

The Portuguese and Europe: Media Construction of a Complex Relationship

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For the Portuguese, Europe represents an ideal. It means civilization, culture, development, and wealth. But the Portuguese describe themselves as “second tier Europeans” and as citizens of a country “in the tail of Europe.” This collective self-perception contrasts with the memory of once having been a sea power, and that memory is a cornerstone of the national identity. The paper analyzes how the Portuguese press has been constructing the relationship between Portugal and Europe. The results show generalist Portuguese newspapers have been producing an inconsistent frame of representation of Europe. Between 1985 and 2004, the press showed a tendency for producing a positive conceptualization of Europe but, in other dimensions, the discourse becomes scarce and void. A similar tendency is also present in the discourse of two samples of Portuguese interviewees. The paper suggests the strength of national identity over the current process of deepening European integration. Despite the European Union institutions’ efforts to construct Europe as a contemporary myth of a multi-national, fair, and wealthy model of society, it seems the ancestral memory of national independence and power still resonates among the Portuguese.

The meaning of Europe is rather dynamic and complex. Throughout history, Europe has had numerous definitions geographically, culturally, and politically. The very definitions of the continent’s geographical boundaries are the result of political and socio-cultural interests, and the current process of integration under the European Union only adds further complexity. As Uricchio (2008) points out, Europe “is a fast-moving target. Whether conceived as a discursive entity or a set of institutional practices, it flits among accreted meanings, embedded memories, and an ever-changing configuration of borders, affiliations and organizations” (p. 11).

For Portugal, this dynamism and complexity of Europe seems to be acute. With its accession to the European Union in 1986, Portugal has radically redefined its national strategic guideline. Since the fifteenth century, and for 500 years, the country valued its position on the Atlantic over the fact that it is located in continental Europe. With a geographical location that favored the development of a seafaring tradition, and feeling continentally threatened by their powerful neighbor Spain, the Portuguese cultivated their so called “maritime vocation” through fisheries, trade, overseas expansion, and a sea-oriented culture. Throughout the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo (1933-1974), Portuguese foreign policy was oriented on what was thought to be the guarantee of national independence and a source of power: the Atlantic and the colonial territories in Africa. The state also emphasized the Atlantic identity as a cornerstone of the feeling of Portuguese nationality, and the notion that Portugal had “its face looking to the ocean and its back turned on Europe” became a widespread one.

By the 1960s Europe had already become the main partner for Portuguese foreign trade, but the intellectual elites distanced themselves from or were critical towards the idea of European integration. Later, in the mid-1980s, the option of joining the European Union became consensual among the main political parties, but for the population its meaning has been seen mainly in a pragmatic or instrumental way. Therefore, while Europe has generally been a symbol of culture, civilization, development, and wealth for the Portuguese, ambivalence towards Europe seems to be a persistent feature in Portuguese society.

Portugal is a peripheral European country, not only due to its geographic location, but also in terms of its economic and developmental position. Very often the Portuguese describe themselves as a country “in the tail of Europe,” or as “second tier Europeans.” Additionally, this condition is aggravated by the political nature of the European Union. The complexity and centralization of EU institutions and policies, and the reduced influence of European citizens’ opinion in them, contribute to a strong feeling of distance in relation to the core of Europe. Being almost invisible in everyday Portuguese life, the social perception of and knowledge about Europe is subject to significant mediation processes. The media therefore play a major role. Indeed, Eurobarometer surveys (see, e.g., EC, 2005) have systematically shown that the media are the main source of information of the Portuguese population regarding European affairs.

In order to capture the crystallizations of social representations underlying the relationship between Portugal and Europe, this paper proposes an analysis of the way Portuguese newspapers have been participating in the process of the construction of the social memory of Europe.

