Political Rhetoric and European Integration

John Gaffney
Professor of French and European Politics
Keele European Research Centre
Keele University
Staffordshire   ST5 5BG
United Kingdom
Tel: (01782) 583271
e-mail: J.Gaffney@keele.ac.uk

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of discourse in the EU integration process, and in particular its function and importance as a political, not just rhetorical, resource for the provision of legitimacy and in particular as a resource for political leaders. We shall argue that questions concerning the effectiveness and appropriateness of any European discourse or discourses are fundamental to the issue of political legitimacy in the European context, and that the legitimacy of the European Union depends upon the emergence of a European-level political discourse. National discourses are embedded and are effectively exploited by political leaders in the national contexts. At the European level, that is, within the European framework of political exchange between elites and between elites and non-elites, the interactions and mediatisation of languages, histories, cultures, symbols and myths are more fractured and less organised, while the absence of strong central institutions constrains the effective use of discourse by EU leaders. Anti-European discourse as a political resource challenges and counters claims to European legitimacy. Nevertheless, there exists a European discourse, even though it lacks institutional 'encadrement' and strong mass allegiance. The developing trans-European party families are experiments in a shared and institutionally supported, and therefore politically orientated European identity. It is the relation of Europe to national discourses and their evolution, in conjunction with the development of its own institutional setting which will inform the process of legitimation of European integration. This paper will discuss some of the political problems surrounding the question of discourse. First of all, however, we should clarify two issues: what we mean by discourse, and what it 'does' in politics, both of these points being too often misunderstood or ignored in the discipline of political studies. In order to give a meaningful definition, let us take the second point first and identify the role of discourse.

Important in politics *per se*, particularly important in the European context, the study of discourse's political place is almost entirely

unresearched.[1] We shall demonstrate in this paper that discourse plays a complex role in politics. In order to show this we should bear in mind that discourse is both autonomous and not autonomous from the institutions and practices surrounding it, that is to say that its enunciation is a moment of the political process, and depending upon its own internal structure and mode of delivery (its rhetoric) as well as its context, it will have the political effects of any political act; its context, however, frames it and will influence its use, non-use and effectiveness. In terms of our study there are two formative contexts to discourse: first, the institutional framework of the EU and the political relationships within it, and second the politico-cultural framework of discourse, and especially of leadership discourse in each of the member states and in Europe as a whole.

An analysis of the role of discourse raises questions of the first importance regarding the organisational and institutional constraints upon and opportunities for political initiative at this level, especially in terms of the relation of discourse to popular legitimacy and leadership authority. In accordance with the overall approach of the project of which this paper is a part, we can take as the general framework of our study the political relationships within the EU as a polity, namely, within the national contexts, elite/electorate (citizen) relations, leadership/elite, leadership/electorate relations and, in the wider context, intergovernmental relations predominantly between national executives, and trans- or supranational relations across or beyond national borders. We would highlight, however, that these structures, process, and institutions - national legislative/executive relations, electoral cycles, the role of the media, the 'conjunctures' of national processes with one another - e.g. the relationships of conservative and social democratic policies to one another at the European level in terms of the various fortunes of governments and parties at national level - and at the wider level, the Commission, Council of Ministers, and European Council, and European Parliament, and the

---

[1]   The study of discourse has an extensive literature. The penury is in the analysis of the relation of discursive to political practice, that is, the 'effects' of discourse on politics. The difficulty is compounded by the interdisciplinary nature of the relation. The most extensive research in this area has been done in the United States, particularly as regards the role of presidential rhetoric. See Atkinson, Calloway-Thomas, Decaumont, Drake, Friedenburg, Gaffney, Jamieson, Kohrs Campbell, Wills, Windt in bibliography for representative examples of the study of discourse and its place in the political process.

relationships of these to one another and to national governments and electorates - we would highlight the fact that all of these are not standing structures and relationships, but evolving ones, irrigated - indeed, it could be argued, constituted and sustained - by the perpetual formal and informal flow and exchange of information, in a word, by the discourse within and between them, channelled, directed and deflected by the institutional relationships within the European polity. Of course, it is important in this overall discursive framework to note that the most 'legitimate' and intense political relationships and exchanges take place within the national contexts. Our analysis will focus upon what this means for the question of a wider political legitimation of European institutions and relations. Analysis of the place of discourse also raises wider questions in political science regarding the role of language in politics, in particular that of the generalised misperception that the function of language, symbols, and narratives is simply to legitimate or reflect institutions, processes, and so on. They do do this, but this is of minor importance, certainly to our enquiry here; what we shall concentrate upon is the question of the effect of discourse upon outcomes, that is to say, in the EU context, the role of an emerging European discourse in the framework of existing national discourses, and its effects upon the legitimation of the integration process.

