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Article:

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Abstract

The European Parliament election of 2014 generated much interest on account of the rise of a whole array of populist 'anti-EU' parties. This was widely reported in the British media but did that coverage give British news consumers an insight into the character of these parties, where they stood in relation to one another and where they stood in relation to Britain's own UKIP? This paper sets out to examine not only how much coverage there was in the British media about European political parties but also whether that coverage enabled citizens to get a sense of the political positioning of populist anti-EU parties. These questions touch on the extent to which British media reflect and comment on populist parties, European affairs and hence on the Europeanization of the news agenda.

Introduction

In this country (Britain)… the European-ness of the European election … has been minimal. Yes, the election campaign in Britain has some echoes of debates across the Channel, but the campaign here has in the main been resolutely parochial and trivial. (Guardian, 2014a)

The comments, above, from the Guardian during the European Parliament elections of 2014 (henceforth EP2014) reflect the ways in which European Parliament elections continue to be overshadowed by domestic issues and concerns. This should come as no surprise to students of such elections since it has long been acknowledged that these elections are regarded as less important than national elections, and so something of 'second-order' elections in which 'there is less at stake', (Reif and Schmitt, 1980:9) participation is generally low, smaller parties (and protest parties, presumably) have better prospects and governing parties usually suffer losses.

More recently, Stromback et al. have also argued that EP elections are hybrid in character: that 'they are both national and European at the same time.' (2011:5) They go on to observe that political communication during such elections is about

'European political communication in two intertwined respects: they are for a European body, and they take place across European countries under the influence and constraints of partly similar, partly different factors at individual, institutional and systemic levels of analysis.' (2011:5. Emphasis in original.)

The challenges of studying election contests that involve national and European elements to varying degrees – be they individual, institutional or systemic – is made even greater because it is difficult to determine those factors that give such elections a specific European character. The fact that these elections take place within a similar time-period or involve elections to the same supra-national body does not, in itself, make them either European elections or about European issues. They are European in

name only. As with discussions about the 'Europeanization' of news agendas, there has always been a question about how matters of a European character and import are represented – if at all – in what are still predominantly national media.

In order to explore some of these issues, this paper sets out to examine a number of key questions that emerge from a study of EP2014 in Britain and the media coverage of the European dimensions of these contests. One set of questions focuses on the extent to which the British press and television news media covered political parties (their positions, membership, issues) contesting elections in other European Member States. Did they, for example, report on Golden Dawn or the Christian Democrats in Germany (CDU)? Answering this question would enable us to comment on the 'visibility (or quantity of coverage)' (de Vreese et al., 2006:479) of the electoral contests taking place outside Britain.

The second set of questions derives from the analysis of the content of the above news items. If a news item reports on the campaigning of the Front National in France, how does it describe that political party and its political positioning in French and in European politics? Moreover, how does it describe it in relation to allegedly similar parties in the Britain, principally UKIP, so that British audiences are able to observe and articulate similarities and differences across the European political landscape, i.e. the European-ness of the elections and the agendas?

In posing this question, we touch on a third area of inquiry, namely, whether the labelling of the many parties that were challenging the status quo as 'right-wing kooks' (Mail,2014b) or the 'EU's enemies' riding a 'wave of discontent' (Guardian, 2014b) was a way of discrediting alternative populist anti-immigration, nationalistic, anti-elite parties (See Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014) for a discussion of the slippery concept of populism) Drawing on their analysis of Syriza, Stavrakakis and

Katsambekis have suggested that such coverage proliferates 'new types of "anti-populist" discourses aiming at the discursive policing and the political marginalization of emerging protest movements against the politics of austerity', amongst other things. (2014:134) In effect, the coverage delegitimizes protest and populist parties.

These questions, as we shall see, not only touch on the extent to which British media reflect and comment on European affairs and hence of the Europeanization of EP2014 but also on the ways in which that coverage highlighted a European political crisis and, at the same time, offered a particular lens through which that crisis was to be grasped.

Before proceeding to a discussion of these questions, we explore the coverage of EP2014 in a range of British media.[i]

Domestic media, domestic agendas and the question of Europeanization

The fact that EP2014 took place across twenty-eight countries, including Britain, does not necessarily make it of greater domestic interest. Nor does it make it more relevant to a domestic audience. Why this is the case has been the subject of extensive discussion over the last two decades. Scholars have puzzled over the existence, or emergence, of the 'European public sphere' wherein the media systems might possibly disseminate 'a European news agenda' (see, for example, Schlesinger, 1999) and/ or the extent to which this has come about (or not). (For a discussion of this see Papathanassopolus and Negrine, 2011, Ch. 7) At the core of much of this work lies the question of whether or not we are likely to see, in Keonig et al.'s words, a 'transcendence… of exclusively national identities'. (Koenig et al., 2006:151)

Some of the discussions relating to the 'Europeanization' of media discourses suggest that it is possible to conceive of domestic issues taking on a European dimension when these are placed in the European context or, conversely, European issues could become domesticated when they are placed in a national context. In either case, issues could move from one level or agenda to another. This then introduces the possibility that during European elections, all electioneering at national levels would focus on a similar set of issues that, for the sake of argument, we could call European issues. Unless such a sense of a common focus can be achieved, European Parliament elections at national level would be no more than 'second-order' elections and European in name only. This is, in fact, Marsh's verdict on the 2009 EP election: Europe, he argued, continues not to be a 'primary concern within party competition' and 'there is little evidence that European elections are fought on a terrain that is markedly different from that on which domestic competition takes place.' (2011:309) Such elections are, or can become, no more than rehearsal for national elections.