Literature Review

The articulation of social memory by the media represents a privileged method for reproducing the definitions of culture and identity which are characteristic of a nation. As participants in the setting of an agenda of the main issues and problems to be discussed, as well as in the definition of their frame, the media become important agents of social recollection, favoring certain social representations to be remembered over others, which are kept in oblivion. But the media also nurture ideas and myths that bind individuals to the nation (Osborne, 2001). This not only influences the construction of representations forming social memory but also the reproduction of national identities.

Various authors have underlined the role performed by the press in the historical process of the social construction of national identities (Anderson, 2005; Gellner, 1993; Thiesse, 2000). The mass media contribute to the reproduction of nationhood, not only by addressing a public defined as national and by presenting an informative agenda that is relevant to the nation-state, but also by routinely using words such as “here,” “us,” and “them” (Billig, 1995; Kevin, 2003). In addition to this, the production of media information consists of a form of cultural mediation that makes it possible to “locate” events reported in “maps” for the interpretation of reality shared within nations.

Although the development of globalization and other processes of transnational political integration, such as the European Union, are sometimes seen as threats to national identities,

national memories are still the providers of meaning production in the public communication. Indeed, in the daily production of news the media frame their stories on the set of values and representations which form the dominant culture of their audiences. As Oliveira (1988) stated, “media speech is based on the common and collective speech about reality” (p. 94), and is therefore correlated with the socio-cultural, symbolic, politic, and economic structures of the country.

Contrary to the expected creation of a European public sphere, media spaces have remained locked within the national borders of civil societies. As Habermas (1994) pointed out, the public spheres of European countries are still culturally isolated from one another, attaching themselves to contexts where political issues only become relevant as far as national stories and experiences are concerned. Information about international current affairs is, therefore, selected, interpreted, and contextualized according to national reference frameworks and national interests and angles of approach (Kevin, 2003; Wolton, 1994).

In this context, it is important to bear in mind that, according to Castells (2001), despite the fact that the political elites of the European Union Member States declare they are in favor of integration, citizens seem to be increasingly hostile towards the consolidation of European integration, since that process requires a flexible work market and the tightening of the “European social model,” as well as the transference of power to community institutions which are already considered distant and deficiently democratic. In this perspective, one can state that nationalism has developed together with European integration: “significant sectors of the European population tend to establish their nations against their states which they consider captive of European supranationality” (Castells, 2001, p. 394).

European Union organizations have shown that they have difficulties in implementing an effective communication policy; this has been underscored both by the complexity of community issues and the use of a closed and technocratic jargon. As a result, most European media can be said to be currently presenting a narrow understanding of the concepts and functionalities of community institutions and policies as well as of the “European construction” process (Horta, 2004). Moreover, the complex and time-consuming decision making process in the EU is not compatible with the media needs of rapidly evolving and controversial news (Vreese, 2001). Thus, when one factors in other aspects such as internal media organization constraints and the low levels of knowledge most journalists have about the European reality, it is very difficult to achieve some insight into, and understand the complexity of, the Portuguese journalistic treatment of Europe-related subjects (Horta, 2004).

From this perspective, it is important to understand the way the media participate in the process of social construction of the European memory. Indeed, the social memory provides schemes of collective representations on the basis of which individuals tend to act, and it is through those schemes that the reality of daily life is interpreted by those same individuals (Graber, 1984; Schwartz, 2000). These schemes are permanently undergoing reconstruction and are composed of selected and recreated representations which respond to the transformations of society and current needs. Thus, the way citizens understand the European Union and the support they give to the integration process depend on these representation schemes that, depending on the historical context, are socially activated, recalled, or forgotten.

In the concept of social memory, three different though interconnected dimensions may be identified: selection, conceptualization, and commemoration (Horta, 2005). Articulation of these three dimensions allows for the observation of the way the European social memory is structured in Portuguese society.

