Europe: A Community that is not One

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Readers of European writings about Europe often identify characteristic variations from within it. The two most frequently identified European viewpoints on Europe are those which present a "Europe of the Land" (German viewpoints especially) and those which present a "Europe of the Sea" – the latter being subdivided between a "Europe of the Mediterranean" (French and Spanish especially) and a "Europe of the Atlantic" (British especially). Here is Jacques Derrida giving a more-refined-than-many reader-reports on these typical variations:

> In its physical geography, and in what has often been called, by Husserl for example, its spiritual geography, Europe has always recognized itself as a cape or headland, *either* as the advanced extreme of a continent, to the west and south (the land's end, the advanced point of a Finistère, Europe of the Atlantic or of the Greco-Latino-Iberian shores of the Mediterranean), the point of departure for discovery, invention, and colonization, *or* as the very center of this tongue in the form of a cape, the Europe of the middle [*milieu*], coiled up, indeed compressed along a Greco-Germanic axis, at the very center of the center of the cape. (Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading*, pp. 19-20, emphasis in original)

This paper is on the "Europe of the Atlantic" conception of Europe one finds in Britain. Following a brief German prelude where I jump into the middle of a "Europe of the middle" example from Nietzsche, I will track the development of a distinctively British vision of European integration after the Second World War, and a growing anxiety in Britain about

desires for a European community that is really *is* one because it really is *one*. Focusing on a British conception of a Europe whose excellence lies, as JS Mill put it, in its "many-sided development", its "remarkable diversity", and exploring this as it was articulated in post-War British, and especially British Prime Ministerial, political speech-making, I will chart the British course into the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union in 2016.

I

When the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche surveyed the "peoples and fatherlands" of Europe in his book *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) he believed he could see a nascent desire for "Europe to become one". He welcomed this development, and projected a new synthesis of the old national types that would belong to the formation of a new European sensibility in a newly integrated Europe to come: the formation of what he called "good Europeans". For the most part Nietzsche represents the developmental drivers of this new European synthesis in terms of an ongoing *agon* between the French and the Germans over the future of Europe. But he had a third national group in view whose significance in European affairs he wanted to acknowledge too, and whose shortcomings he would constantly foreground: the English. He does not have much time for the English. Indeed, despite his reservations about the French Nietzsche stressed that they, like the Germans, "understand things that an Englishman will never understand" (BGE, p. 168).

II

Ah, the English. Although the English do appear in Nietzsche's synthesis of the good Europeans of the future, it is by no means clear why he mentions them at all in that regard. It is an unlikely event, in any case, since no English figures figure as what he calls European events – or rather they only appear once, and that is when what is at issue is a less exalted point of European "feeling", the point where, for example, "the same European destiny that

in Beethoven knows how to sing found its way into words", and "into words" with "Rousseau, Schiller, Shelley, Byron" (BGE, p. 159; see also BGE, p. 165). There are lower points on this scale. Indeed, in this context the German composer Schumann gets the worst write-up: with him "*the voice for the soul of Europe*" is positively in danger – "sinking into a merely national affair" – but Nietzsche's talent for uncharitableness to his fellow Germans does not outweigh the respect he has for those not-simply-German Germans he most admires. He immediately provides a little list of people who are European events not merely national ones. "I am thinking about people like such men as Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer…, Richard Wagner and the later French late romanticism of the forties…and I specially mention Delacroix, the nearest related to Wagner." (BGE, p. 170). The mark of being not-simply-national Europeans, is credited above all to the Germans – with the French at least coming along for the ride. Not an English one in sight here. Not yet.

Elsewhere speaking of writers who are European events not merely-national ones he offers another little list: they are those "like Goethe, like Hegel, like Heinrich Heine, [and] Schopenhauer" (TI, p. 79), all of whom avoided, for the most part, over-identification with a "fatherland" – and in this case who were all German.

On the face of it, then, England is not going to be a great contributor to the new Europe. The English are, Nietzsche thinks, "a race of former Puritans" (BGE, p. 139) who are clever enough to make Sundays so "boring" that people positively look forward to going back to work on Monday (BGE, p. 94). We (and I say "we" here deliberately) are "clumsy" and "ponderous", our literature is "impossible" (even Shakespeare takes a hit (BGE, p. 134)), and our special vice is "cant", i.e. pietistic whinging and whining – and he's surely right about that (BGE, p. 138-9). We cannot "dance", indeed Englishwomen, despite being "the most beautiful doves and swans" on earth, can hardly "*walk*" (BGE, p. 165). We are marked by our "profound averageness" (BGE, p. 166). The major English "philosophers" of Nietzsche's