We shall place greater emphasis in our analysis upon the second context, the cultural aspect of our subject than upon the institutional one; this is because institutional questions raised by European integration are far more widely researched. We are not here making a greater claim for the cultural over the institutional, but focusing more upon one than the other for the purposes of analysis.

What distinguishes democracy from non-democratic regime forms are i) the array and arrangement of its political institutions and ii) its 'culture of democracy' (established over time and maintained by ritual and symbolic commitments). Taken together these frame and are framed by the acquired and ascribed legitimacy of democracy. The relationships within and between political institutions, and between institutions and civil society, are mediated, and one of the essential mediations is that of discourse (and the more institutions and more complex the relationships, the more discourse there will be). We shall demonstrate the political significance of this; we shall also demonstrate *how* this works. The most important aspect to stress here is that

discourse is an event in, a moment of, the political process, and as such constitutive of the process of politics. Attention, then, to political *situations* becomes appropriate in order to assess the impact of a moment of discourse upon the overall political process at any given time. Bearing this in mind, we shall take political discourse to mean:

> the verbal equivalent of political action: the set of all political verbalisations, and expressible forms adopted by political organisations and political individuals. It generates response which may range from indifference, through hostility, to enthusiasm and which may or may not lead to political action. It is as complex in its inter-relations as political action is. The significance of any instance of political discourse will be affected by its overall relation to political action. And together discourse and action constitute political practice.[2]

Discourse and Leadership

Leadership discourse offers perhaps the best illustration of, is perhaps the most influential or consequential form of, political discourse.[3] This is for two reasons. The first is that political leadership is in a nodal relation to political institutions: without them it is severely constrained (institutions legitimate leadership through ritual, and sustain its authority and ability to act over time, supply elite support, and so on). The second is that leadership in democratic regimes is in a particular relationship to popular legitimacy. And both of these sets of relationships are discursive, that is, involve organised linguistic exchanges. Each of these reasons raises important questions about a 'voiced leadership' in the EU context, first because the institutions are not designed for the leadership purpose as it is understood in the national contexts (indeed it could be argued that they were designed concertedly for the opposite purpose), and secondly, because in the EU the question of popular legitimacy is highly problematic. In terms of the two sets of political relationships necessary to create and sustain political leadership: executive authority, expressed through executive

---

[2]   J.Gaffney, *The French Left and the Fifth Republic: the discourses of socialism and communism* (London, Macmillan, 1989), p.26.

[3]   See, for example, J. Gaffney, 'Language and Style in Politics' in Carol Sanders (ed.) *French Today* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 185-198.

institutions, and popular legitimacy via the suffrage, European leadership is far from assured. It is not that there are not leaderships in Europe, but that there is no European-level leadership of the type associated with leadership at the national level. Because of leadership's relationship to political institutions and constituencies, which are themselves national in the first instance, leadership *discourse* is almost exclusively national in character. There may subsequently be intergovernmental, trans- or supranational manifestations of leadership, but they normally *proceed from* the national, are condoned and controlled by national sites of leadership and, for the reasons we have given, have much less 'voice', virulence and scope. This is not, however, simply because politics is organised institutionally at state and sub-state levels, but because the executive and legislative authorities in national states are bound into a popular legitimation that is more complex than simply institutionally derived. Their authority does not proceed simply from a rational conferring of political authority which might as easily be conferred elsewhere; it is, in fact, difficult to conceive of it being conferred elsewhere, and this has great significance for our approach to the study of European political legitimacy: national leaderships are enmeshed in a system of mythologies, symbols, and narratives which are themselves organised for the most part in the context of the nation state, and not only cannot be understood without reference to these, but also derive their authority to act from this context.[4] Let us examine this in more detail.

Discourse and national culture

Before looking at the transnational context, let us look briefly at two illustrative examples of national leadership rhetoric in order to demonstrate the relationship between discourse and political culture and how leadership derives significance from it; and also how the whole works rhetorically. Let us turn first to one member state - Britain's - most famous (and perhaps therefore most misunderstood) example of rousing, inspiring discourse:

---

[4]   There is a wide range of literature on this area of political study which spans political anthropology, symbolic interaction theory, and leadership studies. There is little literature on this in terms of the EU (see Ross and Abélès in bibliography). For a recent case study on the symbolism of leadership see L. Milne 'The Myth of Leadership' - J. Gaffney and L. Milne *French Presidentialism and the Election of 1995* (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1997).

We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France. We shall fight on the seas and oceans. We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields. And in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.