The first dimension refers to the selection process of representations that are to be “stored away” in our memory. This is a crucial process since social memory is not constituted by a never-ending accumulation of collective experiences, but by the capacity to claim representations which correspond to current societal needs of preservation and regulation. This means that memory is a dynamic skill, under constant development according to social and historical constraint (Fentress & Wickham, 1994; Ferrarotti, 1997; Halbwachs, 1997). In the selection process of the representations that are to be recalled, several factors can be involved, namely: cognitive resources, individual interests and skills, as well as, at a media action level, agenda setting or thematization. Actually, through the use of newsworthy criteria, the media make a distinction between events, and decide which representations are to be recalled or not.

Memory conceptualization, the second dimension of social memory, is based on the localization or categorization process of new representations in pre-existing grids of reality interpretation and meaning production. As argued by Fentress and Wickham (1994), the conceptualization of representations allows recollection to cease being dependent on the context in which it was produced, so that it can later be recovered and transmitted. In this process, language has a fundamental role since it works as a collective code allowing the group to organize, relate, and share concepts (Berger & Luckmann, 1998). As far as the media are concerned, the journalistic processes of framing and interpreting events allow the representations to be categorized and organized into socially shared concepts.

Commemoration, the third dimension of social memory, consists of a cultural practice that publicly evokes the visions of the past. Moreover, commemoration explicitly claims continuity with the past (Connerton, 1993). At this level, the media perform an important role by spreading rituals, producing interpretations of the meaning of commemorations, and promoting the feeling of inclusion, participation, and identification of the public with the community. The articulation, staging, and ritualization of recalled representations correspond to a privileged form of transmission and reaffirmation of the memory seen as the conscience of a common identity. Commemoration is therefore responsible for strengthening the social bonds and cohesion between the members of the group (Connerton, 1993; Hobsbawm, 1984).

Method

Even though social memory may be taken as a subjective reality, it can be analyzed by means of its objectivism in language. It can therefore be attained either in the form of media or individual discourse. In this study we sought to analyze the articulation between those two levels of discourse, both the public media and the individual, in order to understand the relation between the Portuguese press and the memory of Europe as claimed by individuals with diverse social and professional profiles. One group was highly skilled in terms of

Table 1. *Periods Analyzed*

1985	1 Mar.-31 Jul.	Treaty of Accession to the EEC
1985/86	28 Dec.-18 Jan.	Portugal joins EEC
1987	27 Jun.-26 Jul.	European Parliament Election Campaign
1989	3-19 Jun.	European Parliament Election Campaign
1991/92	1 Dec.-5 Jan.; 1-8 Feb.; 1-11 Apr.; 23 May-30 Jun.; 5-12 Dec.	Maastricht Treaty debate and first Portuguese presidency of EU
1994	28 May-13 Jun.	European Parliament Election Campaign
1996/97	1-20 Dec.; 7-23 Jun.; 20 Sept.-4 Oct.	Amsterdam Treaty debate and European Monetary Union
1999	29 May-14 Jun.	European Parliament Election Campaign
1999/2000	24 Dec.-8 Jan.; 5-12 Feb.; 18 Mar.-1 Apr.; 10 Jun.-2 Jul.	Second Portuguese presidency of EU
2001/02	22 Dec.-20 Jan.	Commencement of euro circulation
2003	22 Nov.-21 Dec.	European Constitutional Treaty debate
2004	24 Apr.-5 Jul.	EU enlargement, European Parliament Election Campaign and Euro'2004

educational and socio-professional backgrounds, and another group was made up of low-skilled individuals in terms of education and professional trainings. The intention behind this division was not only to understand the way social differentiation had been influencing the shared memory of Europe, but also to emphasize the fact that the highly-skilled individuals had, most probably, a closer relation with the press than the lower-skilled ones.

In analyzing the media coverage of Europe undertaken by the press for the current study, the first thing taken into consideration was the evolution of the representations conveyed by newspapers within a wide time frame—from the time Portugal joined the European Communities until today. Based on an inventory of relevant events concerning the relationship between Portugal and Europe, 12 periods have been identified as corresponding to “hot” chronologies (Lévi-Strauss, 1962), that is, sequences of events that could have had particular meaning in the construction of the idea of Europe within the national public space. These periods vary in length depending on the sequence of potentially significant events; they are those identified in Table 1.