time, the utilitarians, are quintessential "herd animals" preaching "one morality for all", and hence are fundamentally detrimental to the "higher men" and their task of building on the future made possible by the process of democratization that he saw irresistibly overrunning Europe. Utilitarians may think that this "English happiness" (the "happiness of the greatest number" is, Nietzsche says, simply "the happiness of England") is the "true path of virtue" but is in reality the worst kind of levelling of individual differences: "what is right for one *cannot* by any means therefore be right for another" (BGE, p. 139). (He makes this point again, more clearly, with the thought that "they generalize where generalisation is impermissible" – i.e. over individuals (BGE, p. 101)). In short, since the future Europe rulers will be responsibility-maximising above all (they will be "philosophers" in the sense that they take responsibility for what it means to be human, take responsibility for *being* this new meaning), the English contribution is absolutely minimal: "they are no philosophical race" ("it was against Hume that Kant rose up"), and "what is lacking in England" is "real power of spirituality" and "real depth of spiritual insight" (BGE, pp. 164-5). We are, in sum, on the list not of European events but of the most contemptible: "shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen and other democrats" (TI, p. 92; see also BGE, p. 97). There is a certain exemplary representativity of everything awful about modern Europe…in the English. For Nietzsche the "profound averageness", "modern ideas" and "democratic taste" of the English is precisely what "the *German* spirit has risen against in profound disgust" (BGE, p. 97). It is hard to imagine we will have any part in Europe's future beyond the old set up of peoples and fatherlands. We have "mediocre minds" and are "mediocre spirits" (BGE, §253).

III

But wait! These mediocre spirits what are they up to? With another little list he spells it out: "The spirit of respectable but mediocre Englishmen – I mean Darwin, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer – is starting to come to prominence in the middle regions of European taste"

(BGE, §253). The mediocre Englishmen [*mittelmässiger Engländer*] gaining ground in the middle regions [*in der mittleren Region*]. In a discourse dominated by the classically German figure of Europe as "the middle", where the Germans are presented as the "people of the middle in every sense", and the French as "born Mediterraneans" (born *Mittelländler* he writes, not people of the *Mittlemeer*), the English are figured as some kind of people of the middle too, mediocre people who dominate the middle, currently occupying, Nietzsche says, the very middle of the middle.

Nietzsche's text thus identifies three singular people as among the (German) figure of the Europeans as people of the middle: the Germans who are people of the middle "in every sense"; the French who, always somewhat "hidden" he says, are "born Mediterraneans"; and, finally, the English who, most encrypted of all, are the "mediocre" spirits who dominate "the middle regions". But according the English such an honour (of sorts) is not all. For Nietzsche immediately continues his identification and list of the mediocre English as ground-gainers in the middle regions by giving them leave to do so: "In fact, who would doubt the utility for *such spirits* to dominate for a while? [*In der That, wer möchte die Nützlichkeit davon anzweifeln, dass zeitweilig* solche Geister *herrschen?*] (BGE, §253, translation mine, emphasis in original). What a turn up for the books. I will exploit this.

IV

Nietzsche's reasons for giving the English-type spirit a temporary priority in the movement towards the new Europe to come are basically practical and pragmatic: working towards a new Europeanism will be safer in the hands of "mediocre spirits" instead of the "exalted spirits" of the French and German type who have a tendency to "fly off", not knowing and not keeping to the "rules" (BGE, pp. 165-6). English "narrowness, aridity and

industriousness" is thus better suited to "dominate" in our time "for a while", even though we are utterly incapable of "being able…to *be* something new" (BGE, p. 166).

Well, thank you. But having been given the floor by Nietzsche (for now), I would like to repay the compliment and suggest right off that what "English spirits" suppose that Europe needs today, and any day they can see thereafter really is the same as Nietzsche's own (in fact strikingly Kantian) vision of a Europe that wants to become one: a Europe united politically through the formation of a European Federation of States. We Europeans are, we "English spirits" think, a unity only of the singularly different: we can be drawn together as *one* (spiritually) precisely because we are not *one* (spirit). *We are the community that is not One.*

This idea is fundamentally at odds with a familiar rival conception of a European community to come, and the interpretation of "ever closer union" that it champions. That rival interpretation is the one that conceives economic and political integration as the movement towards the formation of a supranational Federal State, to put it in German; a great European Republic, to put it in French; a European superstate, to put it in English. Instead, English spirits would urge a (genuinely) more modest (moderate, mediocre) interpretation. "Ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" simply means: cultivating supranational institutional conditions in which war, conflict and mutual antagonism between the nations of Europe becomes increasingly less likely – and the arrival of the good Europeans of the future overwhelmingly more likely.