One obvious obstacle to a more Europeanized agenda or perspective is that much of the activity surrounding European media and coverage is, from the start, determined by 'the national journalism culture existing and by the particularities of the channel, the medium and the service that an individual or a group is working for.' (Kopper, 2007:9. Emphasis added. See also Stromback et al., 2011) Inevitably, this means that domestic considerations help explain how events in Europe are covered in domestic national media. It is not that there is no coverage of European matters – much research has shown that there are varying amounts across different countries, different media and different issues and actors. (See, for example, Trenz, 2004; Gavin, 2007) – but that those events are seen through a domestic media lens. Similar

findings apply in the context of European Parliament elections: although the elections are visible in domestic media – in fact, their visibility has increased between 2004 and 2009 - and they are frequently discussed, variations across member states are common. (For a discussion of some of these issues, see Schuck et al., 2011, Meyer, 2005, Brüggemann and von Königslöw, 2009, Slaata, 2006)

Although the coverage of European Parliament elections continues to be overshadowed by domestic media and politics, this does not preclude the possibility that the news media would amplify what the Guardian referred to as 'echoes of debates across the Channel' (Guardian 2014a). While this may not necessarily be equivalent to the full Europeanization of an agenda, it is at least suggestive of the possibility that domestic media systems would reflect on what was happening in other member states and draw parallels with what was happening domestically (and/ or vice versa). In this way, media would be informing news consumers about what was happening in other member states – a fundamental responsibility of media - and, possibly, enabling them to make appropriate and informed decisions. But this responsibility goes beyond providing lists, say, of political parties, without some context that would enable news consumers to comprehend the political struggles taking place across the EU. In the context of EP2014 and given the large number of parties contesting seats, the question to pose relate much more to the different varieties of 'European Unions' that were being proposed and to the understanding of these as a way of charting particular futures. Furthermore, and this was certainly a possibility, choices at national level could impact at a European level: a vote for UKIP in Britain might conceivably give rise to a powerful Right-wing block across Europe as seats won are agglomerated. This suggests that how political parties were being represented in British media was important and was of relevance to British

voters.

How the British media dealt with these challenges is the subject of the next two parts of this paper.

British media coverage of EP2014

If evidence were needed to help us pass judgement on the question of the Europeanization of the media agenda, it would come from a study of the way in which the debate involving the candidates for the EU Presidency was covered. This event was more than just symbolic: the citizens of Europe could come together to witness in real-time the five leading candidates for the EU Presidency putting forward their visions for the future of the Union. (Hobolt, 2014) But, and unlike domestic leaders' debates, this event attracted little attention: it was streamed on the BBC Parliament Channel – very much a niche channel with miniscule audiences - and it featured only once on a national broadcast news service – on the BBC – and once in the newspapers (the Guardian) with two other references to the presidency but not the debates (once in the Guardian and once in the Daily Telegraph). Did the event have no intrinsic importance? Was it simply deemed by the British media to be of little importance? Irrespective of the explanation preferred, the outcome was the same: little coverage for a unifying European level electoral event.

The little coverage given to the Presidential debates, however, also confirms the importance attached to domestic news values and domestic political actors. In EP 2014, the British media was pre-occupied with the popularity of Nigel Farage and his UKIP party and the challenge this posed to the status quo. This was the lens through which the European Parliament elections featured in British media. Often, as we shall

see, when European parties were referenced in the media, UKIP was also mentioned as part of the challenge to the EU.

To understand why this was so it is useful to consider briefly the political context. As with EP2009, the EP2014 in Britain was essentially about domestic issues (See, for example Schuck et al., 2011); more so because Farage and UKIP posed a real threat to the supremacy of the main parties. Throughout 2014, opinion polls placed them either slightly behind or ahead of the two main contenders, Labour or the Conservatives. (YouGov 2014) Furthermore, as UKIP's anti-EU stance prominently featured the issue of migration into Britain from within the EU because of the 'open borders', a considerable amount of news coverage inevitably focused on the subject of immigration and, in turn, on whether or not UKIP's stance on immigration was racist. (Daily Mail, 2014a, The Sun, 2014a) Put differently, from the moment Farage/ UKIP launched its campaign on April 22nd 2014 with an array of controversial anti-EU and anti-immigration posters, it dominated European election news coverage with other political actors reacting to its lead.

A very simple way to illustrate this is by looking at a 'wordcloud' – a simple representation of word frequency with the size of the font representing frequency - of the coverage in different media. (Figures 1 and 2) This shows not only Farage and UKIP dominating coverage but also the prominence of both the immigration and racism issues. It also shows the minimal presence of other political actors. Put simply, all the news media were focused on the potential success of a popular/ populist, possibly racist, anti-immigration, anti-EU party that drew support from those 'left behind' (Goodwin and Ford, 2014) and disaffected from contemporary political arrangements.