The second step in this study was to constitute a newspaper corpus with different profiles. Based on a set of criteria such as periodicity, annual average circulation, geographical distribution of average circulation, average audience constitution (sex, age,

social class, and professional occupation) and categorization generally given to each newspaper, three dailies (*Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal de Notícias*, and *Público*) and a weekly paper (*Expresso*) were selected.

In order to analyze the European memory of individuals belonging to social and professional groups with different levels of cognitive skills, semi-directive interviews were carried out. The first group can be characterized as holding tertiary level academic qualifications and a tendency to read newspapers often (university teachers); a second group was made up of less educated individuals in low-skilled professions. In total, 31 individuals, distributed by gender and age groups (between 24 and 74 years old), were interviewed between February and April 2005, in the area of Greater Lisbon.

The Memory of Europe Articulated by the Press

One of the indicators of the selection of social memory dimension concerned the editorial relevance given by the press to issues that, in some way, were related to Europe. One can conclude that, despite the fact that the analyzed periods were “hot” chronologies of European issues, in 60.8% of the cases of the four analyzed newspaper front pages there was no reference to Europe; in 31.6% of those front pages there was one Europe-related headline; in 6.4% there were two headlines; and in 1.4% there were three or more headlines. These figures are especially revealing due to the highly commercial function that newspaper front pages have in Portugal. Thus, one can infer that the newspapers did not consider references to Europe as being appealing to the public.

This assertion was also exposed by the spectrum of attention given to Europe in contrast to other issues. Indeed, on the occasion of the European Union enlargement to include ten Eastern countries (1st May 2004), the scarce media coverage on a subject with such strong national effects, contrasted with the intensive news coverage and forum debates on the torture practices used on Iraqi prisoners by the US military forces. Given that editorial criteria concerning the allocation of relevance, pertinence evaluations, and agenda setting in the commentary area are directly connected with thematization (Saperas, 1993), and due to the fact that it is particularly representative of European issues, this would suggest that matters related to Europe tend not to meet the necessary conditions to be classified by the Portuguese press, in practical terms, as preferable subjects for the public attention. Consequently, European issues tend to be withdrawn from the public opinion shaping process.

The longitudinal development of the sample texts has revealed major irregularity. The cyclical mode of media coverage on Europe-related affairs also indicated that the media tend to give little visibility to those issues, except in terms of particularly significant events, like some EU summits, elections, or the introduction of the single currency. This tendency has also been demonstrated in transnational studies on European media (Vreese, 2001).

According to Kevin (2003), the inclusion of a section dedicated to Europe in a newspaper reveals that it is a constant issue in the news agenda, influencing the development of a sphere of debate on European affairs. However, this is not a frequent practice in the European press (Kevin, 2003). The present analysis demonstrated that also in Portugal, the inclusion of a section dedicated to Europe only happened episodically.

In addition to the inconsequential way that topics relating to Europe are depicted, selected, and ranked in newspaper front pages, other indicators revealed that these issues have had a low level of newsworthiness in the analyzed press. These indicators are: the tendency for short text dimension, the absence of an editorial section dedicated to European issues, the difficulty in terms of thematization, and the irregular rate of text publishing (Horta, 2005).

As far as the way the conceptualization of European memory is concerned, it was observed that, in the total of the sample, the policies and functioning of community institutions (16.6%), sports (13.7%), and national domestic policy (10.2%) emerged more frequently in the thematic framework of published information. The importance of sports in the sample follows observations in other European countries (Kevin, 2003), reflecting the media attention given to football.