Europe becoming one. This is first of all a cosmopolitan hope of harmony and peace among peoples, not a project of levelling harmonization or a single European government. Not a United States of Europe, but a united Europe of States. And what does it lead to for the people of this place? They are not citizens of nowhere, but not just citizens of a nation either.

It will lead to the formation of a new kind of cosmopolitan plant "Man", Nietzsche says: people with an "increasing independence of any *definite* milieu".

Milieu. Mid-Lieu. Middle Place. People of the middle without a *definite* middle. These are the European to come, in the Europe of the milieu.

V

But they are not, even in this new figure of the old German figure, One; even unto the spiritual figure they configure for the cape or headland that they all share without sharing. Moreover, while many Europe-producers hitherto have found the attempt to make Europe One hard to resist, they have succeeded only in making it less so. Indeed, the greatest "English" anxiety is that success for the more exalted and amalgamating Federalist interpretation of a Europe to come will be just such a failure. Europe could become as J.S. Mill (one of Nietzsche's "respectable but mediocre Englishmen") had supposed China (in his time) to have become: namely, "stationary" rather than "progressive":

> What has hitherto preserved Europe from [becoming another China]? Not any superior excellence in the [European family], which, when it exists, exists as the effect not as the cause; but their remarkable diversity of character and culture. Individuals, classes, nations, have been extremely unlike each other: they have struck out a great variety of paths, each leading to something valuable; and although at every period those who travelled in different paths have been extremely intolerant of one another, and each would have thought it an excellent thing if all the rest could have been compelled to travel his road, their attempts to thwart each other's development have rarely had any permanent success, and each has in time endured to receive the good which the others have offered. Europe is, in my judgement, wholly indebted to this plurality of paths for its progressive and many-sided development. (OL, p. 71)

Mill (thankfully) stresses cultural diversity and not racial superiority in his estimation of the cause of whatever comparative excellence one can find in Europe. Like Nietzsche, then, he stresses the "unlikeness" of Europeans to each other (OL, p. 70). (As a matter of fact, Mill only ever mentions three European nations by name in *On Liberty*; once again the German, French and English examples are the only Europe-examples.) On the other hand, and despite other intriguing Mill/Nietzsche similarities – notably on democratic "levelling" (OL, p. 72) – there is a striking unlikeness in their respective ways of configuring Europe in its singular identity-without-single-identity. While Nietzsche maps Europe in terms of a "Europe of the middle" figure, in Mill's text it is a "Europe of the Atlantic" figure that gathers the plurality: each nation presented as something like a distinctive "point of departure for discovery, invention, and colonialization" (OH, p. 20). Not only do the Europeans "continually" make "new inventions" (OL, p. 70), but through road and path extension efforts, something akin to colonial domination (extending control over other countries) is "at every period" attempted in over-Europe operations too. This overreaching is obviously part of Nietzsche's picture, though it is not so clear why his people of the middle are so keen not to stay coiled up in their own land. On a "Europe of the Atlantic" picture, by contrast, heading out, not staying put is part of the programme.

For Mill, and once again like Nietzsche, each European nation ultimately benefits from the "great variety" of headings of the other nations, but they do so only on condition of the failure of particular national efforts at overall over-Europe domination. (Mill did not think that this point holds everywhere that such domination was attempted by European nations. He generally supported European countries extending control over other countries where he considered those other places not yet ready for "civilised" forms of self-government. But if there is a good to be received from others, any others, I cannot see how what Kant rightly called the "whole litany of evils" resulting from colonialism could anywhere be thought an

acceptable or respectable way to deliver it (Kant, p. 106).) What is achieved through the singular ways that each has "struck out" in Europe is not valuable for that nation alone: when (and because) they are not simply overwhelmed, every nation can receive and draw in "the good which the others have offered", even if it is itself transformed (for example, Germanized) in the process of that development. In short, what is valuable for Europe overall is not a development in which the European community comes ever closer to being One; on the contrary, Europe's own best-becoming depends entirely on its people and peoples remaining gathered as a developing Many.

VI

In the end, for Mill, plurality is Europe's irreducible excellence, its "many-sided development", its "remarkable diversity", the insistent mark of what is valuable in Europe itself, a good overall that each nation has a hand in creating – and each has a hand in threatening ("each would have thought it an excellent thing if all the rest could have been compelled to travel his road"). The perhaps paradoxical virtue of letting "English spirits" like Mill "dominate" for any time would thus lie in this: that travelling *their* over-Europe road would require a set-up for Europe overall that best enables every other to "travel his" own, and hence for each to remain in a condition fit to "to receive the good which the others have offered" without colonizing compulsion. Perhaps it could then even cultivate the chance of replacing extreme intolerance, expansionism, and (life-saturating) nationalism with mutual respect, good-neighbourliness, and (more occasionally active) warm-hearted patriotism.