Winston Churchill, 1940

There is no doubt that this extract has an internal structure that is rhetorical and poetic (repetition, alliteration, short sentences of firm intention and varying length, a series of cinematographic images, etc); and the quality and effectiveness of the speech can be approached in these terms. We shall concentrate here, however, on one feature of Churchill's rhetoric which has particular significance for this study, which is that it is culture-bound, that is to say, inextricably bound up with British political culture. We must look, however, at what this means, for the truth of this is in inverse proportion to what people generally - and especially the British - think this means.

In what sense can we say that this is a representative example of British or English political discourse? We can identify cultural precursors in Macaulay and in Kipling, for example, but one of the reasons why the European dictators were so disdained by the British population throughout the 1930s and into the War itself was precisely their use of high, emotional rhetoric (newspaper cartoons of the period lampooning Hitler or Mussolini's rhetorical style are revealing here, as was, from the beginning of the war itself, radio comedy). Why then was Churchill's rhetoric, so different even in its sentence structure and intonation from other forms of British discourse, so effective? For effective it was: from June to December 1940 Churchill's discourse arguably kept Britain in the War, kept the British in the War, and kept all other options off the table. How then can we argue that it is culture-specific? Within the limits imposed by

a paper of this length we cannot go into detail,[5] but can make several points.

In the speech, Churchill is in effect 'inventing' our island (see first five sentences), cut off from France (where the encroaching combat was taking place), by the seas, and the oceans. More importantly, however, what the speaker is actually offering to the island is not victory, but defeat (see sentences six to eleven): on the beaches of our island where the enemy comes ashore, we fall back to the fields surrounding our towns, then to the streets, then take to the hills. When cornered there, however, we shall not surrender: 'We' are retreating. In terms of appeals to leadership, it is interesting to note that Churchill is in fact offering a choice of two options, one clear: utter - but heroic - defeat; one unclear: something other, but which involves *listener dependency upon the speaker himself*.

The important point for our analysis here, however, concerns the 'national' both as a mythological reference point and as a rhetorical resource. We have already mentioned that high-flown rhetoric was very vulnerable to lampoon in British culture. What therefore was the nature of the dependency? The answer to the puzzle is that the British had, precisely, no appropriate voice themselves because that is not how they spoke. In the area of political as in social rhetoric, Lord Halifax or Clement Attlee were the rule, Churchill the exception. As in the later period, Margaret Thatcher the exception, John Major the rule. The inter-relationships of 'crisis' rhetoric, transcendent leadership styles, and appeals to heroism, are complex, and in the case of wartime Britain became dramatically important in a situation in which they were as necessary as they were unusual. The essential point here is what Churchill's discourse tells us about *culture*: (what is it in British or English political culture that restricts such rousing, inspiring rhetoric and, in crises, briefly allows it through, and to such effect?

---

[5]   The author is currently researching for a study of leadership in this period where greater detail is given concerning the rhetoric of speeches and their effects; see J. Gaffney, 'Churchill and 1940', Harvard University, Center for European Studies, November 1992; Lunar Society Lecture, 'The Politics of Language and European Integration' Birmingham, October 1995.

Perhaps all national cultures have a crisis discourse built into them in varying degrees. Let us, briefly take another rhetorical fragment from another national European language, in order to see how different prevailing cultural conditions have different rhetorical and political effects. The de Gaulle example we shall use is, of course, another classic example of leadership rhetoric, but here we shall concentrate on what it tells us about the nature and political conditions of national discourse:

> Je vous ai compris (I have understood you)
> Charles de Gaulle, 4 juin 1958

As the Algerian War drew the French Fourth Republic into political crisis in 1958 and the country to the brink of civil war, de Gaulle, the wartime resistance hero, re-entered the political scene (and in a very 'stage-managed' way). He told the unhappy French that he understood them (it was to the Algiers crowd he spoke but his 'real' audience was the French nation). Such communion, particularly at this time, was the essence of de Gaulle's political support. The de Gaulle example, however, is fundamentally different both in its cultural conditions of production and in its political effects from the Churchillian. Essentially, Churchill's only purpose was to save the regime; de Gaulle's to change it. In political terms, this was not just an institutional or constitutional change, but a cultural one. We could say much more here about the cultural significance of the 'je/vous' relationship in de Gaulle's thought, what we might call the discursive intimacy between leaders and followers in French politics (to which de Gaulle gave an institutional framework by his 1962 reform of the constitution to elect the President by universal suffrage), and the French attraction to exemplary leaders. What we can say here is that this strongly personalised and romantic element is as integral to French political culture as it is inimical to British political culture. In fact, de Gaulle is the French paradigm; Churchill the radical, rhetorical deviation from the British paradigm. Churchill saved 'Our island home' but only on condition, as it were, that he did not interfere with it. De Gaulle used the reservoirs he knew to exist outside mainstream political institutions in order to appeal for authority to confer legitimacy upon new ones.

