

Becoming Europeans?

Attitudes, Behaviour, and
Socialization in the
European Parliament

Roger Scully

Department of International Politics
University of Wales, Aberystwyth



OXFORD
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DF

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Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York
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First published 2005

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

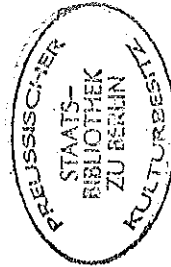
Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by

Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 0-19-928432-6 978-0-19-928432-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2



1 A 59502A

Preface and Acknowledgements

Nationalism has been and remains the most important political phenomenon of the last three centuries. For good and ill, nationalism has come to dominate the manner in which most of our world is politically organized, and it remains overwhelmingly the main legitimizing principle of states (and would-be states). The European Union (EU) is the most far-reaching attempt to address the biggest problems that nationalism generates. At one and the same time, the EU upholds the centrality of nation-states within Europe, yet also partially subverts that dominance by establishing and developing important institutions of governance at a level beyond the state. There can be few, if any, more compelling scholarly tasks than trying to understand the process of European integration and its consequences.

I have been studying the EU for some years. Being a part of the research community engaged in this task has often been an exciting intellectual experience. Recent years have seen great developments in our subject matter as the EU has experienced both the 'deepening' of integration and the 'widening' of its membership to a degree that would have been difficult to imagine even twenty years ago. And, partly in response to these external stimuli, there has been a considerable degree of intellectual development among the scholarly community. Those studying the EU have raised their game substantially, with increasingly sophisticated concepts, theories and methods being deployed in their analysis. The *sui generis* and rapidly changing nature of the EU places immense demands on those attempting to understand it. It is not, I think, unduly complacent to suggest that scholars have become increasingly competent in fulfilling this very difficult task.

Going native?

It seems to me immaterial, which party to vote for in the coming European elections, since as soon as they get elected they immediately 'go native' and see it as their job to represent the EU rather than their electors in this country. Would it be impertinent of me to suggest that they should promote the interests of this country, which are not always synonymous with those of the EU?¹

Even those candidates who claim to be Euro-sceptics will soon have it knocked out of them after a few weeks *sur le continent*. A Christian Democrat in Brussels told me this week: 'If you're a Tory involved in European politics and legislation you can't keep saying "I don't go along with any of this", because it gets too boring. All MEPs eventually go native.'²

An objective observer must conclude that a corporate spirit born of working together and the awareness of participating in an ambitious historic enterprise have created and maintained among the Communities' functionaries a prevailing European loyalty. (Spinelli 1996)

The notion that those who work in European institutions come to develop a more 'European' outlook is one of the most widespread conjectures made about the EU. Such ideas permeated normative writings pre-dating the beginnings of the EU. Many of the earliest advocates of European unity contended that working together in such a context would generate new, shared understandings among those participating.³ David Mitrany's functionalism similarly imagined cooperative efforts developing new levels of international understanding and altered political beliefs (in the direction of reducing mutual hostility).⁴ It is less clear whether similar notions were important for the EU's founders. But the first analysts who went to study the new European enterprise were more definite. The complex neofunctionalist synthesis of Ernst

¹ *The Times*, 7 June 1999, Letters Page.

² *The Guardian* (G2 section p. 5), 2 June 1999, Francis Wheen column.

³ For a review, see Rich (1996).

⁴ For instance: 'Each of us is in fact a bundle of functional loyalties; so that to build a world community upon such a conception is merely to extend and consolidate it also between national societies and groups' (Mitrany 1946: 204).