As expected, the analysis confirmed that in all of the studied newspapers the idea of Europe is dominated by the European Union, whilst other conceptions only have a sparse expression in the analyzed corpus. Indeed, almost 70% of the analyzed texts referred to the EU, of which 37.6% were associated with the idea of economic community, 32.3% political community, and 14.9%, the third most frequent conception of Europe, had to do with the idea of sports community. The proportion of texts in which the idea of Europe as a social and cultural community prevailed did not exceed 4.7%.

The analysis of other indicators of the dimension of memory conceptualization, such as the media approach used in the articles, the relationship established between Portugal and Europe, and the connotation and values associated with Europe, has demonstrated that there was a largely favorable discourse towards Europe in the sample. In 56% of the analyzed newspaper articles, the relationship between Portugal and Europe was favorably depicted, whereas it was seen as neutral or undefined in 30% of the cases, and as negative in only 14% of the total. However, the frequency of articles favorable to Europe was relatively higher in the earlier periods (from 68% to 76%), which were simultaneous with the beginning of the European integration of Portugal, as opposed to the latter ones (from 58% to 49%).

Considering the fact that the conceptualization of Europe was shown to be dominated by the idea of the political and economic construction of the European Union (43% of the articles portrayed a political approach), this favorability for the EU is probably linked to two features. On the one hand, the construction of a discourse encouraged by European political elites idealizes, and mystifies, the European integration process as a project of peace, prosperity, liberty, democracy, tolerance, and cohesion. On the other hand, the main national political parties emphasize the benefits for the country resulting from adhesion to the EU. However, most recently, the difficulties associated with the lack of leadership and common strategy in the European construction process are likely to have gained in importance.

If at an ideal and abstract level, Europe has emerged associated with very positive connotations, at a concrete level, there were paradoxical representations in the analyzed articles of the European reality concerning the ideology that lies beneath the concept of "European construction."

In a positive perspective, many representations have emerged in association with Europe: economic development (wealth, complete performance of market economy), political stability (democracy, institutional stability, organization, law observation, respect for human rights,

and equitability), liberty (political, liberty of movements), unity (“European family”), diversity, pacifism, and knowledge.

In a more negative perspective, and especially in recent years, Europe appears to be associated with a critical situation: (a) lack of political ambition, strategy, and leadership, (b) lack of trust in its own values, (c) risk of being reduced to a simple common market, (d) loss of geostrategic importance, (e) economic idleness, (f) population becoming separated from the decision making process, (g) democratic deficit, (h) detachment of citizens, (i) little importance given to public debate, (j) increasing dependence of the nations on central and cumbersome power structures in Brussels, (k) insufficient cohesion and solidarity, (l) unsustainability of the European model, (m) hypocrisy, (n) revival of populism, (o) ungovernable dimension, (p) neo-liberalism, (q) commercialism, (r) excessive bureaucracy, (s) and possible increase in criminality and epidemic situations. Some residual ideas associated with the idea of Europe have also emerged: Totalitarianism, Nazism, anti-Semitism, war, violence and blood-shed among Europeans; and control over the colonized territories.

The analysis of the third dimension of the concept of memory—commemoration—allowed for the observation of the way the press has publicly reported rituals and symbols, as well as the feeling of belonging to Europe. However, a lack of “European” commemorations was immediately observed.

Regarding ritual actions like the European Parliament election campaigns, the analyzed texts pointed out an instrumentalization of European affairs by political actors in terms of favoring national party fights and emptying media speech (very dependent on the agendas of the political sources) of any content effectively associated with Europe. Thus, one can say that there was preferential media focalization on party issues and national policies. In the analyzed articles, issues relating to Europe were almost non-existent in comparison to in-party fighting, the creation of leading political personae and small “stories” or *fait-divers*. Indeed, the core issues in 70% of the analyzed articles on the European Parliament elections were about national domestic policy, 12.6% concerned campaign organization in other European countries, 8.8% dealt with topics strictly related to the European Union, 6.2% highlighted issues concerning public opinion and participation (namely surveys), and 1.9% dealt with Portuguese integration in Europe. Consequently, the clear result was a lack of the ritual function that could be expected from the media coverage of these electoral campaigns, projecting a public representation of Europe as positive though distant, uninteresting and not capable of mobilizing the public.