What our brief reference to British and French examples demonstrates is that political discourse is in an intense and complex relationship to its context. A secondary though important remark we can make, and which is implied by the examples we have briefly looked at, is that national discourse is a rich political/rhetorical resource for highly personalised leadership. This will have an important bearing upon the notion and development of a European-level discourse, and which we shall analyse below. First, let us make one or two comments regarding leadership which have relevance for our analysis of national-level and European-level discourse.

The first is that political actors often speak of 'crisis' in a system. The Churchill and de Gaulle examples show that national mythologies are powerful elements in the depiction of such, and take on very different rhetorical forms and can have different political consequences in different nation states, depending upon the institutional and cultural configuration pertaining. In fact, 'crisis' offers opportunities (either as a context or as a resource) and although not defining of personalised, rhetorical leadership, is an indication of how problematic it is for a European-level discourse to develop. European discourse is always vulnerable to the dynamism of national rhetoric, especially at leadership level.

Discourse and legitimacy at the European level

For an appraisal of a *European* discourse we need to look at what me might call the conditions of production of a legitimating rhetoric: the institutions themselves, the discourses allowed or encouraged by them, the personalities who might make discursive appeals, the constituencies to whom they make such appeals, the channels of such communication, and the nature of the appeals, and the cultures or mythologies which underpin both the rhetoric used and the community or communities appealed to. As we have said earlier in this paper we shall concentrate here on the discursive and cultural. We should bear in mind, however, that the question of the institutions is in reality inseparable from the question of discourse.

In terms of the institutional question most associated with our own analysis - the type and role of leadership at the European level - and questions relating to the type of culture/s which might give rise to

claims to or affirmations of European leadership in the contemporary period, dramatic styles of leadership, particularly in certain polities within Europe, have barely any currency, any resonance at all. And it is perhaps worth stressing that since 1945 one of the most important leadership contexts of European integration has been the *fear* of high rhetoric - particularly German.

In the context of European integration in the contemporary period, there are two further factors which arguably disfavour the crackling nationalism of the earlier period. The first is the question of legitimate *style*. The channels, the avenues of communication have changed beyond recognition, and as regards rhetoric and discursive exchange, changes in the electronic environment mean that worlds separate mid from late twentieth century Europe, especially in terms of the requirements of style. Television has been the formative context of shifts in leadership style: as the leader's face came closer, his (occasionally her) voice became quieter. It is worth underlining this media-framed cultural shift away from high rhetoric and dramatic gestures: the Mussolini chin, the Hitler crescendo, the Gaullist *hauteur*, the Churchillian forebodings, irrespective of other reasons for their decline (which we shall come on to below), have been marginalised by the nature of the medium itself. However, if we can say that the decrease in the pertinence of an earlier rhetorical style means that another more conducive perhaps to exchange at a transnational or supranational level is favoured by the media, we should also recognise that intergovernmental discourse and images display a concerted blandness and an equally bland photo-call consensus on the part of the national leaders. And even here the discourse - that of seamless European consensus - is itself given little place in the overall flow of communication; or rather the *saying* is itself relegated to the *said*. Publicly, what leaders say is given no prominence, only what they have said, what 'has been agreed'. This raises questions related to the possible diminution of the importance of political discourse itself in the political process and we shall return to this in our conclusion.

Second, the environment of political rhetoric today, although bland, is unimaginably more sophisticated both technically and culturally than in pre-EU Europe. Most of Churchill's major speeches were not even recorded; and of de Gaulle, not only did no one record his most famous 18 June 1940 speech, the evidence is that no one actually heard it. Today, everything is recorded and catalogued. (The irony

is therefore all the greater given that all this discourse is deemed as being of little political consequence.) And the listeners are infinitely more sophisticated too. There has grown up since the Second World War three generations shaped by a media culture - less drama, more style, more education, more irony in its humour; and it is a culture that is more travelled, and exposed to the outside world - all of Europe and the United States, especially - even to the extent that the 'outside' is sometimes perceived as not even outside, but part of a 'superhighway' international culture.

Related to the question of mediations, moreover, is the practical problem of language itself. To date, for the elites at least, the problem has been bizarrely solved: they, the elites, speak English to each other. English remains moreover, the strongest contender. This is *the* lingua franca, not only, of course, from the Atlantic to the Urals, but from San Francisco to Vladivostok. It is perhaps an irony that the language of the new Europe should be the language of the most reluctant Europeans, as well as that of - according to the French especially - the cultural imperialists, the Americans, whose sole cultural aim is to open as many fast food outlets across the old continent as they can.