Figures 1, 2 about here.

The similarities with what was taking place across the Channel were not lost on

journalists. *Channel Four's* Matt Frei drew the threads together in this way:

Whether it's here in Denmark, in Sweden, Holland, France, Italy, Spain, Greece,

Britain and even Germany, there are national variations on a common European

theme and that is rising popular anger against established politics. Against the

institutions of the EU. Against immigration. Against globalisation. In fact

against the very spirit on which the EU was founded. And wherever you look it

is the national mainstream parties that are playing catch-up with the popular

mood. (Frei, 2014a)

In this representation of events, what was happening in the UK was not dissimilar

to what was happening in other EU countries, and vice versa. The 'rising popular

anger' was truly a European issue about disengagement and disillusion, populism and

challenges to the status quo. UKIP was, in this narrative, not dissimilar to parties in

other European states. But was this an accurate representation of UKIP and of what

was happening elsewhere? How would British journalists explain matters in a way

that would make them comprehensible within a domestic context? How would they

discuss meaningfully the 'national variations' and their significance for domestic and

European politics?

To explore these questions in depth, we examined only those items (news,

features, editorials, comment) published or broadcast in Britain across a range of

news media that featured political actors and political parties engaged in electoral

contests in a different EU member state. In other words, we examined those items that

mentioned a specific political party or political actor contesting EP2014 outside of

Britain. Items that did not mention parties or actors were not included in this analysis because they were too general in their content.

Analyzing these items in depth would allow us not only to comment on the visibility of other European political parties (mentions, descriptions, spokespeople) but also on the ways in which they were positioned – ideologically, tactically - in relation to domestic parties and actors. We would be able to explore, for example, how UKIP was discussed in relation to France's Front National or Wilders' Freedom Party. In this way, we would be able to comment on the ways in which the European electoral contests were understood comparatively and the generalizability of the theme of the rise of the 'EU's enemies'.

How these aims were pursued is discussed in the next section.

British media look at Europe, and sometimes look back

Our analysis draws on items selected from five newspapers: the Guardian, Daily Telegraph–the largest circulation liberal and conservative papers-Daily Mail, Sun and Daily Mirror, and three evening television news programmes: BBC1, ITV and Channel Four. All items – news, features, comment, or editorial – that discussed, rather than merely referenced, the European Parliament election during the period from 22nd April 2014 through to polling day on 22nd May 2014 were selected for analysis.[ii]. Items that merely referenced the elections, e.g. the elections are being held next week, were excluded from the selection and analysis. A total of 197 newspaper items and 42 television news items[iii] were selected for analysis. (Table 1) The number of items coded – on average one or more items per day over the four weeks of the campaign even for the tabloid press – possibly reflects the prominence of the controversial issue of immigration during the campaign (and in British politics in

general) and the heavily contested nature of the campaign itself. This latter point is in line with Schuck et al.'s (2011) findings from their study of the 2009 elections.

Table 1 about here

Despite the visibility of EP2014, at least as measured by frequency of news items across the four week period prior to election day, named political parties and actors contesting the elections in a different member state were only found in 27 newspaper items (out of a total of 197, or 14%) and in 8 broadcast news items (out of a total of 42, or 19%). Perhaps not surprisingly, the more 'serious' the news medium, the greater the number of items. The tabloid Sun and Mirror did not carry any of these items and the commercial television service, ITV, carried only one. (Table 1) Findings such as these are broadly in line with other work that shows up differences between tabloid and non-tabloid British media coverage of political, social and economic issues. (See, for example, de Vreese et al., 2006) But there are also differences between news media that can be dramatic and significant: the 3 items in the Mail ran to just over 1100 words[iv], the 9 items in the Telegraph to around 5000 but in the Guardian the 15 items ran to around 14,000 words. When the 8 broadcast news items are transcribed, they add up to a total of between 5,000 and 5,200 words. We would therefore expect to find the Guardian offering considerably more information about EP2014 than any of the other media analysed.

In order to explore in greater depth the visibility of non-British political actors (parties, politicians) in media coverage and how these were discussed in isolation or in relation to Britain's own anti-EU party, UKIP, each media outlet's output will be examined separately, at least initially. One reason for taking this route as opposed to a more formal and systematic analysis (whether framing or quantitative content

analysis) is that there are, overall, relatively few items that focus on similar actors or issues. For example, Berlusconi and his Forza Italia party featured in only four items (three in the Daily Telegraph and one in the Guardian) but only one of these was similar across both papers. This dealt with his medical condition. Similarly, the three items in the Mail were principally about Le Pen and the Front National although one comment piece did list other political actors (Hungary's Jobbik, Greece's Golden Dawn and Grillo's Five Star Movement) in one small paragraph. (Mail, 2014b) This suggests that when it comes to looking at the coverage of non-British European parties contesting the EP2014, one is reduced to examining only two newspapers and a very small number of items in which some comparative information is provided.