Nietzsche supposed it undeniable that English-type spirits should dominate in Europe, at least "for a while". However, in the political history of Europe since the Second World War, the period of the unprecedented construction of an over-Europe institutional set-up that specifically aims at putting the mockers on attempts at particular national over-Europe

domination, such English spirits have actually struggled even to begin doing so. The other more exalted desire for attaining "ever closer union" has generally prevailed among those closest to its building(s). In what follows I will track the development of a distinctively English-type vision of European integration after the Second World War, and a growing anxiety among such spirits about more grandiose desires for a European community that is One. Focusing on that "English" vision as it was articulated in post-War British, and especially British Prime Ministerial, political speech-making, and keeping an eye on the ambition to achieve "ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" that has been the watchword of nearly all over-Europe political thinking in that period – British contributions included – we will also make our way into the perhaps not very philosophical opening of "Brexit"; the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union in 2016, and the majority that was won then for "Leave".

VII

The idea of a united Europe found a new lease of life in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. At that time self-consciously "rational" and "modern" political thinking cleaved to the idea that "world peace" could be secured only through the institution of a "world government". A major step on the way to such an end was the ambition "to create a kind of United States of Europe", as the rather unlikely figure of the wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill put it in a speech at Zurich University in 1946 (when he was in fact no longer Prime Minister). This was a "grouping" of nations which, as we shall see, Churchill did not, at that time, think Britain would be part of.

The nation-state – and the nationalism and xenophobia it cultivated – was increasingly regarded as an inherently pathological and irrational formation, tailor-made for war and international rivalry. A rationally designed federal government in Europe would be able to

achieve a more politically advanced and pacific alternative: replacing the particularistic and typically antagonistic politics of national self-interest with a more promisingly peaceful politics formed around the objective interest of the whole. Fusion of national interests into a single European interest would replace national rivalry in Europe once and for all. It is in that context, and in those terms, that the ambition to achieve "ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" most often made its way among those closest to its project. It was the fervent conviction of the founders of "the project" that the aim of cultivating conditions of mutual understanding and respect between the peoples of Europe ultimately required developing the institutional architecture of a European political body with the State-like power of a Federal government. And it was the developing design of that institution that was often to the fore in discussing European developments.

While it was not an organization that served as a building block of the future European Union, Churchill's call for the formation of "a Council of Europe", which was inaugurated in 1949, was one of its spiritual ancestors. The Council of Europe was an initiative that Britain supported and participated in, and the characteristic hope "to achieve a greater unity" among the peoples of Europe was already clear, even if the institutional means to that end remained open:

> Article 1a. The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its Members for the purpose of safeguarding and realizing the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress. (Statute of the Council of Europe, London, 5th May 1949)

Under the guidance of the French diplomat Jean Monnet it was, however, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), inaugurated in 1951, and not the Council of Europe that took up the creative effort "to achieve a greater unity" through what was initially expected to be a

rapid institutional development towards "a kind of United States of Europe". The preamble of the treaty that forged the ECSC gives clear expression to that effort, and to a distinctively political sense of the unity it aimed to realise. Britain did not take part in the initiative.

> CONSIDERING that world peace may be safeguarded only by creative efforts equal to the dangers which menace it; CONVINCED that the contribution which an organized and vital Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations; CONSCIOUS of the fact that Europe can be built only by concrete actions which create a real solidarity and by the establishment of common bases for economic development; DESIROUS of assisting through the expansion of their basic production in raising the standard of living and in furthering the works of peace; RESOLVED to substitute for historic rivalries a fusion of their essential interests; to establish, by creating an economic community, the foundation of a broad and independent community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts; and to lay the bases of institutions capable of giving direction to their future common destiny. (The Treaty of Paris, 1951)

The "Commission" formed the central institutional expression of the ambitions of this treaty: a supranational authority that would construct an economic union as a transitional phase on the road to a new political union. Indeed, the words of the preamble of the Treaty of Paris show very clearly that the creation of an economic community had always been a stage on the way to substituting government in the *national* interest with "institutions capable of giving direction" to the European peoples conceived as a community whose interests had fused into one.

VIII

The beautiful vague words on "ever closer union" were first introduced in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, officially the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC), stressing the cosmopolitical objectives of economic integration. The supranational, institutional conditions thought necessary to the attainment of those objectives were understood as likely to develop in a step-by-step "neo-functionalist" way, where integration in specific sectors would lead more or less inevitably to further such developments in other sectors, the historical role of nation-states in those sectors being successively taken up by the supranational body in that process.