To date, although the unofficial language of the elites has been predominantly English (with a concerted rearguard action by the French to maintain French at elite level), that of the *higher* rhetoric of European integration, the medium of Jean Monnet, of Robert Schuman, of François Mitterrand, of Jacques Delors, has indeed been French, one of the least spoken European languages. And whose metaphors, of course, structure French visions of the world. Perhaps 'integration' is itself a concept that is French. The word the French prefer, however, is not integration but 'construction', and related terms such as 'chantier', 'architecture' - even 'cathédrale' was a term de Gaulle used - suggest a metaphorical imagining of Europe which is certainly not shared by all. Such spatial metaphors not only point to fundamental differences between Europeans concerning what European union actually involves, but also imply a formative effect upon integration of the dominant language itself.[6]

---

[6]   One thinks also of Margaret Thatcher's disdain for words such as consensus, 'European' words suggesting European schemes; she preferred the 'English' let's shake-on-it term, 'agreement'.

On the other half of the continent, from middle Europe to Russia, German is the language of Europe - when it is not English. In terms of the imagining of a new European order, is it not itself unimaginable that German be the language of expression? It is also the case that for fifty years German discourse has been concertedly business-like, unrhetorical and uncontentious, in order to provide reassurance that the German European presence bears no relation to its former rhetoric and therefore none to how it formerly imagined Europe. It is especially true of the Germans, but generally true of discourse in Europe that raised voices remain the property of only certain nation states at certain times, never that of Germany nor that of Europe as a whole.

Styles and Registers: towards discursive federalism

At elite level, problems are generally avoided, in part because of the EU's commitment to its eleven official languages, in part because of the elite's multilingualism. But if the elites are multilingual, the people are not, and Europe *itself* since 1992 has become a *popular* issue, of both identity and communication *about* Europe *between* Europeans (The Maastricht Treaty and public reactions to it are the clearest manifestations of this.). And an effective domestic political stance in each of the member states has often been anti-Europeanism; in fact to the point where, by the mid-1990s, lack of popular awareness of the strategic issues involved had led to a situation in which 'elite discourse' and 'popular discourse' had become the rhetorical representatives of pro- and anti-Europeanism respectively, the latter's main theme being the *illegitimacy* of the Union, in particular its Commission and bureaucracy. At various moments since its creation, and particularly since perhaps the mid-1980s, the EU has encountered a series of situations which have had direct bearing upon integration (or non-integration). Each of these moments has required a rhetoric for all the reasons we have given above, and none or next-to-none exists, as far as pro-integration is concerned. In the previous section we raised the question of which *language* or *languages* might be appropriate agencies of European communication; similarly, can we imagine which *registers* and *styles* might be appropriate to a shared European discourse, in particular one which might act as a resource for leadership?

We can identify six types of European-level discourse. 1) The discourse of the European bureaucracy; 2) of European-level leadership; 3) of 'utopian' Europeanism; 4) of the elites; 5) of national leaders about Europe; and 6) of transnational politics. Let us look at each in turn.

1) The discourse of the Brussels bureaucracy can be characterised as impersonal, necessarily humourless, and from a rhetorical point of view, dull. It is an administrative discourse. Such a discourse might be 'appropriate' to a particular institutional configuration and set of practices, particularly in situations where there are contested issues regarding executive authority. Its required tone is its political disadvantage, that is to say that to legitimate the bureaucracy it gives voice to, it must restrict itself to the administrative register. It does not inspire the pro-Europeans, and it is despised by the anti-Europeans. For the latter, it is the dull noise itself of the European machinery ticking over, working for the purpose of quietly stealing away the sovereignty of nations. For some, it's very dullness is proof of its illegitimacy. For the antis, however, in a certain respect it is a dream come true. What the Euro-enthusiasts want and what the Eurosceptics also *do not* want is the opposite: a rhetorical register that is inspiring, that makes you get up out of your seat, as it were; a 'European' rhetoric that moves, or that stirs *something*, even if it is only attention, for it is such attention which provides one of the mainsprings of political legitimacy, particularly in phases of institution-building.

2) The question of bureaucratic discourse raises the question of the ambiguity surrounding the legitimacy of Europe's institutions, and therefore the dilemma of its discourse/s. We have intentionally not examined in detail institutional questions but it is worth examining the institutional implications of discursive change. On the question of register and style, it would be helpful to consider the example of the Commission: is the European Commission a bureaucracy? Or is it an executive? It behaves like an executive in certain circumstances, but invariably it *talks* like a bureaucracy. After becoming President of the European Commission in 1985 Jacques Delors played greatly upon the ambivalence surrounding his legitimacy to act as an executive leader. It is arguable whether the President of the European Commission (appointed by the national governments) is an official or a leader. Delors, himself a pro-integrationist, saw his mission and leading the