In a similar way, the analysis of the European single currency (euro) as a symbol indicated a media coverage of Europe which tended to be predominantly instrumental and economical. As Silveirinha (2005) has pointed out, despite the media hype surrounding the euro during the period when the new currency was introduced, the media coverage in the following 12 months has depicted the single currency as a catalyzing tool in terms of economical development, thus erasing the symbolic potential of the currency concerning money and economic affairs.

The media coverage of the European Football Championship that took place in Portugal in 2004 was also taken into consideration in analyzing the identification with Europe.

Nevertheless, although the occasion was one of public representation of the identification with Europe, the media coverage took place only in the context of a strong staging and promotion of the nation and national identity. The analysis that was carried out clearly showed that the idea of Europe was bound to be forgotten, except when considered as a representation of otherness, in the sense of the “others” it was important to beat and, in doing so, show accomplishment and competition skills as a way of furthering the international prestige of the country.

During the period in question, headlines on the Euro 2004 were frequently among the three main titles on the front pages of the analyzed papers. However, in those headlines not only were there no common European identity representations, but there was also a recurrent suggestion of identification between the national football team and Portugal or the Portuguese. Encouragement given to public mobilization, as well as the frequent use of national symbols by newspapers indicates a memory reproduction of national identity, and not a memory of Europe. Accordingly, by way of example, two of the most read dailies: *Correio da Manhã* presented front page headlines such as “País eufórico de lés a lés” [Euphoria throughout the country], “PAÍS A VERDE E VERMELHO” [COUNTRY IN GREEN AND RED], and “Tudo pela bandeira” [All for the flag]; “PORTUGAL DE CHUTEIRAS” [PORTUGAL IN FOOTBALL BOOTS] was run in *Jornal de Notícias*. Even a newspaper with a more conservative profile such as *Expresso* became attached to the concept of nationality, for example, by offering the national flags as gifts to its readers.

Hence, praise for the euphoria, national pride on the successful accomplishment of the event, and patriotism stood out in the press. On that account, the representation of Europe was less favorable than usual. The exhibition of the national capacity for organization, together with its sporting capacity, was used to disregard Europe. The Euro 2004 media coverage was therefore a form of broadcasting a stirring discourse which highly promoted nationality over the feeling of belonging to Europe.

The Memory of Europe Asserted by Two Groups of Portuguese

The second level of analysis concerned the memory of Europe as asserted by two samples of individuals belonging to groups with very different levels of education: 15 were university professors or assistants and 16 held, or had held, less qualified positions. This distinction was made in order to allow for an understanding of differences associated to objective life conditions in the way individuals recall Europe.

Regarding the selection of memory dimension, it was observed amongst the interviewees that they share the perception that the Portuguese tend not to draw too much attention to European affairs, preferring those issues which are more directly connected with their own experience of life. As one of the interviewees reasoned, this lack of attention is based on the fact that European affairs are “less interesting subjects, less...appealing...to ordinary people” (woman, 36 years old, Master’s degree). This confirmed one of the Eurobarometer survey results: in 2001, for example, 88% of the Portuguese interviewed stated that they paid little or no attention to news on the European Union (EC, 2001).

In the same way, regarding the importance personally assigned to Europe by the interviewees, it was clear that this tends to be a subject kept apart from the field of the individuals' personal preoccupations, especially in the case of less educated interviewees. The low appreciation of the European Union can be related with the nature of publicly available information itself. As the television is the most important means for gathering information on European affairs for 74% of the Portuguese population (EC, 2005), it is important to bear in mind that fragmentation, superficiality, reduced contextualization, and the speediness of information on TV news "make insight and understanding difficult on many significant aspects of the facts presented as news" (Wolf, 1992, p. 171).

