shared representations of a collective self as reflected in public debate, political symbols, collective memories, and elite competition for power. [And consisting] of collective beliefs about the definition of the group and its membership that are shared by most group members' (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009: 4). In other words, I look for *structures of collectively shared meanings about self and the community that become manifest through public action and discourse*. Because I am of the opinion that identities are vital for political and social collectivities in times of crisis for several reasons: not only do they provide a sense of belonging, fellowship and a common narrative, but also because 'social identities have *behavioral implications*. Attachment leads to loyalty together with a sense of obligation to the group. It is this loyalty that constitutes a resource for social mobilization, collective action, and support for institutions such as the European Union' (Risse 2010: 22 my emphasis) or the respective nation states. Can we trace any collectively shared meanings about the EU? What do these meanings reveal about our relationship to the Union? Can we speak of loyalty to the European project among the wider population?

I argue that uncovering the existence of such meaning(s) structure, a common framework of understanding is not enough. European identity does not automatically guarantee a positive relationship to the EU, because, a simple

existence of collectively shared meanings themselves does not tell us anything about their *content*. Most European identity scholars implicitly assume a *positive* construction of identity[7] based on feelings of belonging, shared values and ideas; people considered as having European identity are typically more informed about the activities of the Union, have a higher mobility and support European integration. European identity, although contested, constructed and imagined, is still perceived as a positive sum of specific norms, characteristics, values and narratives that people relate to in one way or another (Delanty 1995, Shore 2000, Pagden 2002, Burgess 2002, af Malmborg and Stråth 2002, Delanty and Rumford 2005, Bruter 2005 and others).

But what if the shared meanings and imaginations of European collectivity are *negative*? What if the collectively shared feelings are not feelings of belonging but of distancing, along the lines of, let's say, Anti-Americanism? We know what it means to be European, but we collectively share the view that we'd rather not be European? According to the definition above[8], such identity can still be considered an identity, although with a *negative content* and therefore very different behavioural implications: no loyalty, no obligation and no solidarity with the group.

Some trends in this direction are already discernable: pro-European governments crumbling over European issues (Portugal, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Greece, Italy), diminishing support of European Union membership among the general population[9] (European Commission Eurobarometer 75 Spring 2011) rising euroskepticism and popularity of openly anti-EU populist parties (The True Finns of Finland, Václav Klaus – president of the Czech republic, Party for Freedom of Netherlands lead by Geert Wilders or an idea of referendum on remaining in the EU proposed by the British Conservative Party in October) frequent demonstrations against EU measures turning into riots in the streets of Madrid, Lisbon, Athens complemented by anti-capitalist protests in virtually every major Western metropolis. Based on these observations, I think it is important to consider the possibility of construction of a *negative European identity* shared by Europeans that is anti-European at its heart, an identity in which the content of the shared meanings speaks against further integration. Such a Europe-wide feeling of disillusion and detachment would consequently imply that loyalties and obligations are not transferred onto the European level, but remain with other communities, nations for instance.

To quote Thomas Risse once again, paraphrasing his earlier work: 'identities 'do not float freely'' (Risse-Kappen 1994), 'they become salient and are fought over in particular historical moments, especially in times of crisis' (Risse 2010: 2). Current economic crisis constitutes such moment of identity manifestation, political sphere is activated, citizens are mobilized. The question now stands: what kind of European identity (if any) becomes salient? This is the moment of contestation, negotiation and identity articulation, a move from the ambivalence of permissive consensus to political debate and action. So what are Europeans fighting for? Are they fighting for the European Union or their respective national communities? Are they demonstrating a *positive European identity* implying loyalty and solidarity with the European project, or a *negative European identity*, a common disillusionment with Europe that would imply low loyalty and low solidarity with the European project? In the language of integration politics, we can assume a positive outlook shows pro-integration, supranationalist meanings versus a negative stance displaying meanings against further integration, intergovernmental in principle or even meanings openly hostile to the idea of integration.

The goal of this article then, is to *start a discussion* by analysing discourses of two EU member states, with very different relationship to the EU and assess *what kind of European identity*, if any, is formulated and what does it mean for European solidarity in times of crisis.

Methodology and operationalization of political cartoons

Constructivists focused on European identity research, rely almost exclusively on discourse analysis to uncover the meaning structures constituting social realities. According to Berger and Luckmann, it is the ability and capacity of *language* to typify, stabilize and accumulate *meanings* and experiences and to transmit them to future generations (1967: 37-39). Language and discourse is according to many *the* key to uncover the meanings and imaginations of social realities, and indeed European identity scholars had paid plenty of attention to the official EU documentation, public speeches of EU and national representatives, newspaper articles, interviews or internet chats. However, every discourse is multimodal – composed of multiple modes of communication from text and speech through image to the silver screen to architecture (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, O'Halloran 2004). But so far, political science has viewed images with suspicion, as something rather irrational and volatile (Müller 2004, Bernhardt et. al. 2009). Therefore it paid only little interest to the *visual mode* of discourse – to images that are being communicated through the media, in electoral campaigns or art exhibitions[10], although images, photographs, paintings, digital manipulations, including *political cartoons* too are integral components of construction of social reality, as much as any declaration or public speech.

 Despite the fact that language and discourse are at the cornerstone of political science discourse analysis, it would be a mistake to reduce this approach to the study of verbal practices only. In line with Vít Beneš, I am of the opinion that it is more appropriate to understand 'discourse analysis as a study of human meaning-making practices that, besides verbal communication, include the visual media (films, posters, billboards) or any other human activity that falls into

the broad category of non-verbal communication' (Beneš 2008: 92). Thus *political cartoons* can and *should* be studied as a specific meaning-making practice, as an expression of political opinion that makes issues and identities visible and open for contestation and thus contributes to their imagination. Certainly, language and text are an important source of information on our society, but official documents, speeches, books (even fiction) or newspapers, so to speak, do not tell the whole story...