An economically flat-lining UK began to turn to Europe at the start of the 1960s, but was twice thwarted in its bid to join by a French veto. President Charles de Gaulle's concern that a Britain too closely aligned to the United States was ill-suited to a pan-European project proved to be the major stumbling block. However, a third application made after his departure from office in 1969 was successful, with Britain officially joining the EEC in 1973, along with Denmark and Ireland. Only two years later the incoming Labour government offered Britain its first ever referendum on the question of continued membership. The Government's own information pamphlet recommended that voters support "staying in the Community". The pamphlet was explicit that the aims of integration went beyond the promise of national economic advantages, and included the cosmopolitical virtues of a pacific union. The ongoing transfer of competences to the supranational level which those closest to "the project" hoped to see was not, however, on the list of aims (https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:fug282yox):

> The aims of the Common Market are:
>
> - To bring together the peoples of Europe.
>
> - To raise living standards and improve working conditions.

- To promote growth and boost world trade.

- To help the poorest regions of Europe and the rest of the world.

- To help maintain peace and freedom.

The "Yes" campaign was supported by Prime Minister Harold Wilson, but without the backing of his own party, which had roundly rejected continuing membership in a special conference vote before the 1975 referendum. It was also supported by the new Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, and the Liberal leader Jeremey Thorpe. Both the Labour and Conservative parties were already split on the question, the former far more so than the latter at that time. Labour "No" campaigners were largely from the left of the party (represented most notably by Tony Benn), Tory "No" campaigners largely from the right (represented most notably by Enoch Powell). But the majority of the leading figures in both parties supported continuing membership, as did the large circulation national newspapers and Britain's business leaders. The referendum went decisively in favour of remaining. Britain stayed in, at least for a while.

IX

The first institutions of European union emerged in the wake of two terrible world wars of European origin. It was also, however, the period of European division that marked the Cold War. Sticking as we are to British political voices, it is worth noting that it was the latter that was to the fore in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's most strikingly pro-European speech, "The Bruges Speech", delivered in 1988. Anticipating surprise among some of her audience, she insistently affirmed that "our [Britain's] destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community", but she went on even more strongly to recall that still only part of Europe was part of that Community:

The European Community is one manifestation of that European identity, but it is not the only one. We must never forget that east of the Iron Curtain, people who once enjoyed a full share of European culture, freedom and identity have been cut off from their roots. We shall always look on Warsaw, Prague, Budapest as great European cities. (Thatcher, speech to the College of Europe, "The Bruges Speech", September 20, 1988)

Thatcher, like Churchill in his call for "a kind of United States of Europe" in 1946, emphasised the geopolitical significance of the (by then) European Community (EC), and its role in ensuring "prosperity and security" for Europeans "in a world in which there are many other powerful nations and groups of nations". In the 1980s, however, such a project was more clearly framed by the contemporary circumstances of the Cold War rather than the memory of World Wars. Seventeen years later, Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking to the European Parliament in 2005, not only distanced himself from Thatcher's "market philosophy", he also framed the historic opportunity for those European countries that had suffered under Soviet domination and totalitarian conditions differently than Thatcher. Like Thatcher he argued that "enlargement" of the (by then) European Union (EU) to include the (by then) post-communist central and eastern European countries was an issue for the EU's "economy" and "security". However, the political significance of this geopolitical development had shifted again. European integration was no longer a Post-War or Cold War security project, but a politically progressive one: the "extraordinary historic opportunity" offered by enlargement belonged to a politics forged "in the traditions of European idealism", standing squarely against "outdated nationalism and xenophobia" (Blair, speech to the European Parliament, June 23, 2005).

Coming from a country whose semi-detached position seems to have been its only European constant, it is perhaps ironic that leading British politicians of this period – Churchill,

Thatcher, Blair – all argued that the major problems facing Europe in their time were not about institutional "principles or conceptions" (Churchill), or questions calling for "arcane institutional debates" (Thatcher), or constitutional "subtleties and complexities" (Blair). In a time of "ruin" and "despair" (Churchill), "a time of change and uncertainty" (Thatcher), a time of "profound upheaval" (Blair), the question of Europe's heading was, they all argued, not only economic or institutional, but first of all political and geopolitical. Moreover, for them, advancing the project of European co-operation was not about making use of difficult political circumstances to announce the necessity of further neo-functionalist developments, but, in the face of such circumstances, to make the case for a moral and political choice in favour of Europe, thus requiring from Europe's national representatives, above all, "moral leadership" (Churchill), "political courage" (Thatcher, twice), "political leadership" (Blair).