In the identification of the conceptualization of Europe, the ideas of history and civilization stood out. Accordingly, Europe was characterized by interviewees in a deeply positive, valued, idealized way: "an old society already well established" (woman, 47 years old, PhD); "really wealthy and beautiful" (woman, 36 years old, Master's degree). "Europe" also represents—mainly among highly educated interviewees—an ideal model of a developed, organized, fair, cooperative, and tolerant society that values peace, social, and humanitarian issues. Among the interviewees with less qualified jobs, "Europe" tends to represent an economic community in which Portugal is integrated and that brings (or should bring) development, advantages, help, benefits, and funding. As one of the interviewees explained, "Europe is the countries united...in order...to be able to perhaps develop better and...how should I say this...exchange products among them...something I don't know..." (woman, 57 years old, 6th grade).

Another idea of Europe, this time with a negative meaning, is that of political institution. In this respect, once again the sample showed a gap between the highly educated interviewees potentially more interested in European issues and the less educated, who not only tended to show lack of interest but also detachment, lack of affection, or indifference to the EU. "What irritates me is not belonging to Europe, but having a lack of power...within Europe" (man, 55 years old, PhD). "The Portuguese may be swallowed up and disadvantaged" (man, 56 years old, 6th grade).

Thus, the interviews showed the connotation given to Europe as being extremely variable; very positive when associated with culturally idealized aspects, and negative when understood as an opposition to "Portugality."

Regarding the memory commemoration dimension, the analysis of some symbols of ritual actions and of the feeling of belonging to Europe has allowed for the conclusion that there does not exist in the public space any ritualization forms of belonging to Europe which could promote identification with the European reality.

Discussion

Since public opinion has become a legitimizing force of the authority of political institutions, the media are privileged objects of political elite instrumentalization, due to the fact that they constitute socially legitimized agencies of information broadcasting with unparalleled social transmission capacity. Though among national political elites there is a dominant consensus about the participation of the country in European integration, there has

been a duplicity both in speech and in action, meaning that the gains coming from the European Union can be largely advertised as “national victories,” whilst, on the other hand, “Europe” is to blame for unpopular measures and policies. The political elites have also revealed incapacity to discuss concepts and models of European construction, which are supplanted by mere party dispute at the national level.

In a context where even elites show ambiguity towards Europe, the media coverage of these issues by the press does not surprise by reflecting the social memory of Europe in an inconsistent way. It is, on the conceptual level, ideally positive and favourable towards the European integration, yet, in the selection and commemoration levels, the social memory of Europe is hardly considered appealing, and is replaced by a speech that benefits nationality. Thus, the memory of Europe is valorised by the press at the level of representation, but at the level of action it does not appear in the public space in a coherent way.

Regarding the interviews, it was confirmed that there is an important discursive difference between higher- and lower-skilled or educated interviewees, translating to considerably higher levels of information and interest in European affairs among the former rather than among the latter. Furthermore, the highly qualified interviewees were likely to present a permeable ideology concerning European Union elites, also claiming forms of cultural sharing and common values, as well as a European ideal society model, though always defending critical perspectives about the EU political institutionalization. On the other hand, the less professionally qualified interviewees produced discourses that were more circumscribed to an economic, concrete, and functional perspective of Europe, attached to daily life perception. As a result, though sharing historical idealization of the European continent and culture, they were likely to place the EU in an instrumental perspective for obtaining advantages to the country, making it clear that there is a need to defend nationality. In spite of the differences between the higher and lower professionally qualified, Europe emerged conceptualized in a positive way, though the dimension of selection was considered as hardly appealing and commemoration itself was almost absent from their social perception of public space.

There is a certain alignment between the discourse produced by the press and the representations claimed by the interviewees, and data from both discourses suggest the strength of national identity over the current process of deepening European integration. Despite EU institutions’ efforts to construct Europe as a contemporary myth of a multinational, fair, and wealthy model of society, it seems the ancestral memory of national independence and power still resonates among the Portuguese.

Note

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