We can think of the media as a 'forum within which institutions, groups and individuals struggle over the definition and construction of social reality' (Greenberg 2002: 181). Free media focus their attention on events that are at the centre of interest of the collective, and at the same time they '[do] not replicate the system logics […], but strive instead for autonomy in terms of selecting, re-interpreting and evaluating political news' (Trenz et.al. 2007: 1). To this end, we analyse particularly those parts of the news coverage that present an *opinion* such as editorials, commentaries, discussions or more recently blogs and internet discussions. I argue that political cartoon, also called editorial cartoon in the United States, too presents an opinion that should be analyzed, but in a visual or visual-textual mode. Consequently, the same way post-structuralist discourse analysis helps us study the meanings 'beyond' words, it can help us study meanings and imaginations 'beyond' pictures (for more on post-structuralist discourse analysis of political cartoons see Chalániová 2011a, 2011b).

But while verbal/textual mode of discourse is relatively well documented, 'visual opinions' are analysed only seldom and usually in exceptional cases with real world consequences: such as the Muhammad cartoon crisis. At the same time, it can be argued that political cartoon is just another form of *visual opinion* and it too contributes to the construction of events, threats or identities the same way editorials do, or perhaps even in greater measure. For example, authors of the book *Europa-Bilder*[11] argue that, 'it is not the discourses themselves that construct collective identities, but it is above all images that create very powerful collective imaginations' (Öhner et.al 2005: 7)[12]. I am of the opinion that in the present-day fast communication society, political cartoons are more easily *read* by the public than a page-long expert commentary, simply because they can be 'consumed' within seconds. In agreement with Bahaa-Eddin Mazid, I argue that cartoons, especially political cartoons, are legitimate objects of discourse analysis, because they 'reflect cultural attitudes and values, and record and perpetuate many commonly held beliefs' (Mazid 2008: 434). Using humour, satire and exaggeration combined with commonly understood *metaphors*, *symbols*, *stereotypes* and narratives, cartoons help construct our social reality. Through periodical, stereotypical and schematic portrayal of actors and events, they reify meanings within a wider socio-political context. In other words cartoons can be viewed as a chronicle of opinions with a normative connotation about political events, as well as a reservoir of collectively shared meanings that we can tap into.

Thus, in my contribution I will *analyse the visual mode of political discourse as seen by the cartoonists of four major newspapers in the two chosen countries (UK, SK) with an aim to deconstruct the meanings portrayed in their relationship with the European Union.*

From Image to Meaning: Operationalisation of Meanings in Political Cartoons

As I've argued above, there is a difference between *existence* of an (European) identity and its actual *contents*. While visibility and presence in discourse leads to EU's psychological existence as an 'imagined community'' (Risse 2010: 7), the content derives from the actual meanings shared within the communication community, and could be either positive or negative.

To test for the *presence* of a European identity political cartoons of the two chosen EU member states, I trace frequency of visualisation of whole-European topics (topics that go beyond the immediate EU-UK/EU-SK relationship) and their concurrency – whether these topics appear roughly at the same time across the Union. Visual presence of topics beyond the immediate national frame of reference (for example European themes) and concurrence of these themes across other European member states speaks in favour of existence of an 'imagined community'. Interest in and routine portrayal of European topics concurrently with other members suggests a certain level of European consciousness, either stronger or weaker European identity.

However, discourse, whether verbal or visual, does not only speak of the existence or absence of a subject. It also carries with it a *normative evaluation* of the subject or an event that speaks of its nature, character and relationships, in other words, gives the subject its *content*, its meaning within a wider social context. So besides determining the existence of a community of communication and/or a common identity, we have to analyse the meanings that are being communicated with respect to the subject and the community itself.

Nevertheless, deconstructing meanings from images, sculptures or architecture (visual mode of discourse) is very different from textual discourse analysis.

'For instance, what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of colour or different compositional structures. And this will affect meaning. Expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference'

(Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 2).

Indeed, *caricature* gives artists the freedom to express views that might be too harsh, too radical or just too politically incorrect to make it to the editorial, and thus would be left out of the ordinary textual discourse analysis. Furthermore, political cartoonists by using metaphorical expressions, puns or unspoken visual references to common knowledge are able to communicate shrewd, complex, multi-layered narratives about people and events that words can express only with great difficulty (Gilmartin and Brunn 1998: 563 in Mazid 2008: 437).

So, how to decode meanings out of political cartoons[13]? To our misfortune, '[v]isual language is not – despite assumptions to the contrary – transparent and universally understood; it is culturally specific' (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 4). As long as European member states retain their *cultural* differences, they will code meanings into images differently. Yet, if we manage to recover the meanings on a national level, a cross-country comparison is possible, even in such different countries as United Kingdom and Slovak Republic.

In general, 'reading' images follows a *logic of association* rather than logic of argumentation: 'while academic and journalistic texts are based on argumentation and reasoning, visuals follow a logic by association, *connecting different meanings that would not necessarily make sense if written down* or communicated orally' (Müller and Özcan 2007: 287 my emphasis). Political cartoons in particular, thrive on the surreal, the absurd and the outrageous. They routinely couple reality with the impossible. But in doing so, cartoonists draw on popular culture, current political situation, stereotypes, puns and metaphors, constructing an amalgamate of associations to bring home a statement about the (sorry) state of affairs.

Any given political cartoon makes use of multiple artistic and linguistic tools as means of expression. Below, I develop a list of cartoonist's 'tools of the trade' that, when combined, contribute to the overall meaning of a specific political cartoon. Every political cartoon, besides delivering an opinion, is at the same time a work of art, and it is entirely up to the artist's preference, which means of expression he chooses to prioritize. The choice of specific instruments such as personification, pun or a metaphor, over exaggeration or popular connotation depends, to a degree, on the cartooned subject itself. Usually, political cartoons present a multi-layered mini-narrative and the 'reader' has to decode the subtle hints and the puns to arrive at the intended overall meaning.