Haas included, as one of its core elements, a theory of socialization—the idea that interactions occurring within new contexts can lead to changed attitudes:

As the process of integration proceeds, it is assumed that values will undergo change, that interests will be redefined in terms of a regional, rather than a purely national orientation. (Haas 1968: 13)

Haas's very definition of the integration process encompassed attitude and loyalty shifts on the part of political actors: the ultimate achievement of the integration process, the development of a 'political community', would mean 'a condition in which specific groups and individuals show more loyalty to their central political institutions than to any other political authority, in a specific period of time and in a definable geographic space' (Haas 1968: 5). These transfers of loyalty would occur, initially at least, mainly among political and socio-economic elites: for many of the latter this would be prompted by the altered locus for provision of their functional needs, but for those within the newly established European institutions this process was seen as essentially a straightforward consequence of the development of shared values within the new environment.⁵

Haas's thinking on socialization overlapped marginally with that of Karl Deutsch, though the latter was concerned more with broader social interactions generating a 'bottom-up' process leading to the development of a sense of 'community' that included 'we-feeling' and 'mutual sympathy and loyalty' (e.g. Deutsch 1966) with regard to the basic idea that more frequent interactions can

⁵ Or, as Haas put it, for 'decision-makers in the new institutions', 'the heterogeneity of their origins may compel them to fashion doctrines and develop codes of conduct which represent an amalgamation of various national belief systems or group values' (Haas 1968: 19). O'Neill explains that 'The sociological consequences of the elite transactions which are the core of the neo-functional notion of political change were assumed to be both sufficiently cumulative and intrusive to erode over time any exclusive sense of national identity. In short, a cultural osmosis is assumed to be at work in the fabric of these European societies participating in the Community endeavour' (1996: 43).

alter attitudes and even promote elements of a common identity. Refinements of neofunctionalism by Leon Lindberg and Philippe Schmitter gave significant theoretical weight to socialization processes on participants, and the development of 'community-mindedness' among them (Lindberg 1963, 1965, 1966; Schmitter 1971: 864–5). For these early theorists, as Pollack (1998: 13) summarizes, 'Regarding the mechanism of attitude change among these elites, we find... references to socialization into a certain Community "code" as a result of prolonged experience of cooperation.'⁶

The idea that socialization processes within EU institutions tend to shape individuals' identities and attitudes in a more 'European' direction has, however, by no means remained unique to neofunctionalism. Such ideas have become prevalent in many different areas of writing about the EU. Mass media coverage of the EU is replete with references to those at the European level 'going native'—or expressing similar ideas in less pejorative terms.⁷ Much of the general contemporary academic literature on EU institutions and policymaking appears to assume that those participating in the institutions are subject to a significant degree of socialization into shared norms and values (e.g. Armstrong and Bulmer 1997; Cini 1996: 222–3; Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997: 235).⁸ And scholarly projects that build on the

⁶ Similarly, Corbett (1998: 48) points out that neo-functionalists saw those in the EP as 'developing habits of behaviour at the supranational level'. It should be noted that references to Pollack (1998) are to an unpublished conference paper made available through the internet; page references are to the version possessed by this author, and may differ from copies of the paper available elsewhere.

⁷ To give but two examples: a *Daily Telegraph* interview with Sir Leon (now Lord) Brittan after his completion of term as European Commissioner, observed that 'He insists that he travelled to what his countrymen increasingly regard as the heart of darkness without going native' (1 February 2000, Alice Thomason, p. 23). Another example, taken from press coverage after the Cardiff June 1998 European Council summit, is this: 'The idea of a super-council of deputy prime ministers raises more questions than it answers. There is a clear tendency for those personally engaged in Europe to go native', Martin Walker, 'Analysis: balancing act in the rise and rise of neo-nation states', *Guardian*, 17 June 1998.

⁸ Other work, though not making such blanket assumptions, still raises the issue of socialization as something to be considered: see, for example, Duff (1994).

intellectual tradition of social constructivism—which, after achieving prominence in International Relations theory (e.g. Wendt 1992, 1999; Hopf 2002) has recently been applied to analysis of the EU (e.g. Christiansen et al. 1999)—have developed not a dissimilar position, focusing on the 'mutually constitutive, non-instrumental bases of social interaction', and viewing the EU as a potential venue for 'complex social learning, a process whereby agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction' (Checkel 2001a: 556, 561). Constructivist-inspired work has tended to posit both 'macro' and 'micro' processes of attitude changes—the former concerning the ability of EU to reshape the preferences of member states, and the latter considering, as one possible micro-foundation of the former, the socialization of individual political actors operating in EU institutions.⁹