European nations to greater unity, and on a rising tide of integration began his presidency with the style, and discourse and imagery, of a supranational leader. Such comportment and a stream of rhetoric that was both pedagogical and transcendental facilitated the several outcomes of the single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. For several years Delors was treated internationally almost like a government leader or Head of State. In the 1990s, however, the tide of pro-integration was dragged back by a relatively sudden undertow of 'Eurosceptism'. In interviews and speeches in the early and mid-1990s Delors claims to leadership were dramatically tempered by a more wary defensive approach, more fitting of an administrative officer. There is no doubt that in the future, it is the 'earlier' Delors who will take on the status of the visionary pointing the way, but it is worth our noting that it was largely the use and abuse of these two discursive conventions within the Commission (of bureaucracy and of leadership) which allowed Jacques Delors to be such an innovative Commission President.[7] The institutional norm here, however, is severely constraining of eloquence, and to date it has been only for brief shining moments of opportunity that the transcendental register has been struck with vigour, at least within the Commission.

3) There is a higher pro-European register, as expressed by such organisations as the Federal Trust and the European Movement. They have a certain missionary and utopian aspect to them, yet are often rhetorically weak, and invariably connote a political naivety. This is partly due to their being based upon a world-view that is very wary of the stirring rhetoric of the 1930s, partly due to their having no electoral constituency, and they remain the arena of exchange between pro-European elites. Historically speaking this is an interesting discourse as it is both transcendental and pan-European, but neither expansionist nor militaristic. Moreover, although it is largely (though

---

[7]   For an analysis of Delor's discourse see Helen Drake 'Jacques Delors and the Discourse of Political Legitimacy' in Helen Drake and John Gaffney (eds) *The Language of Leadership in Contemporary France* (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1996); For a thoroughgoing analysis of Delor's methods and style of leadership see George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995).

not exclusively) [8] the domain of the elites, it fits in with leadership discourse itself, lacking the personalisation and vigour characteristic of the latter. On the question of elites too, utopian pan-Europeanism is often exclusive to the continent's social as well as - often more so than - political elites, drawing it even further away from the popular legitimacy of the discourse of nationalism.

4) Related to this discourse is that of the intellectual elites, the 'serious' newspapers of most European countries, the research centres and universities throughout Europe, the Think-Tanks of most political parties, the general attitude of journalists, commentators, and so on. For the most part, this 'enlightened' discourse is no less partisan for that in its underlying belief system: that 'Europe' is a good thing, international exchanges and a general consensus which transcends national concerns part of a European intellectual tradition several centuries old. It is extremely difficult to assess the political effect of this discursive disposition, given that it is not strictly related to political activity, but rather the background discursive social context of much writing and commentating on Europe. Nevertheless, it is probably true to say that it has considerable indirect influence, while remaining thoughtful, intellectual and restricted to a particular group.

5) An interesting exception to these restricted pro-European registers is the case of leading statespersons, François Mitterrand being the best recent example of this, who could speak 'for' Europe with authority and persuasion. It should be remembered that the 'tide' of integration we referred to earlier was begun by national leaders, in particular by President Mitterrand of France and Chancellor Kohl of West Germany in the early 1980s. It is the case, moreover, that a national leader like Mitterrand could use a higher rhetorical register than a 'European' leader like Delors, in that within the bounds of international protocol and national decorum, a Mitterrand could say what he wished, and what he said would be of great importance. Mitterrand's consistent pro-European appeals gave great strength to European integration in the decade from 1982 till 1992. It should not of course be forgotten, however, that Mitterrand's authority to speak was drawn from his *national* legitimacy as an international statesperson.

---

[8]   Variations on this is the discourse of leftist internationalism such as was seen during the Spanish Civil War, or the discourse of the various peace movements.

A further point to remember is that there is also a certain contingency in such support, depending as it does upon an alignment of individual action, domestic public policy, and international relations, an alignment more reminiscent of astronomy than of politics. Is it, then, that, overall, it is the anti-Europeans and the nationalists who have the rhetoric - and the rhetorical high ground that goes with it - and the pro-Europeans do not? This brings us to the question of transnational politics.