Methodologically, much like the reader, we too can deconstruct a political cartoon (using the instrumentarium outlined below): uncover the piecemeal meanings, and connect them back together in a meaningful way, much like putting together pieces of a puzzle into one meaningful whole.

For analytical purposes, I describe each of the tools individually, in real life however, the usage of these instruments often overlaps: pun can utilise a metaphor to build upon etc.

Representations of persons – the choice of protagonists subjected to caricature gives the reader and idea about who are the main actors in a particular issue or event. Political leaders such as prime ministers, presidents or ministers of finances and foreign affairs or leaders of the political parties often have a stable 'cartoon visage' (in cartoons by a concrete cartoonist) based on their outer appearance and character. They do not need to be explicitly identified again and again.

Symbols and *icons* – flags, signs, icons and logos are frequently utilised to identify a person, personification, institution or a company. Symbols are used to highlight party affiliation, institutional membership, corporate interest and alike. Cartoonists also make use of commonly recognised symbols of peace (white dove) and justice (Lady Justice - a blindfolded with a sword one hand and scales in the other) (see also *personification*).

Personification – embodiment. Endowment of an animal or a thing with human characteristics representing typical qualities of the subject or collective personified. Typically in British cartoons, the banking sector is personified as a clutter of fat cats. On an international level, Russia is often cartooned as a great brown bear personifying its size, power status and danger potential. Personification can also be attribution of personality or even a persona, to inanimate or abstract objects such as states and institutions. A typical example would be Uncle Sam, personifying the United States of America. Personifications often have roots in folklore or mythology of a given subject (Chinese dragon), but at times they are just straightforward personifications of fairly recent invention (a drowning € with a swimming belt).

Stereotypes – stereotypes are cliché and oversimplified qualities associated with the subject fixed in the popular knowledge. Stereotypes are usually not based on truth, but continue to circulate within population as

modern myths. An excellent example is a stereotype associated with blondes: it is popularly believed that platinum blond girls are just dumb hotties with gold-digging ambitions.

Composition – Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: chapter 6) further divide composition into tree interrelated systems based on *information value* – position of protagonists and their relation to each other; *salience* – elements/persons made to attract the viewer's eye, placement in the backround/foreground; and *framing* – presence or absence of framing devices, e.g. lines connecting or dividing the visual elements (people or things) 'signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense' (2006: 177). In practical terms, positioning and posture of the subjects towards each other, their engagement (or not) in common activity gives away meanings about their relationship. Positioning of a subject at the centre of an image or in the 'thirds'[14] suggests an eye-catching quality to the subject, and its greater importance compared to the rest of the crowd not occupying the compositional 'sweet spots'. Division by a fence, great distance or contrasting colour tones in the background connotes rivalry and discord, whereas occupation of the same ship implies companionship.

Size – is an important indicator of subject's power status. An obvious difference in size between two or more actors betrays unequal power relationship in which the bigger in size typically dominates the dwarf. The power relationship need not only be between two people: an example of unequal power position could be an image of tiny immigrants waiting in front of a Fortress Europe. Their triviality in face of the EU clearly states they have no chance of entering.

Age – too is an important marker of subject's qualities. Old age typically codes for fragility, weakness and senility in cartoon characters. Too young an age on the other hand suggests immaturity, inexperience and dependence on parental figures for care. Age does not relate to people only: new and shiny buildings are usually associated with modern technologies and progress, while shabby crumbling ruins point to archaic, disfunctional objects or institutions.

Exaggeration and *ridicule* – are crucial instruments for cartoon artists, because most of their visualisations happen in the realm of the absurd. Not only cartoonists exaggerate facial features of the cartooned to highlight their perceived personal traits, e.g. Margaret Thatcher's enlarged crooked nose giving her a look of a bird of prey. Cartoonists position their subjects in most improbable situations. Politicians might find themselves under the sea, in biblical times or in a cemetery. Each of these exotic excursions communicates a meaning: drowning in the sea or being dragged under the surface indicated a 'tight spot', motives from biblical times, such as the *Last Supper* or journey of the Magi make use of the meanings associated with these historical events, and a walk among the tombstones either suggests raising ghosts (or zombies) of the past or saying goodbye to failed political projects.

Puns and *play on words* – political cartoons are commonly complemented by 'text bubbles' – a sentence or two by the protagonists – or a stand alone title such as: 'last summit' in words associated with the *Last Supper of the Christ* depicted in cartoon. In their brief utterances, cartoonists rely on *synonyms* (words with the same or similar meaning); *homonyms* (words that sound the same, but have either different meanings such as *bank*-financial institution and a river *bank*, or sound the same, but have different spelling such as *Grease*-the musical and *Greece*-the country); *metonymy* (a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated such as using *London* for *Great Britain* or *Brussels* to signify *European Union*); *synecdoche* (a figure of speech in which part is substituted for the whole and vice versa, e.g. use of the word *law* instead of *police officer* and other. Similarity between current names of events, slogans and entrenched archetypes helps artists assign meanings associated with the historical or popular events to the current event under scrutiny.