As already noted, the Mail presented the least information to its readers but a paucity of references does not mean that descriptions of these parties were not also offered. Those that were offered were in line with the way in which the elections were contextualised in the newspaper (and television) coverage as a whole, namely, the rise of the far-Right across Europe and the challenge to the status quo. Thus, France's Front National, now 'allegedly modernised… moving it away from its racist and anti-Semitic roots' (Mail 2014c), (was it no longer racist and anti-Semitic?), and Hungary's Jobbik, Greece's Golden Dawn and Beppe Grillo's were labelled the 'right-wing kooks' (Mail, 2014b) that were likely to dominate the European Parliament. UKIP is absent from these items so its position in relation to these other parties remains obscure.

It is in the nine Telegraph and 15 Guardian items (7 news and 2 comment pieces, and 8 news and 7 comment and editorial pieces respectively) that one finds more extensive coverage. Nevertheless, the way the elections were contextualized differs little from that found in the Mail as can be seen in this Guardian headline: 'EU's

enemies from left and right ride high on wave of discontent: EU braced for an influx of rebels after May elections: Anti-Brussels parties: The big vote.' (Guardian, 2014b)

While these two newspapers do mention Le Pen's Front National in their coverage – as did the Mail – they do also include a wider range of other actors and parties. France's Front National is mentioned most often when both papers are considered together, followed by Greece's Syriza and Italy's Berlusconi and Wilders' Freedom Party. Many other parties are simply listed (sometimes in more than one item): SPD, FDP, Merkel's CDU, Slovak National Party, Danish People's Party, European People's Party Socialists and Democrats, European Freedom Alliance, New Democracy, Die Linke, Feminists Initiative, Finns' Party, Austrian Social Democrats, French Socialists, Denmark's Liberal Alliance, AfD, Vlaams Belang, Golden Dawn, the Pirates, Die Linke, Feminists pour une Europe Solidaire, and the Independents.

Sometimes party spokespeople are also quoted: Halla-aho for the Finns' Party, Tsipras for Syriza (twice in the Guardian), Wilders on behalf of his Freedom Party (twice in the Telegraph but not at all in the Guardian), Berlusconi (twice in the Telegraph); other party spokespeople remain silent: National Front's Le Pen, Golden Dawn, Lega Nord, Swedish Democrats, Jobbik are some parties whose voices are silent.

The list of parties is long because the newspaper items in which they are mentioned are long, especially in the Guardian. Lists, however, are not necessarily helpful when it comes to understanding the locations–ideologically, tactically–of different political parties and they do not touch on the related question regarding how those parties were described to British readers. To get a better understanding of this we need to recall two features of the EP2014 news coverage.

One was the focus on Farage and UKIP as the anti-EU, anti-EU immigration party; the other was the troubled question of whether or not it was a racist party. Linked to this was the question of whether or not this was part of the rise of populist anti-politics parties across the political landscape challenging the established order: the 'motley crew of anti-EU nationalists' (Telegraph 2014f) challenging the status quo or the Guardian's 'EU's enemies from left and right" (Guardian 2014g). In other words, how was UKIP related to these convulsions or vice versa?

General and negative labels–'kooks' or 'enemies'–aside, it is difficult to work out where similarities and the differences between parties and actors actually lie when there is no comparative element on offer. Was the perception of a common European theme of popular anger an extrapolation of domestic national forces at play (or, conversely, of European forces at play in the UK)? Was it based on a view that things looked similar when, in fact, they could differ markedly? As a candidate from Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is quoted in the Guardian 'We're not all anti-EU, just anti this particular EU': (Guardian, 2014b) There was a danger, then, in lumping everyone into the same category and, in so doing, not providing readers with indications of significant differences. For example, Daily Mail readers would not be able to work out how UKIP differed from the Front National now that the latter had, 'allegedly modernised' itself. (Daily Mail, 2014c) Both were 'anti-EU' but were both for exiting from the EU? Both were anti-immigration and nationalistic, so why could they not work together? Furthermore, how did UKIP fit in with the list of 'the right-wing kooks' it provided its readers?

As will become clear, being 'anti-EU' could mean many things and it was not a particularly helpful way to group parties together. To take another example: UKIP is an anti-EU, anti-establishment party but so is Syriza ('anti-establishment, anti-EU,

anti-austerity' (Guardian, 2014b)) ('anti-austerity on steroids' according to the Telegraph (2014a) but Syriza is of the populist left (Guardian, 2014c). The more nuanced and the fuller the descriptions, including perhaps labels or descriptions along the easiest comparison axis of all, the Left vs. Right, the easier it was for comparisons to be made; the more shortened the description or label, the more difficult to identify differences.