X

In what will never be an affectively forceful expression, Blair emphasised that the decisive political leadership needed in Europe should be from "moderate people". He meant this to contrast with the politics of Nazi, fascist, and socialist totalitarianisms which had cast such a shadow over Europe during the twentieth century. The Europe of nations had created circumstances in which "extremes gain traction". Blair saw the European Union as a union of "values" and "solidarity between nations", a "common political space" and "not just a common market"; a union in which a "social Europe" and an "economic Europe" would mutually sustain each other, and prevent a descent back into political chaos.

It is sometimes suggested that Britain only ever wanted to belong to an economic community, and that perception is not wholly unwarranted. However, with Churchill, Thatcher and Blair one can also see an underlying commitment to a (variously understood) political and geopolitical project. One could, of course, follow Hitler in thinking that the British approach

to Europe is merely a (what might now be called) neoliberal attempt to further "the so-called peaceful conquest of the world by commercial means", an attempt that aims in reality only "at the consolidation of British world hegemony" (MK, p. 500, p. 502). But if Churchill's call in 1946 for a united Europe that could overcome "that series of frightful nationalistic quarrels", if his hope that Europeans "in so many ancient states and nations" might be spared the tragedy of "tearing each other to pieces", if his dream of building a political body in Europe "under which it can dwell in peace", if all that was a call for British world hegemony (or even just "the happiness of England" to use Nietzsche's expression), and not an attempt to rescue Europe from its bloody history, one has to take one's leave of the conversation – even if at times one has to take one's leave from Churchill too. The vision of what Thatcher called the "willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states" striving "to speak with a single voice", to pool or share sovereignty where things can be done "better together than alone", the vision of what Blair called "a union of values, of solidarity between nations and people", may be typically British, but, is also, I will argue, in good part – good.

XI

This trio of British politicians gives a fair sense of the shifting geopolitical sands across the immediately-post-War, Cold War, and then post-Cold War contexts. However, that simplified timeline overlooks another trio: Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who prepared the ground for joining in the 1960s, Prime Minister Edward Heath who took the UK into the EEC in 1973, and Prime Minister John Major who achieved a hard-won parliamentary majority for the Treaty of Maastricht, which brought the EU into being, in 1992. All three were just as keen as Churchill, Thatcher and Blair to stress the political virtues of European integration, and not just economic benefits. Wilson, speaking to the House of Commons in the run up to the second (and again rejected) application to join the EEC in 1967, insisted that

whatever the economic arguments, the House will realise that, as I have repeatedly

made clear, the Government's purpose derives, above all, from our recognition that

Europe is now faced with the opportunity of a great move forward in political unity

and that we can – and indeed must – play our full part in it. We do not see European

unity as something narrow or inward-looking…Together we can ensure that Europe

plays in world affairs the part which the Europe of today is not at present playing.

(Wilson, House of Commons Speech, 1967).

Heath too saw in the EEC the possibility of "an end to divisions which have stricken Europe for centuries" (Edward Heath, "Brussels Speech", 1972), and still in the time of the Cold War stressed, like Thatcher after him, that this division was not over: "'Europe' is more than Western Europe alone. There lies also to the east another part of our continent: countries whose history has been closely linked with our own". Twenty years later, John Major welcomed the possibility of "embracing the new democracies of the East", emphasising above all that "the most far-reaching, the most profound reason for working together in Europe…is peace" (John Major, Conservative Party Conference Speech, 1992).

These "joining" efforts were taken on by Wilson, Heath and Major in a British national context that only became more anxious that national political decisions in Westminster would "let Britain's identity be lost in Europe", as Major reported "a lady [in Cornwall]" putting it to him. Speaking to an increasingly Eurosceptical Conservative Party, Major insisted that "being at the heart of Europe" was not about "turning a deaf ear to the heartbeat of Britain" but seeing "our own national interest", what is "right for British industry; right for British jobs; right for British prosperity", as now more than ever inseparably connected to Britain's membership of "the Community" and its flourishing.

There is considerable continuity across these British political speeches on the primarily pacific virtue of European political integration, and of Britain's best future as lying fully in that development. But there is another British continuity that is equally significant, if significantly more problematic, something belonging to the distinctive "Europe of the Atlantic" perspective that Britain has been historically central to. As I have indicated, Churchill did not think Britain would be part of his projection of "a kind of United States of Europe" in 1946. The "coherent natural grouping" of nations from the "mighty continent" would be a partner with what he called another "natural grouping in the Western Hemisphere": "we British have our own Commonwealth of Nations". (Along with the UK, the members of the Commonwealth at this time were the semi-independent polities that had Dominion status, and in 1946 white governments, within the British Empire. In 1946 these were Canada, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, and the Union of South Africa.) When Germany has been in question for Germany, Europe has always been in view too. As we shall see, when Europe has been in view for Britain, it is the history and memory of Empire that has loomed largest over its horizon.