Metaphorical expressions – not to be confused with abstract conceptual metaphors (Drulák 2004, for more see Lakoff 1993), are frequently utilised by cartoon artists because of their ability to deliver the meaning without explicitly saying so, which is a huge advantage in the criticism business. On the one hand, metaphorical expressions challenge our creative perception by invoking idioms and symbolic language, on the other hand, once identified they narrowly constrain the set of possible interpretations, because within a given social collectivity metaphors have a limited range of meanings. By using a popularly known metaphor, the artist actually steers the readers' thinking towards the preferred meaning.
We have to keep in mind though, that metaphors and metaphorical expressions are culturally coded: a metaphorical expression 'to make a dog's dinner out of something' has a clear meaning of performing poorly within the Anglo-Saxon culture, but the same phrase would only receive raised eyebrows in Slovakia. But, *metaphoric expressions are only verbal or visual tools to express another meaning*. Thus, in two different cultures, we can still arrive at the same meaning using different expressions: in English the meaning of metaphoric expression 'to make a mountain out of a molehill' connotes *exaggeration* based on physical resemblance of the molehill to a mountain and their real difference in size; in Slovak, a metaphor standing for *exaggeration* is 'robiť z komára somára' (to make a mule out of a mosquito), in this case the metaphor is based on onomatopoeia of the words *komár* and *somár* that

sound similarly, however in real life relate to two very differently sized animals. Although the above expressions are *literally different*, they still convey the *same meaning* in different cultural settings. So, the crucial thing here is to decode the culturally embedded meanings of a metaphors rather than their literal translation. Such meanings, in contrast to verbatim diction, can be compared across cultures.

Examples of popularly used metaphors include sinking ships, politicians dressed up as prostitutes or bloodsucking vampires. Some metaphors, of course, can be comprehensible across different cultural settings, e.g. the vampire metaphor based on a popularized myth from Romania. Virtually everyone in Europe and America is familiar with nocturnal life demand and eating-habits of these hideous creatures. Thus a political portrayed as a vampire represents a limited set of meanings such as hunger/greed, antiquity or the need to hide from the light of day – troubled consciousness.

Pop culture – too is widely exploited to associate the cartooned with popularly known figures and references from novels, musicals, folk stories, films or children's fairy-tales. Politicians are depicted as familiar celebrities such as Michael Jackson, sci-fi characters such as the Terminator, or characters from popular mythology such as Robin Hood and *Jánošík* – the Slovak 'king of thieves'. Cartoonists reference religion, fiction, mythology etc. to transfer meaning from the original popularly known source to the situation at hand. Again, in case of globally known characters (Terminator, Madonna) the meanings stay the same through different cultural backgrounds.

Archetypes – cartoonists mock established pieces of art – the *Last Supper* already mentioned above or Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. They also recurrently exploit established metaphors of politics as a game of chess. Archetypes too are culturally coded, thus we cannot uncover the meanings without knowledge of the respective cultural context, however, once we arrive at the author preferred meaning, we can compare it further.

Punch line – is usually the final sentence of a joke that delivers the humorous effect. Cartoons too use humour and satire to communicate a meaning, thus a punch line would fulfil a similar function as in a verbal joke - bring together all the elements to drive home the intended meaning. A punch line could paraphrase a slogan 'unity in absurdity' to crown the illogical way of decision-making in Brussels or refer to pop culture: the Terminator's trademark catch phrase '*Hasta la vista*, baby!' pronounced before annihilating a target (or a political rival).

Use of *colour* – most cartoons are traditionally sketched in black and white, only recently, colour entered into the picture. Colours could be used to evoke a variety of emotions: colours such as red, orange, so called 'warm' colours are associated with comfort and home. Blue on the other hand is associated with cold and ice and loneliness, white with innocence, black with death, night and things sinister. Besides being warm and homely red colour can also evoke aggression or rage as in bull fighting. Thus cartoonists can exploit the arsenal of colours to nuance their message even further.

Use of *time*, *weather* and *seasons* – cartoon artist at times also add a touch of nature to their illustrations. Use of time, weather and seasons could be either purely descriptive: like drawing a snowy background during the winter months, or instrumental denoting a meaning: much like a setting sun is associated with decline, or winter and freezing temperatures can speak of frozen relations between the protagonists, spring is associated with new life.

The above is a list of tools and instruments a cartoon artist uses to communicate a meaning to his readers. In no way it implies that a cartoonist has to use all of the above in a political cartoon. The situation is rather the opposite: a political cartoon is a combination of partial meanings by association into a meaningful whole – the overall complex meaning intended by the artist.

Based on this instrumentarium this paper will test, by concurrence of appearance of cartoons in the press and examination of shared meanings, the existence of a European identity in two of the EU member states - United Kingdom and Slovak Republic. Next, I will analyze the contents of this identity: first, the *representations* and *personifications* of the European Union to see with whom Europeans (do not) identify. Second, I analyse the complex meanings of cartoons in which a relationship between EU and the respective nation is established, to assess whether this relationship is viewed in positive or negative terms. In the third part of the analysis I test a negative identity construction[15] based on radical differences between the Self and the Other to see whether any shared meanings of Europeanness can be constructed vis-à-vis an entity not considered European. For general conceptualisation of Self/Other construction, see Neumann (1996, 1999), for detailed methodology see Lene Hansen (2006) and for application in discourse analysis of political cartoons see Chalániová (2011a or 2011b).

Data

The analysis was conducted on a data sample from two major newspapers from each country: The Guardian and the Independent from UK, and SME and Pravda from SR. The Guardian (est. 1821) is a left-oriented British daily with a circulation of 283.000. The Independent (est. 1986) is the youngest of British newspapers, its circulation is 184.000 pieces during the week and 157.000 on Sundays, its ideological position is in the centre. Pravda (est. 1945) is a left-oriented Slovak daily with a circulation of 51.000 and SME (est.1993) is a rightist paper with a circulation of 55.000 pieces a day (all the information on circulation is from Eurotopics).

The cartoons were collected over a period of four years: from 1st January 2008 (with the exception of The Guardian starting from 1st May 2008) to 7th November 2011. Throughout this period several whole-European events, some of them crises, took place:

- June 2008 - Lisbon treaty was rejected in Ireland
- January 2009 – Slovak Republic joins the Eurozone and adopts € as its currency
- June 2009 - Elections to the European Parliament
- October 2009 - Lisbon treaty was ratified in Ireland in a second referendum
- November 2009 - Czech Republic was the last member state to sign the Lisbon treaty
- November 2009 - Appointment of the new EU representatives, baroness Catherine Ashton as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Herman Van Rompuy as the first President of the European Council. Former British prime minister Tony Blair was in the run for EU President, but did not succeed.