If British newspaper readers wished to make sense of what was going on in other member states, one easy way of doing so could have been to use UKIP and its political position as a guide. In this way, British citizens would have, at the very least, some sort of yardstick with which to make sense of events across Europe. But only in 14 out of the 27 news items identified for this particular analysis can one find any text that, in one way or another, places UKIP in the context of the other European parties contesting power. In one of these, in the Guardian, the comparison relates to the gender balance within different parties rather than to other matters such as positions re-the Euro or immigration. This means that in only 13 out of the total of 197 items (7% of items) relating to the elections in Britain does one get a sense of where UKIP stands in relation to the other parties that were labelled as the 'EU's enemies from left and right'. (Guardian, 2014b) Of these 13, 9 are in the Guardian, and 4 are in the Telegraph. This means that a large number of readers of newspapers – Mail, Sun and Mirror readers – were not presented with an opportunity to contemplate the positions of the political parties that could 'change the political map of Europe.' (Telegraph, 2014b)

The Telegraph offers perhaps the fewest opportunities to contextualise UKIP within the constellations of parties. Two of its 4 items are drawn from an interview with Geert Wilders and both put forward the possibility of an anti-EU bloc that

includes Wilders' Freedom Party, Le Pen's (recently modernised and detoxified) FN and Farage's UKIP. It is worth noting, below, the ambivalent positioning of UKIP vis-à-vis Wilders' party and the nuanced labelling of Wilders' Freedom Party.

Mr Wilders' party is strongly critical of Islam and has been accused of links to racist far-Right groups. Mr Farage has rejected any deal with Mrs Le Pen's party, which includes members who argue that the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews did not take place. Mr Farage says such views make it impossible for Ukip - which denies being racist - to work with her party. (Telegraph, 2014c. Emphasis added.) Mr Farage, who has not ruled out working with the Dutch Freedom Party despite Mr Wilders's controversial views on Islam and immigrants, has stayed out of the alliance. He said he refused to join because the Front National had "anti-Semitism and general prejudice in its DNA". But Mr Wilders is convinced that he can persuade Mr Farage to overcome his distaste for the Front National after voting finishes on May 25. (Telegraph, 2014d. Emphasis added.)

Given that UKIP was criticised by many for being racist and that it did have to expel members who expressed homophobic and racist views, (Daily Mail, 2014d) the issue of difference perhaps could have been clarified. It may, after all, be more a matter of political tactics and expediency than ideological purity, something the paper hints at: 'The new grouping will pose a major political problem for Mr Farage because it threatens to break up his current Europe of Freedom and Democracy bloc, which has the Slovaks, Italians and Belgians as members, with the loss of influence and around £1million a year in funding. (Telegraph, 2014d)

Throughout the Telegraph's coverage – excluding the three items on Berlusconi - the themes that are elaborated concern the likelihood that UKIP might join, or not, a right-wing Eurosceptic alliance alongside others, including the Front National,

Wilders' Freedom Party, the True Finns and the Danish People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party, Belgian Vlaams Belang, Italian Lega Nord, Slovak National Party and Sweden Democrats. Apart from Farage's distaste for the Front National, other obstacles are not explored. When the Telegraph includes the Alternative für Deutschland party (AfD) in its roster of 'eurosceptics' and quotes its spokesperson saying that it 'will not work with Nigel Farage … because of the UK Independence Party's anti-immigration policies…' (Telegraph, 2014e)**, the absence of explanation becomes more problematic. Are they all anti-immigration, anti-EU – AfD seems not to be? Are they all racists – the Freedom Party, the Front National and UKIP all swim in the same waters – but they seem to deny it? The questions about differences continue to linger.**

It is in the 9 items in the Guardian that one can find the most extensive discussions of different positions and a long list of parties – not surprising given the number of words in the selected pieces – although one can still find the labels: Strache's Freedom Party in Austria is 'far-right anti-EU, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim'; (Guardian, 2014d), Grillo's 5Star is 'anti-Brussels mavericks'; Wilders' party is 'Muslim-baiting'; Golden Dawn 'neo-Nazi' and so on. In one 3392 word item starting on Page 1 of the paper, the constellations of parties is discussed alongside UKIP's position within them:

'Ukip, for instance, wants Britain to simply walk away from the EU, regardless; the FN and PVV would go the same way given half a chance; AfD and the Finns see their own countries' exits as unthinkable'…

On immigration, though 'hardline nationalists such as Italy's Lega Nord, Austria's FPO, Vlaams Belang in Belgium and the Swedish Democrats may' join the FN and Wilders, others like UKIP keep their distance.

… While all stress "flexibility" and willingness to co-operate with anyone who shares a specific view, few can imagine Syriza ever sitting down with the FPO, AfD with Jobbik, or Ukip with the PVV'. (Guardian, 2014b)

This was all part of the 'zoological' array of 'anti' parties mix analogy used by Timothy Garton Ash to provide some insight into European right <u>and</u> left wing populism and anti-EU sentiments, (Guardian, 2014e) as well as the distinctiveness of an election 'that reflects national as well as European preoccupations'. (Guardian, 2014f)

The key point to take away from this analysis is that only a few of all British newspapers readers – the Guardian sells fewer than 200,000 copies per day though its online readership is internationally very large, the Telegraph sells just under 500,000 per day - would have been presented with an opportunity to even consider the make-up of parties contesting power in Europe and fewer would have been given even an inkling of how they differed from one another and from UKIP.