XIII

As the Council of Europe began to take shape, it seems that Churchill began to look more favourably on the idea of Britain joining the European group. Perhaps the "natural grouping" of the Commonwealth started looking considerably less "natural" to him when the organization of countries that were formerly part of the Empire started to include quite so many countries of the (rapidly diminishing) Empire not ruled by white people. In any case, he was unquestionably in favour of Britain joining the EEC later in his long life, which is no great advert for it. Nevertheless, it is Empire that brings in a further defining aspect of the line of British Prime Ministerial contributions we are considering here – at least until Blair. Successive British politicians still had Empire in view when Europe was in view. In the

passage from Wilson's speech cited above I omitted a sentence in which he had underlined the British view of the importance of a Europe to come that was not "narrow or inward-looking" by immediately recalling that "Britain has her own vital links through the Commonwealth, and in other ways, with other continents. So have other European countries". It was there in Heath's Brussels speech in 1972 when, while claiming not to be thinking of reviving the "Age of Imperialism", he nevertheless stressed "the lasting and creative effects of the spread of language and of culture, of commerce and of administration by people from Europe across land and sea to the other continents of the world". It was even more powerfully present in Thatcher's Bruges speech in 1988 too, where she spoke shamelessly of "how Europeans explored and colonised – and yes, without apology – civilised much of the world". And, in fact, it was still there in John Major's conference speech in 1992, when he claimed that "Britain has always grown and prospered when it has looked outwards – from the time of the First Elizabeth". The post-War British understanding of both itself and of Europe was forged in the history and memory of British and European discovery, colonialism and Empire.

Blair's speech to the European parliament in 2005 was not free of Imperial references, but the attempt was made there to mark a decisive break from the post-War British understanding of both itself and of Europe in that regard. He did not represent the Europe that "had dominated the world, colonised large parts of it, fought wars against each other for world supremacy" as something one might recall without more ado, still less without apology: if there was a time when European leaders had done so, he said, "those days were gone". Moreover, he did not speak up for "the idea of Europe, united and working together", as Churchill had, from the outside, but firmly from the inside, as "a passionate pro-European", confidently affirming his commitment to "Europe as a political project".

Not that he advocated ever greater powers for European institutions. Blair gave his speech in the wake of referenda "in two founding member states" in which the EU's attempt to establish a European Constitution had been "comprehensively rejected" by ordinary citizens. He was drily provocative in denying against no one that this was because "people studied the constitution and disagreed with its precise articles". It was perfectly clear that it was a question of perceived EU over-Europe overreach: people were simply opposed to the pretence or aim to establish the EU as a supranational State-like body, a European superstate. And Blair agreed with them: "people always see politics more clearly than us. Precisely because they are not daily obsessed with it". In Blair's view the real challenge for the EU was about the "renewal" and "modernisation" of its "policies" not the statification of its "institutions". Or again, the EU's future depended on the success of its practical efforts to "improve the lives of people", not the promotion of a distant "ideal" that very few Europeans found attractive. It was failing in the former, and Europe was weaker as a result. Thinking in this way was not, he insisted, "anti-Europe" but would help the EU "recover…support amongst the people", without which Europe could find that its citizens and nations had simply "defaulted to Euroscepticism".

XIV

The whole pacific point of the EU for Blair was to enhance and protect not reduce and replace the power of its Member States. As Blair had put it in a speech two years earlier in Warsaw, "the purpose of the European Union is to give us, the individual nations that form it, greater economic and political strength" (Blair Speech in Warsaw, 2003). An EU which enabled its members "to cooperate in our mutual interest" would ward off Euroscepticism by practically demonstrating that "in collective cooperation they increase individual strength" (Blair Speech to the European Parliament, 2005). His Warsaw speech was explicit about the EU this implied:

We want a union of nations, not a federal superstate, and that vision is shared by the majority of countries and people in Europe. A European superstate would neither have the efficacy or legitimacy to meet the global challenge… I reject the notion that the "true" Europe is to be found only in the European Commission and European Parliament. The European Union is a balance between the community and the intergovernmental. What we need to do is to strengthen Europe where necessary at every level; but the fount of authority lies in the free will of nations, collectively expressed… [We] need to root the European vision in the identity of the nations that make up Europe. (Blair, Speech in Warsaw, 2003)

The idea of enhancing the strength of individual nations through membership of a political union that limits their sovereignty is the central, and perhaps paradoxical, aim of a united Europe of states.