Meanwhile the economic crisis returned in full force and some Eurozone member states had to be bailed out by the EU and the IMF:
- April 2010 - Greek bailout
- August 2010 - Creation of the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) worth of €440 billion
- November 2010 - Irish bailout
- May 2011 - Portuguese bailout
- June 2011 - rating goes to CCC in expectation of default
- October 2011 - Agreement between EU, IMF and banks to cut write off 50% of Greek debt
         - European Financial Stability Fund was enlarged to €1 trillion, the issue causing demise of the Slovak government

In the watched period, these four dailies printed together 308 political cartoons related to Europe and the European Union. These political cartoons constitute the bulk of the data sample.

Results: European identity and the community of communication

From the outset we can see a disparity between the British and Slovak press in number of printed cartoons: The Guardian (39), The Independent (73), Pravda (87) and SME (109) cartoons. Numerically, the British devote lesser attention to Europe, Slovak coverage on the other hand reaches almost two thirds of the total coverage (196 cartoons) with the remaining third (112 cartoons) divided between the British dailies.

From the coverage of European affairs, it is clear that all four dailies' coverage peaks roughly at 5 points: first, the Irish 'No' to Lisbon of June 2008; second, the final ratification of Lisbon Treaty and appointment of new EU representatives in November 2009; third, the Greek bailout of April 2010; fourth, the Irish bailout of November 2010 and finally, the events leading from the summer Greek bailout to the enlargement of EFSF in October 2011. The peaks are illustrated in Figure 1.
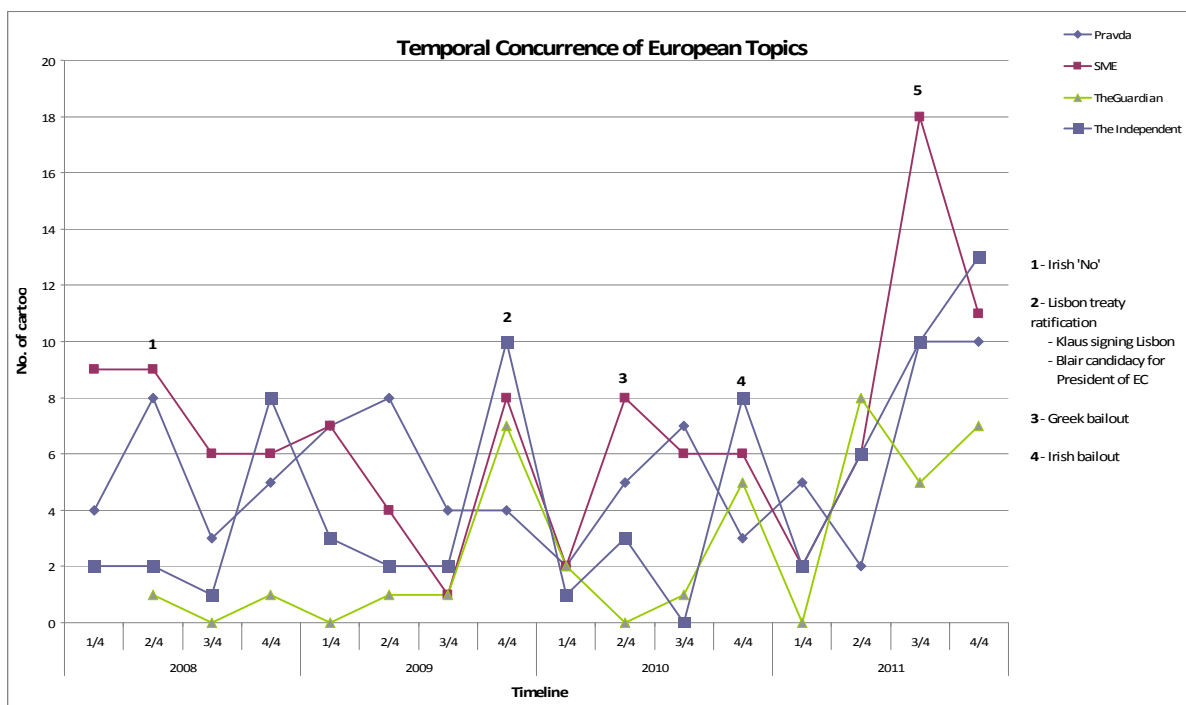
Figure 1.: Temporal concurrence of European topics across the political cartoon in dailies: Pravda, SME, The Guardian and The Independent

Throughout the year 2008, the only concurrence can be observed on the topic of Irish 'No' to Lisbon in the first popular referendum: while the Irish 'No' is covered by both British papers, only SME in Slovakia refers to the event. The other Slovak daily (Pravda) is busy with the domestic Lisbon ratification, criticising Slovak ignorance by dubbing the *Lisabon* treaty *Libanon* treaty. The British dailies suggest a rather grim fate to the treaty (The Guardian 2008 June 20th; PCA 1[16]) painting a tombstone for the project, Slovaks on the other hand see the Irish as naughty rascals forwarding the treaty to Poland (Polish plumber) and Czech Republic (Švejk) to see the results of their ratification process (SME 2008 July 3rd; PCA 21).

Second peak - increased interest in EU affairs - is connected to the final ratification of the Lisbon treaty in November 2009. Again, coverage of the three dailies (Guardian, Independent and SME) soars, the fourth paper Pravda keeps to the same level as in the previous quarter. Again, differences can be found in the content of the cartoons: the British dedicate plenty of attention to their former Prime Minister Tony Blair who is in the run for President of the European Council (The Independent 2009 October 26th; PCA 9), Slovaks ignore this fact completely. Instead, the Slovak print focuses on the President of Czech Republic Václav Klaus - a renown Euroskeptic - whose signature would crown the labourious ratification process (Pravda 2009 October 6th; PCA 17). In turn, Slovak dailies completely ignore Tony Blair's candidacy and failure to achieve. The new representatives do not enter the picture or are illustrated only in passing.