Did television news provide a fuller account of the turmoil across Europe? The contextualization of the elections across the member states differed little from what one could find in the newspapers. This is a comment within Mates' report for ITV:

'If the rise of Eurosceptic and far right parties was just happening in France and Britain, that would be extraordinary enough but it's happening right across the continent. In no fewer than five countries they could win this election and take a quarter of the seats in the new Parliament. That would make them pretty hard to ignore.' (Mates, 2014)

However, one has to recognise that television news structures and formats do not usually create spaces for extensive reflections on events. Given the length of these programmes – usually 25 minutes duration – they can provide little more than brief

accounts of events with, occasionally, some background. This is certainly the case with BBC Ten O-Clock News and ITV's News at Ten; Channel 4 has a format that allows for greater discussion but it is still very much a news service, albeit within a 60 minute format. Although there is within Channel Four the opportunity to create the equivalent of a lengthy newspaper comment piece, it's longer pieces tend to be made up of discussions – sometimes heated - between two or three guests.

Throughout the period of the election campaign, all three services provided a window on the campaign but the emphasis, as with the newspapers, was always on the domestic contest. Of the 42 items on EP2014 broadcast on all the three channels, only 8 provided a distinctive contribution on the campaign (parties, political actors) in a different EU member state. Four of the 8 were on the BBC Ten O'clock News, 3 on Channel Four News and only 1 on ITV News at Ten. Of these 8, only one – on the BBC – covered the EU Presidency debates as a way of offering an overview of where those seeking the post would stand. The other 7 items used a number of different locations and parties to illustrate, and help explain, the rise of the Eurosceptic and Far-right and Far-left parties.

In one piece on the FN, Matt Frei reported from Marseilles and observed that:

The boats in the Marseilles marina are a reminder of what fuels the National Front in times of crisis. The glaring gulf of economics. Those who feel abandoned, itching to join the swelling ranks of the enraged. That is the power of populism. (Frei, 2014b)

France was, in fact, a popular location for the broadcasters and all three news programmes carried an item on Le Pen and the FN. Golden Dawn in Greece featured twice (BBC, Channel 4), AfD in Germany once (BBC), and the Danish People's Party once (Channel 4).

By comparison with newspaper coverage, broadcast news did not provide a roster of parties and, consequently, some sense of differences and similarities across the European political landscape. On the occasions when UKIP was mentioned, it was mentioned in the context of Le Pen's Front National, Germany's AfD and the Danish People's Party. In respect of UKIP and the FN, the similarities with the newspaper coverage are obvious: firstly, that the 'the Front National has taken the emphasis off racism and xenophobia trying pretty successfully to decontaminate her party's image' (Mates, 2014a); secondly, that Farage still refuses to join it. Le Pen is quoted as saying: '"I don't need UKIP," she said, "I consider Nigel Farage disloyal. I've heard Mr Cameron say that UKIP are drunkards and racists. I find it equally unjust with Mr Farage talks about me saying that the National Front is about anti-Semitism."' (Mates, 2014a)

The other connections between UKIP and the other parties are relatively brief. The BBC, like the Telegraph, links UKIP with the AfD, 'a young Eurosceptic party'. In response to a question regarding forming an alliance, the AfD spokesperson replies: 'No, no, clearly not. I think that we have quite a bit of different views on core issues. Nigel Farage wants Great Britain to withdraw from the European Union. We do definitely not want that.' (Hewitt, 2014a)

Channel Four, by contrast, also links UKIP with the Danish People's Party, albeit very very briefly. In the relevant item, Matt Frei (2014a) uses the controversy surrounding Danish meatballs – pork being the issue – that has caused concern amongst Danish Muslims and non-Muslims as a way of introducing the Danish People's Party and its anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, anti-EU stance. He then adds that 'this is Denmark's UKIP and their biggest rallying cry is to curb immigration. Drastically.' Whether UKIP would look kindly at this linkage is open to question.

One other political party, Greece's Golden Dawn, is reported across two channels and in both items what it stands for is clearly signposted. The BBC report (Hewitt, 2014b) notes that 'many regard Golden Dawn in Greece as a neo-Nazi party. Despite having several of its MPs in prison, it could win seats in the European Parliament' although Paul Mason, on Channel 4, is somewhat more blunt: ' Golden Dawn are white people who like swastikas …' (Mason, 2014) and then lists its members' criminal activities. The BBC item adds a few words on Syriza as a way of also illustrating the rise of the left in Europe.

On the very few occasions when newspapers did seek to expand on how these parties aligned themselves politically, it was possible to get a sense of the vast array of parties and the almost minute differences that made alliances difficult. The nuances are missing from the television news items. The television news items, though, offer something the newspapers do not, namely, visual and verbal representations of opposition. One finds in many of the items not only a statement of where these parties stand but also either a critical questioning of their position (by the journalist) and/ or commentary from members of the public in support or against those political Parties. The BBC item on AfD includes, for example, comments by Angela Merkel as a way of countering the AfD alternative; the item on Golden Dawn includes much on Syriza and quotes from its leader Tsipras, and so on. On Channel Four, the position of the Danish People's Party is opposed by members of the public and questioned by the journalist, and a similar structure can be found in the items on the Front National.