In summary, the belief that individuals are socialized within European institutions towards generally more pro-European attitudes is widely held. This is equally true for the more specific body of work on the EP. The question of socialization effects had been explored during the era of the non-elected Parliament, when the pertinent question was whether national MPs had their attitudes influenced by their part-time service in the assembly. Would their horizons be broadened, and their beliefs changed? Early work, particularly that of Kerr (1973), indicated that this was not, generally, what occurred (see later). The issue began to be raised once more with particular force, however, when direct election of MEPs finally happened in 1979, and the prospect loomed of a mostly full-time and perhaps power hungry, elected chamber. Marquand (1979: 70–7) argued that those elected with more sceptical views about integration would find it difficult to resist the Euro-federalist ethos that would dominate the Parliament. Meanwhile, Cotta suggested that, along with a general inclination in favour of a closer European union, a more specific aspiration would develop among MEPs—towards making

⁹ On the latter point, see Checkel (2001a); Jachtenfuchs et al. (1998: 471).

Such statements are rendered plausible by being broadly consistent with traditions of thinking in several academic disciplines. The notion of encounters with new organizational surroundings provoking attitudinal, behavioural and cognitive changes is widely regarded as one of the most strongly supported findings within the field of organizational psychology (for reviews, see Falcione and Wilson 1988; Feldman 1981; Louis 1989; Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992). As van Maanen and Schein (1979: 210) observe, 'research has yet to discover a work setting which leaves people unmarked by their participation'. Within social psychology, Herbert Kelman has emphasized how contact between individuals of disparate backgrounds and views can prompt sometimes dramatic reappraisals of the images held of those from other countries, and how through working together,

individuals and groups from different countries become committed to international cooperation not as an abstract value, but as a concrete vehicle... They become involved in a network of interdependent individuals and groups, without references to national differences, and are likely to develop a sense of loyalty to it. (Kelman 1966: 575)¹⁴

that Kerr's findings offer little support to a socialization hypothesis. In other work, Ovey, who draws from elements of the 'new governance' school in seeking to understand MEPs' work of the parliament, is also fairly definitive: 'The formal and informal rules which guide preferences and behaviour are discovered upon entry to an institution, are transmitted through socialisation and are embedded in normative orders... The institution thus provides "the lenses through which actors view the world"' (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: 13), exerts pressure on values and preferences, shapes ideas and attitudes and accordingly leads to an identification with the institution' (Ovey 2000: 4). Note that institutional identification is not put forward as a hypothesis, but is stated more or less definitively. The same author later suggests 'The European Parliament influences MEPs and affects their identities' (Ovey 2000: 7) and states that 'MEPs respond to the institutional framework of the EP, embedded in the norms of the political system of the EU, by unintentionally becoming detached from national parties' (Ovey 2000: 8). Although supporting citations are made to the general institutional literature (March and Olsen 1989; Powell and DiMaggio 1991), no actual empirical evidence is deployed by Ovey in support of these contentions.

¹⁴ For a study that applies some of Kelman's ideas to the EU, see Hewstone (1985). A more general review of the psychology of attitude changes is given in Zimbardo and Leippe (1991).

In a roughly analogous manner, a long-standing tradition in sociology has emphasized the power of 'institutional cultures' within organizations to shape the views of members: this tradition has been manifested notably, and recently, in the sociological variant of the 'new institutionalism'. In this school, the impact of institutional socialization processes on individuals appears sometimes to be not only powerful, but also more or less inevitable (e.g. March and Olsen 1989: 22, 48, 160; Jepperson 1991: 146; Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 27). Institutions themselves are seen as 'normative vessels': carriers of an institutional culture that encompasses not only knowledge, but also beliefs and values.

