Sage Journals

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space

Contents   PDF / ePub   More

Privacy

Privacy

Guest editorials

"The best defence of our security lies in the spread of our values": Europe, America, and the question of values

On 29 October 2004 the European Constitution was signed by the twenty-five members of the European Union (EU) in a solemn ceremony held in the very same chambers on Rome's Campidoglio where the 1957 treaty establishing the European Economic Community was instituted. Four days later, on 2 November, George W Bush was elected to his second term as the president of the United States.

These events mark the affirmation and consolidation of two radically different (geo)political subjects, with widely differing visions of political right—and rights. They also seem to mark a growing schism in the West that cannot be reduced to a Euro – American difference of opinions, for it also cuts through internal political debates in Europe and the United States. At issue are morals and values—and the role of politics and the state in legislating and promoting them.

The US election has been described by commentators on both sides of the Atlantic as the triumph of a moral message, of 'strong values'. Indeed, few would question the role played by morality and appeals to 'family' and 'national' values in the Bush campaign. Patriotism and sanctity were mobilised as political forces. Recent events in Europe have also brought the issue of public and private morals and values into public debate—but in a radically different way from the American experience.

The elaboration of the European Constitution and the political debates that accompanied its signature have prompted a wealth of reflection on the question of morality and values. This reflection has centred on the role of such ethical issues within Europe and, in particular, on the place of ethical issues within the new political project enshrined by the constitution. We have examined elsewhere (Bialasiewicz, Elden, Painter, forthcoming) some of the spatial imaginaries of the constitution, focusing on two senses of political space that run through the document: the constitution aims both to enforce hard territorialisations with regard to issues such as migration, international security, and terrorism, and to inscribe an aspirational space of shared values, an "area of freedom, security and justice" (*Official Journal of the European Union* 2004, article I-3.2) where economic and social inequalities are combated, and rights and privileges distributed throughout.

The aspirational sense of the EU constitution is intriguing, because not only does it continue the grand style of some previous constitutions—such as the US Constitution, but in contrast to, say, the German Basic Law—but also it is aspirational in the sense of its imaginative geographies. Transcending e~~~~~~

aspirational in the sense of its imaginative geographies. Transcending established national and regional identities in a single document is arguably requiring of a new kind of political subjectivity, and of a set of values that simultaneously include, exceed, and supersede the narrow particularities of its distinct and collective histories. Of course, the US constitution may be a cautionary tale here, in that interpretation, selective quotation, and precedent show that a framework is no guarantee of political practice. Nonetheless, the purpose and values of this European 'project'—which, like 'constitution' implies both an achievement and a process—are, we believe, worthy of examination.

References

Bialasiewicz L, Elden S, Painter J, forthcoming, "The constitution of EU territory" *Comparative European Politics*.

[Google Scholar](#)

Blair T, 2004, "Full text: Tony Blair's speech" *Guardian Unlimited* 5 March, http://politics.guardian.co.uk/iraq/story/0,12956,1162991,00.html.

[Google Scholar](#)

Clarke R, 2004, *"Drawing up blueprints for Bush victory"*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3987237.stm.

[Google Scholar](#)

Derrida J, 2004, "Une Europe de l'espoir" *[A Europe of hope] Le Monde Diplomatique* 3 November, page 3.

[Google Scholar](#)

Foucher M, 2002 *The European Republic* (Centre de Sciences Humaines and Manohar Books, New Delhi).

[Google Scholar](#)

Garton-Ash T, 2004, "American blues" *The Guardian* 18 November, page 11.

[Google Scholar](#)

Privacy

Gastner M T, Shalizi C R, Newman M E J, 2004, *"Maps and cartograms of the 2004 US presidential election results"*, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mejn/election/.

Google Scholar

Giannini M, 2004, "Pera: 'Su Buttiglione congiura anti-cristiana'" [Pera: Buttiglione faces anti-Christian crusade] *La Repubblica* 31 October, page 2.

Google Scholar

Gow D, 2004, "Defiant Barroso stands by anti-gay aide" *The Guardian* 22 October, page 15.

Google Scholar

Habermas J, 2001, "Why Europe needs a constitution" *New Left Review* 11 5–26.

Google Scholar

La Repubblica 2004, *"Buttiglione, dopo i gay le single. Nuova bufera sull' ex-ministro" [Buttiglione, after homosexuals, single mothers. New scandal faces the ex-minister]*, 16 October, page 2.

Google Scholar

Latour B, 2003, "Tocqueville, reviens, ils sont devenus fous!" [Tocqueville, come back, they've gone mad] *Le Monde* 4 April, page 17.

Google Scholar

Marozzi M, 2004a, "Buttiglione contro le madri single: 'I bambini nascano in famiglia'" [Buttiglione against single mothers: 'children should be born in a family'] *La Repubblica* 16 October, page 2.

Google Scholar

Marozzi M, 2004b, "Immigrazione, media e gay: Buttiglione sulla graticola UE" [Immigration, the media, and homosexuals: Buttiglione on the EU's hit list] *La Repubblica* 6 October, page 4.

Google Scholar

Offe C, 2002, "Is there, or can there be, a European society?", in *Demokratien in Europa* Eds Katenhusen I, Opladen W (Leske und Budrich, Berlin) pp 71–90.

Privacy

Google Scholar

Official Journal of the European Union 2004, *"Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe"*, C310, 16 December.

Google Scholar

Siedentop L, 2001 *Democracy in Europe* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middx).

Google Scholar

Studemann F, 2004, "Neocons look to bond with eurosceptics in UK" *Financial Times* 6 – 7 November, page 4.

Google Scholar

Todorov T, 2003 *Le Nouveau Désordre Mondial [The new world disorder]* (Éditions Robert Laffont, Paris).

Google Scholar

Toynbee P, 2004, "The yobs of Europe" *The Guardian* 21 May, page 27.

Google Scholar

Turner C, 2004, "Jurgen Habermas: European or German?" *European Journal of Political Theory* 3 293–314.

Crossref

Google Scholar

Similar articles:

🔒 Restricted access

[The Question of Values and Value Education in the Philosophy of Martin Buber](#)

Show Details ⌄

🔒 Restricted access

Privacy

[Review: Peace & Security: Peace & Security a Question of Values](#)

Show Details ⌄

🔓 Available access

[Introduction: Social value projects in post-liberalisation India](#)

Show Details ⌄

View More

Sage recommends:

SAGE Knowledge
Literature review

[Industrial Relations: What is Wrong with the System? (1965)](#)

Show Details ⌄

SAGE Knowledge
Literature review

[The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism: Perspectives on Alfred Chandler's Scale and Scope](#)

Show Details ⌄

SAGE Knowledge
Literature review

[The Strategic Role of the Board](#)

Show Details ⌄

View More

[Download PDF](#)

Privacy

Also from Sage

CQ Library

Elevating debate

Sage Data

Uncovering insight

Sage Business Cases

Shaping futures

Sage Campus

Unleashing potential

Sage Knowledge

Multimedia learning resources

Sage Research Methods

Supercharging research

Sage Video

Streaming knowledge

Technology from Sage

Library digital services

Privacy