Overall, though, it is obvious that the list of parties mentioned is much shorter than one finds in the newspaper coverage, at least in the Guardian and the Telegraph. In these 8 pieces[v], there are references to: Front National, Syriza, Golden Dawn, Danish People's Party, AfD, and CDU. In the introductory remarks to packages other

mentions can occur but without any supplementary information. One example is from a Channel Four introduction to a reporter's package: 'the Dutch Freedom Party headed by the charismatic anti-Islam candidate Geert Wilders … Alliance for Freedom Group could be joined by Austria's Freedom Party, the Sweden Democrats and even the Slovak National Party. Together they would be entitled to significant European Parliament funding. UKIP and the Danish People's Party, who we met earlier this week, rejected an offer to join the Alliance fearing association with more hard-line parties.' (Snow, 2014)

Finally, aside of one BBC item which did cover the 'leaders' debates' and in which Schulz, Geller, Verhofstadt and Junker were all seen making a statement, in the other 7 broadcast items analysed here, 9 European politicians made an appearance and were seen on screen making statements (sometimes more than once within an item). Of the politicians, Marine Le Pen appeared in two separate items, whilst the following appeared in one item only (though there could have been multiple sound-bites within each item): Morten Messerschmidt (Danish People's Party), Jean-Marie Le Pen (Front National), D. Rachline, (Front National), S. Boukouras, (Golden Dawn), A. Tsipras (Syriza), B. Lucke (Alternative fur Deutschland), A. Merkel (Christian Democratic Union), and D. McAlister (Christian Democratic Union. Six of the 10 appearances represent the right and only one the left. Europe and European politics, a viewer might be led to believe, was nothing more than about an established order being bombarded by the rising masses supporting (mainly) the right anti-establishment forces.

Discussion

The issues raised in this paper touch on a number of quite different considerations. Some, like the differences between media, can be dealt with quite briefly; others, like the question of Europeanization, require more in-depth consideration. Where there is a congruence between these two is in one of the questions that underpins this paper, namely, what sort of information about the European Parliament elections do UK citizens and voters get.

As we have shown, the heavily contested nature of the elections domestically and across other member states, ensured that the topic of the elections was discussed regularly in the British media. However, only consumers of 'serious' newspapers and viewers of public television had access to the sorts of extended discussions that would permit them to comment on the nature and range of parties competing for power in other member states. Although reports often made references to 'the Right-wing insurgency' (Telegraph, 2014g) across Europe or to the 'anti-EU parties' (Sun 2014) likely to succeed in the elections, it was mainly in the Telegraph and in the Guardian, that readers would have been able to get a sense of some of the differences that marked out one party from another. As the quote at the top of this paper makes clear, while there may have been a wave of social discontent and anti-EU sentiment, the sources of that discontent and, hence, the solutions were often very different. It may have been misleading, therefore, to lump them all under the 'kooks' label as the Daily Mail had done.

But the labelling of anti-EU parties as 'kooks' was a part of the general abuse heaped on them As the Guardian pointed out, 'the term "populist" (attached to some of the parties) is the hold-your-nose form of abuse for the anti-European mavericks and radicals riding high in the polls, beneficiaries of the collapse of public confidence in Europe…' (20014d) While the terminology may have differed from item to item,

news consumers were often offered material that sought to portray anti-EU resentment and protest channelled through popular parties as undesirable ('mavericks', 'kooks', 'enemies' 'populists', 'racists'). Does this lend some support to Stavrakakis and Katsambekis' suggestion that such coverage marginalizes parties that offer alternative accounts of the present and alternative visions of the future? Further and more comparative research is needed to fully document this but it is possible to argue that placing all the alternative parties under ready-made (and negative) labels can erode those differences that are significant and worthy of our attention. To note just one example: the differences between the AfD and UKIP are large yet both the BBC and the Telegraph reported on the former rejecting the latter without noting also that the AfD has indicated its willingness to work with Briatin's Conservative party. Without context and explanation, relationships can be puzzling rather than informative.

With UKIP firmly established in the UK as the most popular political party in EP2014 and its anti-EU message appealing to the disaffected, it was only a tiny leap of the (journalistic) imagination to connect this with what was happening elsewhere (and of what was happening elsewhere to what was happening in Britain). The list of anti-EU parties did confirm that it was happening elsewhere; what was not see easy to work out - given the limited information in most of the media analysed - was whether it was happening elsewhere in the same way and for similar reasons.

Nevertheless, the semblance of similarity that was reflected in the news angles adopted – e.g., the swelling of discontent, the rise of anti-EU parties - does suggest that the news media were reflecting, albeit imperfectly, European issues or, at the very least, issues that were common to EU citizens. Only extensive comparative research of a similar kind would show whether the same news angles dominated the

media agendas in Europe so that we were all, literally, reading and thinking about the same things. Were readers of French newspapers, for example, as interested in Farage as British media were in Le Pen? What of Dutch news media and Farage and his links with Wilders? What we do know, though, is that some of the British media did try to cover EP2014 in a way that reflected 'national as well as European preoccupations.' (2004f) Is this sufficient evidence of Europeanization?