Each of the styles and registers mentioned does have 'correspondences', echoes in the cultures of each or most of the European states. Each of the national states has a bureaucratic style. Delors' style of and mixing of discourse is not restricted to the French language or to France. The European Movement is similar in each of the member states. Intellectual exchange is cross-national, even though differences can be seen. And national leaders resemble one another on a sliding scale running from business-like and unceremonious to stately and grandiose. And it is not only in pro-European discourse that there are such overlaps. Anti-Europeanism exists in differing degrees in the European states, and there is, paradoxically, something if an international of hard right nationalists. It is beyond dispute that these discrete traditions are fashioned according to the institutions and cultures in member states. It is also the case, however, that there are reservoirs of shared experience and perspective which allow some, or all, Europeans to be seen as sharing an inheritance? This, or course, raises questions not only of legitimacy and European integration but of European identity: what, in fact, is being integrated? We can say that many of the shared elements of an identity as well as the shared themes and styles of a European discourse do exist, but are organised into political families: that is to say, that rather than search at the supranational (or subterranean) level for a shared culture (which is not to say that they do not exist at these levels also), we can best identify them in clusters. At the level of the discursive expression of political families we can identify clusters of expression, sentiment and allegiance which correspond relatively accurately to the transnational political families; Christian democracy, social democracy, liberalism, international communism, environmentalism, and the ultra-right. There are also other cleavages we can identify, for example a Northern European and Southern

European divide, and state and sub-state conflicts of identity;[9] nevertheless, the families of political cultures are clearly identifiable. Often membership of the same family stretches credibility to it limits; are the Spanish Socialists and the German Social Democrats really in the same family? Do not the parties from their own country share more with them than people and parties from the other side of the continent?

The litmus test for the plausibility of the families thesis as a way of imagining European integration and perhaps institutional reform might be - leaving aside here the question of the actual languages involved, though it is a leaving aside which begs many fundamental questions: can the families forge a 'discourse'; and within and between them are their discourses comprehensible to one another? Can each of the political families acquire a voice, and does the range of voices constitute a 'background' or meta-language shared by each or recognised by each? And if we can call this situation one of discursive federalism, are there casualties in this process? The question of sub-state nationalism and of sub-state identity lie outside the scope of this chapter, but we can mention here that there are arguments both for and against the view that European integration and European-level political organisation run counter to the interests of the regions.

In terms of political organisation, very loose structures uniting the members of political families have existed for part or all of the twentieth century in the form of the Internationals (Socialist, Christian Democrat, Liberal). More recently, these loose federations have been duplicated essentially though not exclusively at the European Parliament level by the creation of the transnational political parties whose aim is to group together and co-ordinate more effectively the parties within families. We shall not to into detail here on the structure and development of the transnational parties.[10] As regards discourse we can say that there has been quite a considerable

---

9   These differences also raise interesting questions such as whether 'quietest' rhetoric is more northern European than southern, what sub-state variations come into play and how, etc.

10   See Simon Hix, 'The Transnational Party Federations', Robert Ladrech, 'Political Parties in the European Parliament', and Julie Smith, 'How European are European Elections?' in John Gaffney (ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union* (London, Routledge, 1996).

convergence within the party groups and families, largely due to their co-operation in the European Parliament, drafting legislation, organising joint positions and so on. Such convergence, however, has been accompanied by a certain draining of rhetorical power. The joint political manifestos used at European Parliament elections are a good illustration of how tortuous has been the aligning of the parties' discourses. Over the last three elections (1984, 1989, 1994) the Party of European Socialists which groups Labour, Socialist and Social democratic parties, has toiled over a joint manifesto - moving from 'opt outs' for some parties to a consensus blandness, to a recognition that relative freedom should be left to national parties when translating the manifestos for their respective countries - a great deal of labour for documents which to date have been for the most part ignored by the national electorates during the European elections campaigns, and even by the national parties themselves. Nevertheless, a Socialist, Christian democrat and so on European level discourse has and continues to emerge. Such convergence has been further encouraged by the transnational parties by their each organising meetings of the leaders of national parties, whether in government or not, on the eve of European Council meeting in order to develop a European-level partisan voice, and one that would be politically effective in negotiations. Similarly, one can point to a growing emphasis within the European Commission to appoint commissioners along partisan lines thus 'politicising' still further the institutions of the union. It is perhaps ironic that the attempts by the parties to make themselves and their European-level activity more coherent have followed *national* models of political competition and cleavages which are clearly manifest at national levels. It is also not without significance that these convergences have taken place most strongly within weak institutions (the Parliament especially), where their political effects are contained and limited.

Conclusion

We have argued that discourse is a fundamental element of the political process but that it is seriously under-researched in the discipline. One of the most important and misunderstood aspects of it is that it does not simply enhance leadership, or reflect a political culture or legitimate political authority; more importantly it is a formative moment of politics, a *causal* element. It is also the case that

discourse in the modern period is framed essentially in national terms; this is not only because politics is institutionally organised at the nation state level but because myths and symbols are deeply embedded in the culture of a nation and inform the political process. Political actors who draw upon national mythologies and symbols as a rhetorical resource can derive great tactical advantage in particular circumstances given the richness of the resource; generally speaking, rhetorical appeals to competing mythologies face formidable competition, particularly at the level of political leadership, and particularly at moments of intense political activity (invariably referred to as crises, historic crossroads etc.).