The third and fourth peaking of interest in European affairs revolves around the economic crisis and the Greek and Irish bailout of April 2010 and November 2010 respectively. All of the newspapers increased the number of cartoons depicting European/Greek/Irish problems throughout the second to fourth quarter of 2010. But again, there is a difference in density and coverage of Greece and Ireland: the British dailies portray Ireland with greater frequency than Greece and Slovaks pay more attention to Greece than Ireland, although in general all four newspapers show interest in both bailouts. Greater British interest in Ireland could perhaps be explained by their geographic proximity and economic interdependence. The tight relationship between the two economies is indicated by a chain connecting the noses of Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen and George Osborne, British Chancellor of the Exchequer (The Guardian 2010 November 19th; PCA 4). Greater Slovak interest in Greece could be explained by common membership in the Eurozone. Especially in SME, € is visualized prominently (SME 2010 May 11th; PCA 23).

The fifth and, so far, the final peak that surpasses any previous coverage of EU in all of the papers deals with Greek insolvency, European sovereign debt crisis and, in Slovakia also with the EFSF (UK is not a party to the fund). Coverage of the centre-right dailies soars sky high with SME peaking at 18 EU cartoons (in the third quarter of 2011) and The Independent with 13 (in the fourth quarter of 2011). The EFSF vote in Slovak parliament meant the demise of centre-right government, so this event contributed to the continued interest of the right-oriented media. While there certainly are similarities in communication in both countries, one theme stands out particularly: Slovak cartoonists are preoccupied with the domestic governmental crisis and view the crisis mainly through domestic lenses, the Brits (not being members of the Eurozone) seem to have a broader, more international take of the crisis.

From these findings we can conclude that indeed both Brits and Slovaks are aware of a wider European context, both countries react to the Europe-wide context and we observed that there indeed is a concurrent coverage of events. However, when we return to the original definition of European identity as a *structure of collectively shared meanings about self and the community that become manifest through public action and discourse*, we see that although both Brits and Slovaks are dearly aware of the self and the European community, both countries attribute different meanings and priorities to the events. Geographic proximity, economic ties and domestic connections trump possibility of a pan-European position and meaning.

Contents of European identity

Part 1: Who Represents Europe? How is European Union Personified?

Assessing Europe's *political representation*, surprisingly we come to very similar results for both countries: in three newspapers, SME, Pravda and The Guardian, throughout the first two years of analysis the EU is more or less a rhetorical exercise, an imagined community that is often referred to, or its symbols displayed. The leftist papers do not show off the EU symbols as often as the rightist do. Throughout the year 2010 German chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Nicolas Sarkozy take the limelight and are visualised with increasing frequency as representatives of the Union, often in commanding position, with a raised finger, at the helm of a ship or as generals (SME 2011 March 26th; PCA 25 and SME 2011 August 17th; PCA 29). The Guardian too notices a change in leadership and Merkel and Sarkozy rise in prominence appearing either alongside the British representatives (The Guardian 2010 February 12th; PCA 3) or later in the crisis, speaking down to David Cameron, the incumbent Prime Minister (The Guardian 2011 October 26th; PCA 5). Only The Independent follows a slightly different path in years 2008 and 2009. From the very beginning British and European leaders assume a relationship of 'belonging to the same club' and are often visualised as equals, for example sitting behind one table (The Independent 2008 November 15th; PCA 7) collectively shying away from former US president George Bush. However, as time progresses towards the crisis, the dynamic of the relationship changes to British 'going it alone' rather than with the rest of the EU (The Independent 2011 October 29th; PCA 13).

European Union as seen from within the member state takes on very different *personifications* than the EU seen from the outside (compare Chalániová 2011b). Slovak cartoonists readily tap into ancient mythology and, much like the Chinese and their personification into a dragon, personify European Union as Europa – the Phoenician princess accompanied by a snow-white bull. Yet, in this case a bull does not stand for might and strength, because both Europa and the bull look worn out and sick (SME 2011 October 3rd; PCA 30 and SME 2011 October 27th; PCA 31). European Union is also personified as a raised finger, embodiment of the 'dictate from Brussels' (SME 2010 September 17th; PCA 24). The British do not have any particular personification that would invoke the myths and legends of ancient Europe. The Independent utilizes variations on EU symbols e.g. yellow bananas on a blue field instead of golden stars to mark things European (The Independent 2009 October 26th; PCA 9). However, the crisis offers new subjects to personify: the Eurozone itself. While Slovaks are typically content with personifying the Eurozone by the symbol of its currency € and making it suicidal (SME 2010 May 11th; PCA 23), The Independent cleverly cartoons Eurozone as a dead parrot invoking an idiom meaning disappointment 'be as sick as a parrot' as means of expression (The Independent 2011 July 22nd; PCA 12).

Part 2: The Content of EU-Member State Relationship

Based on part one and focusing on cartoons directly depicting an EU-member state relationship we can conclude that the British newspapers, although not united on the relationship in 2008 and 2009 now clearly depict a division rather than European unity. From the start, The Guardian has pointed out separation and distance between the EU and UK. UK's former prime minister is declined by the EU, EU literally slams the door in his face (The Guardian 2009 October 31st; PCA 2). Next, a frequently used metaphor of a ship: UK in a lifeboat is just an appendix to the S.S. Titanic marked by a European flag. The Independent presents a much warmer relationship to Europe, even though with worsening crisis, the UK too is pushed to the sidelines: before the crisis, the Brits huddle with other Europeans and turn away from George Bush and the idea of transatlanticism (The Independent 2008 November 15th; PCA 7), but when the crisis hits Europe hard, tandem 'Merkozy' decides to face the storm alone (The Independent 2009 August 14th; PCA 8). And even though David Cameron's cabinet would prefer coordination with the 'core' Europe, the 'Thatcherite ghost of the past' provokes only loathing from the EU camp (The Independent 2010 October 29th; PCA 10). Thus we can conclude that because UK is not included in the Eurozone rescue plan, the cartoonists captured the British as being ostracized from the Union. A Halloween cartoon of 2011 is very illustrative in this case: Euro, has been 'raised from the dead' by a last minute rescue plan and the European leaders Merkel, Sarkozy, Berlusconi and

Papandreou cheer the occasion, the British prime minister stand alone some distance from the pack (The Independent 2011 October 30th; PCA 14).