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Daily Telegraph (2014c) Dutch chief predicts UKIP will join Le Pen alliance, 6 May.

Daily Telegraph (2014d) UKIP will join Europe's rising Right, says Wilders, 6 May.

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Guardian (2014c) Comment: Only left populism can halt the rise of Europe's far right: Ukip's advance is part of a wider discontent, fed by EU-wide austerity and revulsion against an anti-democratic stitch-up, 15 May

Guardian (2014d) The voters are not stupid. They know politicians cannot deliver: A Europe united by a sullen political disillusionment, 20 May.

Guardian (2014e) Comment: This week's crucial vote is in Europe but not the EU: If Ukraine can hold a democratic election for its president next Sunday, maybe it can return to peaceful negotiations, 19 May.

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[i] The research on which this work is based was funded through a British Academy Small Research Grant, SG130313.

[ii] Items were taken from actual newspapers, not their online vesrions. Items that mentioned EP2014 in an incidental way, e.g. the elections are on Thursday, were also coded but these do not feature in this analysis. There were 69 such items. Items were

coded by at least two coders, e.g. inter-coder reliability for the Telegraph was high, Kappa 0.688. Differences were resolved to ensure appropriate categorization of items.
[iii] A broadcast news item would be a complete package, with an introduction by the presenter preceding it.
[iv] The totals are a rough guide only as they may include headlines and text but also bylines and caption information.
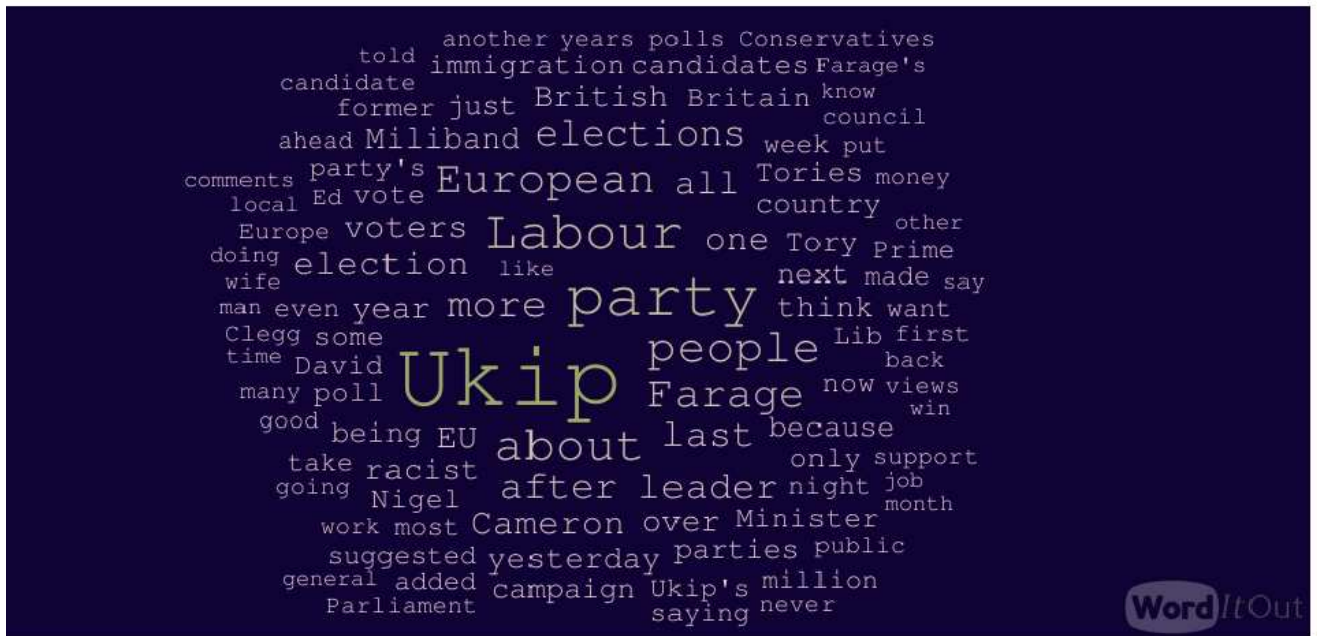[v] In the item on the debates for the Presidency, the names of the speakers flashes across the screen when they are seen speaking. These references, e.g. to Ska Keller, Greens, are excluded from this particular list.

Table 1: Total items coded, 22nd April to 22 May 2014 (21 May for TV*)

	Total items discussing EP2014	Total items discussing European political parties and political actors
Sun	39	0
Mirror	25	0
Daily Mail	33	3
Daily Telegraph	46	9
Guardian	54	15
Total newspaper items	**197**	**27**
BBC1 Ten O'clock News*	16	4
ITV News at Ten*	12	1
Channel Four News*	14	3
Total TV news items	**42**	**8**

Daily Mail Wordcloud provided by Worditout.com

http://worditout.com/word-cloud/576999/private/15d213520c418c2d6c67a6994314bed6

Guardian wordcloud provided by worditout.com
http://worditout.com/word-cloud/577005/private/8da58b1a604de43269a6963a53c48f78