We also identified a range of European-level discourses, politically the most interesting being that of Jacques Delors in the 1980s and 1990s, and those of the political families. We have argued that discourse in certain circumstances can have significant political effects. We can make two remarks regarding this. First, the EU's institutions and their relations to the media and to popular legitimacy do not lend themselves to what we might term 'high' rhetoric such as is used in national polities, and creating the conditions for such use would involve institutional reform, although as we saw in the case of Delors and of national leaders, 'Europe' is not itself screened off entirely from such rhetoric. A second point to note is that, irrespective of institutional change or relationships, the higher rhetoric of national politics is also as it is because of the strength of myths and symbols underpinning national communities.[11] European-level discourse has access to perhaps fewer myths, or at least less powerful ones. We should note, however, that these are historical and therefore mutable phenomena.

In the terms of European integration the non-discursive is determining: the continuing economic integration of the European landmass, and the question of appropriate political representation which such integration implies. It is, however, possible to *imagine* Europe today without recourse to Roman or Napoleonic models of Empire. Such imaginings too are undergoing significant change since the post-1989 period. The new East-West dimension, or perhaps absence of such,

---

11   For an arguably opposite view, that 'national' myths are not necessarily as strong as is generally assumed see C. Fieschi 'The French Extreme-Right: Filling the Ideological Vacuum' ECSA, Seattle, 1997.

lies outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth stressing how perceptions are changing, given that East and Western Europe *each* regarded the other side as a kind of historical extension of Nazism. This no longer is the case and will have profound effects upon how Europe will be perceived and therefore talked about the in future.

In terms of a European future, much depends upon what is perceived by the national communities as the European heritage and its representation in discourse. Much of the political heritage of course involves conflict: religious, civil, colonial, revolutionary, reformist, racist, genocidal, misogynist, feminist; it also involves and has involved conflicts and conquests concerning the rule of law, human rights, poverty and social welfare. These in conjunction with different and conflictual national histories make the notion of a single shared identity difficult. Perhaps the answer, and an appropriate discourse too, lies not at the level of history but of culture. It is perhaps the combination of shared and separate histories which makes a rich and diverse culture possible. It is perhaps discursive exchanges at this level of a common political purpose and future shared culture which will provide legitimacy for European political development.

Select Bibliography

Abélès, M. (et al) *Approche Anthropologique de la Commission Européenne* (Unpublished Report, 1993).

Atkinson, M. *Our Masters' Voices* (London, Methuen, 1984).

Bréchon, P. *Le discours politique en France* (Paris, Documentation française, 1994).

Calloway-Thomas, C., and Lucaites, J. *Martin Luther King and the Sermonic Power of Discourse* (University of Alabama Press, 1993).

Chevalier, J.(et al) *L'identité politique* (Paris, PUF, 1994).

Decaumont, F. (ed.) *Le Discours de Bayeux* (Paris, Economica, 1991).

Delahaye, Y. *L'Europe sous les mots* (Paris, Payot, 1979).

Deloye, Y (et al) *Le protocole ou la mise en forme de l'ordre politique* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996).

Dolan, F., and Dumm, T. (eds.) *Rhetorical Republic* (University of Massachusetts, 1993).

Drake, H. 'Political Leadership and European Integration; the case of Jacques Delors' *West European Politics* (18, 1, 1995)
pp. 140-160.

Drake, H. and Gaffney, J. (eds.) *The Language of Leadership in Contemporary France* (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1996).

Gaffney, J. *The French Left and the Fifth Republic* (London, Macmillan, 1989).

Gaffney, J. *The Language of Political Leadership in Contemporary Britain* (London, Macmillan, 1991).

Gaffney, J. 'Labour Party Attitudes and Policy Towards Europe' *Current Politics and Economics of Europe* (1,3-4,. 1991)
pp. 213-240.

Gaffney, J. (ed.) *Political Parties and the European Union* (London, Routledge, 1996).

Girardet, R. *Mythes et Mythologies Politiques* (Paris, Seuil, 1986).

Jamieson, K. H. *Eloquence in an Electronic Age* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

Kohrs Campbell, K., and Jamieson, Hall K., *Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago University Press, 1990).

Labbé, D. *Le Discours Communiste* (Paris, PFNSP, 1977).

Labbé, D. *Le Vocabulaire de François Mitterrand* (Paris, PFNSP, 1990).

Rivière, C. *Les liturgies politiques* (Paris, PUF, 1988).

Ross, G. *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Cambridge, Polity, 1995).

Wills, G. *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992).

Windt, T., and Ingold, B. *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric* (Dubuque, Kendall, 1992).

Wolton, D. *Naissance de l'Europe Démocratique* (Paris, Flammarion, 11993).