Slovak relationship with the EU can divided into two phases: relationship of the leftist government led by a social democrat Robert Fico and the second phase of a centre-right coalition lead by Iveta Radičová that took office in early 2010. Both dailies congruently describe the leftist government's relationship with the EU as purely instrumental: based on cashflow from Brussels (SME 2008 February 1st; PCA 19 and SME 2008 February 13th; PCA 20). One of the coalition parties, SNS – the Slovak National Party – is often criticized for corruption and fraud on the EU subsidies (Pravda 2008 December 8th; PCA 16). The centre-right coalition's relationship with the EU got overshadowed by the European economic crisis. A majority of cartoons was dedicated to ridicule Greece, however, one stand out, depicting the prime ministress Radičová as a saint with a halo of Eurostars above her head (Pravda 2011 September 24th; PCA 18). Her great dedication to the Union was the reason that ultimately caused her downfall, when she connected the vote on EFSF to a vote of confidence.

Part 3: The European Self and the Other. The Greek Other?

As outlined in the theoretical and methodological part, besides positive identity construction, every identity is also constructed negatively – by othering (Hansen 2006, Neumann 1996, 1999). The goal of the third part of cartoon content analysis is to test for existence of an Other, that would help outline European identity more clearly. Traditionally, the European Other was the Turk, the Russian of the Past. Today, the crisis contributed to redefinition of the Other and perhaps not surprisingly, Greece emerged as the Other within.

Both the British and the Slovaks utilize identical imagery to denote the same meanings: the ancient motif of Sisyphus rolling a boulder up the hill for eternity. Both countries depict the Greek rolling the debt/the euro up the hill, meaning utter hopelessness of such exercise without any real reforms (The Independent 2011 June 19th; PCA 11 and SME 2011 June 23rd; PCA 26). Second shared theme is the metaphor of pigs. Although the British base their imagery on the acronym P.I.G.S. (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain) and Slovaks refer to a piggybank, the meanings are essentially the same: cause of the Greek downfall is greed (SME 2010 September 17th; PCA 24).

Also some processes of *othering* can be observed in the cartoon sample, especially during the years 2010 and 2011. Greeks are cartooned as fat and greedy (SME 2011 July 4th; PCA 27) Slovaks are visualised as radically different: thin and starving (SME 2011 August 6th; PCA 28). Other bad characteristics range from 'bare ass' nudity (SME 2010 February 17th; PCA 22) to laziness. British cartoons do not *other* the Greeks completely, yet they too connect Greeks with unpleasant things such as Greek specialty turned into s**t (The Guardian 2011 November 1st; PCA 6), or they portray the situation as an ultimate Apocalypse taking cue from the US produced film about war in Vietnam (The Independent 2011 November 4th; PCA 15).

Conclusions

This paper tried to offer a novel insight into the problematique of European identity as imagined by the visual mode of discourse, in this case: political cartoons of daily print. Working from a premise that, moments of crises 'make identities visible and subject to debate' (Risse 2010: 2) I applied poststructuralist discourse analysis to study the meanings of Europeanness which was heavily contested over the past four years by a lasting Lisbon treaty ratification crisis and today by the Eurozone crisis.

In the theoretical part, I proposed a definition of identity as *a structure of collectively shared meanings of self and the community that become manifest through public action and discourse*. Indeed, in the two countries under scrutiny we have a lively discourse on European affairs, both countries have developed notions about the self and the community of Europeans, but they do not really share the meanings collectively.

The countries' visualisation of EU representatives differs slightly: while the British enjoy a more privileged, yet distanced relationship, the Euro-enthusiastic Slovaks are in some cases just commanded from Brussels. In terms of personifications, the British do not feel such need to display symbols of European Union as if it was some distanced relative, Slovaks on the other hand utilize European symbolism frequently, and what's more, they even tap into European mythology and personify Europe as Europa – the Phoenician princess.

Neither of the countries has a definitely negative or positive relationship to the EU. The British are at times contradictory, wanting to become part of Europe, but still going it solo, while Slovak leftist government's relationship with Europe is purely materialistic, the true believers in integration can not be part of Europe, because of their political demise.

Surprisingly perhaps, the two countries are most in accord when it comes to negative identity formation, in other words, when it comes to Greece. Slovaks and the British collectively share some meanings of the Greek situation: the futility of the exercise and greed as the cause. Thus in both British and Slovak political cartoons the Greek becomes the 'villain' of the crisis narrative. So, what ultimately binds the two countries to Europeanness is the commonly shared frustration a negative content identity.

As part of the methodological process, I developed a cartoon-specific methodology and operationalization for visual discourse analysis. The cartoon analysis 'toolbox' could be and will be utilised for further research of political cartoons from other EU member states.

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Notes:

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[1] I use the terms Europe and European Union interchangeably unless explicitly said otherwise.
[2] Previous issues achieving Europe-wide attention were the Constitutional treaty failure, Turkish membership and Lisbon treaty ratification process.
[3] According to the Eurobarometer latest survey 56% of Brits do not feel to be citizens of the EU compared to only 41% who do, ranking the lowest feeling of citizenship in the whole EU 27.
[4] Slovakia finds itself at the opposite side of the spectrum, with its population ranking second in 'feeling as citizens of the EU' with 79% feeling as EU citizens, compared to only 20% of Slovaks not feeling as EU citizens.
[5] Be it tribes, regions, nation-states, gay and feminist movements, Star Wars fan clubs or transnational organizations such as the EU.
[6] European Union is traditionally hailed as a mechanism that works as a prevention of war on the continent, the dismantling of the Union might have grave consequences for peace and stability in this region.