Moving rather closer to the EP, the political science literature on legislatures and parliaments also includes a significant body of research appearing to demonstrate the ability of parliamentary chambers to inculcate members into core values, beliefs, and practices. Fenno's classic work (1962, 1973) on the Appropriations Committee in the US House of Representatives showed experienced members exerting considerable pressure upon neophyte legislators to at least comply with established practices, if not support them. Other scholars of the US Congress have examined the issue both from the point of view of the chamber—how the legislature must 'transmit its norms to legislative newcomers in order to insure the continued, unaltered operation of the institution' (Asher 1973: 499)—and from that of the new Member of Congress 'They must learn to make sense of this new world and understand their place in it—in short, become socialized in a new institution and role' (Fiellen 1962: 80; see also Bell and Price 1975; Matthews 1960).¹⁵ The dependent variables examined in this body of work vary considerably across different types of attitudes and behaviours. In some instances, the emphasis is on learning particular

¹⁵ In a similar manner, Hagle (1993), writing about the experiences of new members of the US Supreme Court, supports the idea that new members of political institutions undergo periods of learning and socialization: rather like much of the organizational psychology work mentioned below, Hagle sees new entrants undergoing an initial period of 'bewilderment and disorientation'.

greater support for international cooperation observed among delegates to international fora may well not come about because of socialization processes, but follows from 'self-selection', that is those who volunteer for service in international institutions being disproportionately supportive of international cooperation before such experiences. Gareau's study (1978) of Senators and Representatives from the US Congress who served as UN delegates was consistent with this self-selection explanation; these findings were further endorsed by Riggs and Mykletun (1979). The fascinating anthropological work on EC officials reported by Bellier (1997: 104) also suggests that self-selection is important in shaping attitudes.

The most systematic, theoretically rigorous and ambitious work conducted in this area in recent years has been that by Jeffrey Checkel (2001a, 2001b, 2003). Checkel sees 'going native' effects as being a consequence of the process of 'argumentative persuasion', through which people can come to altered views, and even changed understandings of core interests.¹⁹ Showing a degree of rigour missing in much other work, Checkel also develops a set of specific hypotheses concerning when argumentative persuasion is likely to be more (or less) effective. However, this work has still been subject to severe theoretical criticism. Not only are some of Checkel's hypotheses difficult to operationalize in a falsifiable manner; in addition, Checkel regards his hypotheses as following directly from social-constructivist metatheoretical premises, and yet Andrew Moravcsik has shown that equivalent notions to most or all of his hypotheses could well be derived from mainstream rationalist research traditions (Moravcsik 2001). But most importantly for our current purposes, in his study of committees in the Council of Europe, Checkel finds only very weak

¹⁹ As with other social constructivist authors working in this area (e.g. Risse 2000) Checkel's emphasis on persuasion draws on the broader ideas of Jürgen Habermas, specifically Habermas's notions of 'Communicative Action'.

and partial evidence of socialization effects actually occurring (Checkel 2003: 224–5).

Three studies of EU institutions have been among those few claiming some support for a socialization hypothesis. However, these works have all suffered from methodological defects that render any supportive conclusions dubious.²⁰ Bellier (1997) examines 'Conversion from the National into the European' among EC officials. However, hard evidence of attitudinal changes in such a direction (beyond self-reports by officials) is conspicuously lacking. Similar observations can be made about the study of Lewis (1998): examining officials in the EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), he discusses 'Supranationality as a Shared Value' (pp. 489–90), but again is entirely dependent on self-reports of attitudinal changes, rather than any independent measure. Trondal's work (2001) examines officials participating in Commission Expert Committees and Working Parties. However, even the modest 'enactment of supranational allegiances' (2001: 15) claimed is based on officials' perceptions of an *esprit de corps* in committees, and of the EC being an independent supranational actor. Thus, Trondal's evidence is not even that of self-reports, but reports of the perceptions of others' attitudes. The more methodologically sound work of Hooghe (1999a, 1999b, 2001) on officials in the EC, which conceptualizes and seeks to measure 'socialization' with far greater clarity and care, than is done in most other work, finds little sign of significant attitudinal changes that can be linked to socialization at the EU level. Specifically, while Hooghe suggests that socialization is often important for shaping attitudes, it is more commonly pre-entry socialization outside the EC that seems to matter. She thus concludes:

The widespread assumption that the Commission is a greenhouse for supranationalism has little basis in reality. It is *not* the case that the longer

²⁰ Pollack (1998) provides an extended discussion of methodological problems in studies of other International Organizations.

undoubtedly an interesting and important question, goes well beyond any inferences that can reasonably be drawn from the evidence presented in this book;³ the implications of the findings here for constructivist ideas about the specific process of European integration are considered below.

So what? The implications

The European Parliament and its members

As discussed in Chapter 1, the EP has in recent years become an increasingly important part of the institutional structures of the EU, and it is therefore more important now than ever that scholars develop their knowledge of the chamber. While much of this book has developed an essentially negative argument—demonstrating what the Parliament is *not*, in terms of the impact of service in the

³ To state this does not mean that I have no views on the value of social constructivism to the study of the EU. The recent overview by Risse (2004) provides not only an excellent introduction to the area, but also suggests a number of areas in which constructivist insights may be particularly important. Risse thereby outlines a potentially fruitful research agenda. Hitherto, applications of social constructivism to the EU have suffered from a number of problems, including: a lack of clarity and precision in some basic statements of the perspective (e.g. Christiansen et al. 1999); a lack of specificity and falsifiability in the truth claims advanced (Moravcsik 2001); and a tendency to present relatively unoriginal ideas in the terminology of social constructivism as new insights (e.g. Giarbo 1999). But all of these problems are, in principle, resolvable, and do not suggest any *fundamental* reasons why social constructivist insights may not contribute much to understanding much about the EU. This is not to deny that other hypotheses that have their inspiration in social constructivist theoretical insights will fail to win empirical support. It is almost certain that this will happen. But in such situations, it is to be hoped that social constructivists do not follow the tendency of some rationalists to treat their paradigm in a quasi-theological manner, as a position to be defended against all contrary evidence, and thus tend to ignore negative findings or to concoct ad hoc ways to 'explain them away' (see Green and Shapiro 1994; Friedman 1996). Rather, it is to be hoped that serious attempts will be made to consider the reasons for the negative findings, and their theoretical implications. The world has recently witnessed some of the drawbacks of 'faith-based intelligence policy'; faith-based social science has little more to commend it.

institution on its membership—such an argument should also carry some positive implications. So what has this study told us about the EP and about those who serve within it? At least two significant points need to be made.

The first important implication of this study for the EP arises out of addressing a question that is immediately raised by the major empirical findings of this study. That question is, 'if socialization processes do not account for the strongly pro-integration position that has typically been characteristic of the EP, then what does?' This is an important and entirely reasonable query to raise. The answer is also important in terms of its implications for the EP. It is not, however, a particularly original answer: rather, it is very similar to that offered by those (such as Ernst Haas and Henry Kerr) who conducted the first studies of the EP in the years before direct elections. Put simply, if we wish to understand why most members of the EP have been strongly pro-integration, the explanation lies, not in what happens to MEPs after they enter the Parliament, but on what occurs beforehand.

A significant part of this story in the past was probably—as Kerr's work on the non-elected EP found was the case—the selection of more pro-European individuals to serve in the chamber. And such selection effects may plausibly have continued into the elected era, whether operating through the mechanism of self-selection with disproportionate numbers of more pro-integration individuals offering themselves as candidates, or at a later stage in the choice of representatives (through pro-integrationists being more likely to be selected as candidates, and/or more likely to get elected). However, the evidence of the first half of Chapter 5 indicates strongly that even if selection effects have been manifest in the past, they are largely insignificant now: MEPs' views on integration are virtually indistinguishable from their counterparts in national parliaments. Nor should we be surprised that European Parliamentarians have very similar views on integration as national parliamentarians, because both groups emerge (for the most part) out of the same parties.