For Blair, the future of the EU lay not in the possibility of a new European federal government, not a new state-like "bureaucracy", but in improved co-ordination on policies that could make the EU the "champion of a global, outward-looking, competitive Europe". The classic "Europe of the Atlantic" figure of Europe is still clearly in view here, but now in the form of what one might call its post-Imperial Europeanization. It was, I think, a promising development, but in reality it was only nascently and weakly making its generational way in Britain. And Blair's pro-European speech to the European Parliament was greeted with jeers – by Britain's own UKIP MEPs. Increasingly hostile to what they saw as centralising forces in the EU overwhelming political freedom in the UK, the right in Britain saw the EU as a regulatory fetter to a self-confident and still globally voyaging Britain. Meanwhile, sections of the left framed the EU as a deregulating neoliberal trap, and part of a neoliberal hegemony increasingly becoming global. For that part of the left it was better for Britain to escape the EU altogether. Many UK citizens were simply feeling something that the lady from Cornwall

was feeling: Britain was losing itself not renewing itself, and not least in Europe. In a desperately ill-conceived bid by Prime Minister David Cameron to quell the divisions over Europe within his own party in a national way, a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU was held in 2016.

<div align="center">**XV**</div>

Prior to the referendum Cameron tried to renegotiate a "new settlement" on the UK's membership, and very nearly won what might have been a significant change not just for the UK but for the EU. The draft agreement between Cameron and President of the European Council, Donald Tusk presented on 2nd February 2016 included the following text:

<div align="center">SECTION C</div>

<div align="center">SOVEREIGNTY</div>

References in the Treaties and their preambles to the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe are primarily intended to signal that the Union's aim is to promote trust and understanding among peoples living in open and democratic societies sharing a common heritage of universal values. They are not an equivalent to the objective of political integration.

(https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21980/decision-new-settlementen16.pdf)

This text did not make it to the final agreement of 19th February 2016, the latter replacing it with the bizarre proposal that EU treaties be amended "so as to make it clear that the references to ever closer union do not apply to the United Kingdom". The draft text of "Section C" may not have anyway given Cameron what he needed to win the referendum, perhaps nothing would have given him that, but its replacement (with its interestingly truncated quotation of the beautiful vague words), the strangest of all UK EU opt-outs, was an unconvincing variation. In the end, the final agreement, with its truncated quotation and its

accompanying (very) long explication that "references to ever closer union" in the EU treaties in fact *have no legal significance whatsoever* whether they "apply" to a Member State or not, only served to confirm that the beautiful vague words on ever closer union were also jealously guarded words for those who wanted them, vaguely-if-not-legally, to still "signal" a particular vision of political integration, and not on the books, as the draft would have had it, as something definitively and explicitly "not equivalent" to that.

XVI

Defending Britain's membership of a Union that few Europeans could have thought especially inspiring in its existing condition or trajectory, the campaign for "Remain" in the UK was strongest in Scotland, where the leaders of all the major parties at least worked conspicuously together, and (like 1975) effectively marginalised "Leave" voices as retrograde and extremist. Many leading national politicians – perhaps especially the former Prime Ministers John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, along with the leaders and former leaders of the minority Liberal-Democrat and Green parties – put all their energy behind the pro-European cause. But, with the Conservative Party now divided from top to bottom, and a woefully inadequate present-but-not-participating leader of the Labour Party, a longstanding follower of Tony Benn with a consistently Eurosceptic past who refused point-blank to participate in a cross-party national campaign, the Remain voice in the UK did not compete well against the glittering promise to "take back control" that belonged to Leave supporters, and most of the national newspapers.

Ultimately, however, it is not clear that the result of the referendum was due to the Remain voice being so fragmented, or what beautiful vague words meant, or indeed how much it was specifically or coherently about assessments of the EU's actual role in British political life. Beyond the postures and impostures of political persuasion, the referendum gave an

opportunity, a rare opening, for feelings like those of the lady from Cornwall to find public expression. "She didn't tell me her name", Major confessed in his conference speech in 1992, but he was doubtless right to think that there was, articulated in that anonymous voice, "the anxieties of millions".

The referendum was their opportunity, and "Brexit" the all-but-meaningless name of their aggregated preferences. ("Brexit means Brexit" – or "'Brexit' means Brexit" – as Prime Minister Theresa May, who was the first to be tasked with near impossible task of picking up the pieces afterwards, came to put it.) While its meaning remains not one, its consequences far-reaching and unpredictable, there was, however, at least one ungainsayable result. As a result of the definitive referendum result, the hope that the UK might find a new post-imperial "Europe of the Atlantic" sense of itself as a large and influential European country, the hope for its post-Imperial Europeanization was, whether temporarily or permanently we do not know, overnight extinguished. It will not dominate even "for a while" – at least for a while. This is a problem for Britain. It may yet prove a problem for Europe.