[7] Of course there is a negative identity construction in the face of an external Other (Neumann 1996, 1999), but what I'm talking about is a *collectively shared negative feeling towards the group*.

[8] Structures of collectively shared meanings about self and the community that become manifest through public action and discourse.

[9] According to the latest Eurobarometer No. 75 the trends are not too optimistic: trust in the European institutions is falling (p. 41), also the number of people who do not trust the EU as a whole overcame the number of people who do trust the EU 46% to 41% (p. 43).

[10] Just think of David Černý's sculpture 'Entropa' created for the Czech presidency of the European Council and the controversies it raised over stereotypical portrayal of EU member states

[11] The title itself is actually a double-meaning play on words: in German *Bilder* is the plural of *Bild* - image, and *bilden* – is a verb to *construct*. So in a very loose translation the title means *Europe's Image Constructors*.

[12] Bernhardt et. al. (2009) continue in the same trend with a book on *EUropäische Bildpolitiken* focused on symbolic representation of the European Union in integration and electoral campaigns.

[13] One way to overcome the cultural differences is to use the three-step *iconographic method* developed from the work of Erwin Panofsky: 'beginning with an iconographic description, followed by analysis, and finalized by a contextualized interpretation of the visual' (Müller and Özcan 2007: 288).

[14] A golden rule of photography composition adapted from classic art is to divide the image into thirds and compose along these imaginary lines. Placing a person on the imagined line marking a 'third' would make the composition easier on the eyes than if the subject was places directly into the centre.

[15] Not to confuse with negative content of identity!

[16] Please see the Political Cartoon Appendix (PCA) at the end of this paper.

Political Cartoons Appendix

PCA 1: The Guardian 2008 June 20th

PCA 2: The Guardian 2009 October 31st

PCA 3: The Guardian 2010 February 12th

PCA 4: The Guardian 2010 November 19th

PCA 5: The Guardian 2011 October 26th

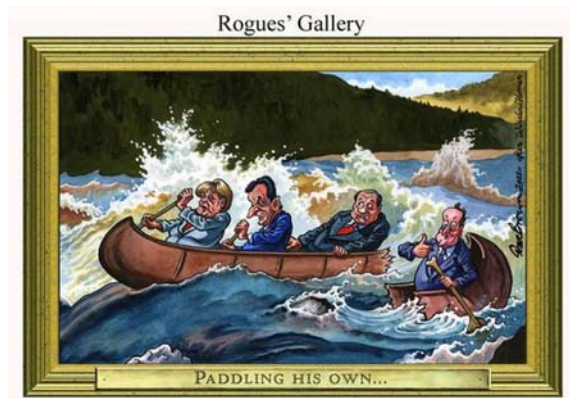PCA 6: The Guardian 2011 November 1st

PCA 7: The Independent 2008 November 15th

PCA 8 : The Independent 2009 August 14th

1

PCA 9: The Independent 2009 October 26th

PCA 13: The Independent 2011 October 29th
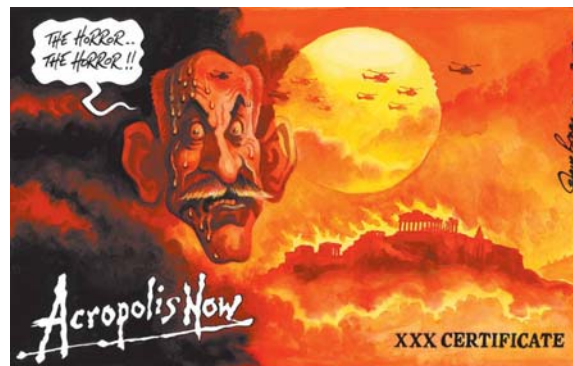

PCA 10: The Independent 2010 October 29th

PCA 14: The Independent 2011 October 30th

PCA 11: The Independent 2011 June 19th

PCA 15: The Independent 2011 November 4th

PCA 12: The Independent July 22nd

PCA 16: Pravda 2008 December 12th
'European subsidies'

PCA 17: Pravda 2009 October 6th
'I'll steam them up for a bit longer'

PCA 21: SME 2008 July 3rd

PCA 18: Pravda 2011 September 24th

PCA 22: SME 2010 February 17th

PCA 19: SME 2008 February 1st
'In Slovakia we speak European'

PCA 23: SME 2010 May 11th

PCA 20: SME 2008 February 13th
'We don't want what's your, we'll keep what's ours'
* European subsidies are ours   ** Ours!

PCA 24: SME 2010 September 17th

3

PCA 25: SME 2011 March 26th
'So you think your parliamentary democracy is more important than our bankers?!?'
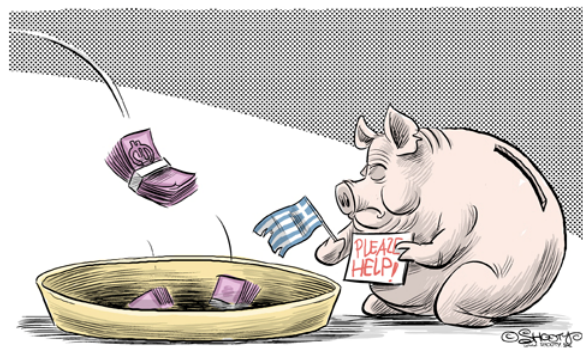

PCA 29: SME 2011 August 17th

PCA 26: SME 2011 June 23rd

PCA 30: SME 2011 October 03rd

PCA 27: SME 2011 July 4th

PCA 31: SME 2011 October 27th

PCA 28: SME 2011 August 6th
'Mutual loans – an expression of solidarity'