

Beyond the Eurosceptic/Europhile Divide: Towards a New Classification of EU News Coverage in the UK Press

John Price

University of Sunderland

Abstract

Newspapers are typically categorised as being either Eurosceptic or Europhile. However, this classification is insufficient and misleading when applied to news reporting in the UK press. The term Euroscepticism has been usefully deconstructed into more nuanced and complex categories by researchers studying political parties and public opinion. A similar approach is now needed to better represent the complexities of EU news coverage. The current Eurosceptic / Europhile classification needs to be developed for two main reasons. First, it is misleading in that it fails to accurately map the landscape of EU news reporting across the press. Second, it is too simplistic in that it ignores important variations in EU news production – in particular, differences between tabloid and quality titles, and between Brussels based and national based journalists. This article will discuss these issues by drawing on new, empirical research into EU news production. It will conclude by proposing a new means of classifying EU news coverage in the UK press.

Keywords

Europhile; Eurosceptic; EU; news; press

STUDIES ADDRESSING MEDIA COVERAGE OFTEN FIND IT USEFUL TO CATEGORISE THE press along various fault-lines. For example, UK newspapers are often categorised in terms of market sector (see McNair 2007):

- **Elite:** i.e. *Independent, Financial Times, Guardian, Financial Times, Times*
- **Mid-market:** i.e. *Daily Express, Daily Mail*
- **Mass circulation:** i.e. *Daily Mirror, Daily Star, Sun*

Or in terms of their political stance (see Statham 2007):

- **Left broadsheet:** i.e. *Guardian, Independent*
- **Right broadsheet:** i.e. *Times, Daily Telegraph*

In terms of the European Union (EU), UK newspapers tend to adopt a strong editorial position which does not necessarily reflect their party political allegiances. For example, *The Sun* backed the Labour Party during the Blair government but took up a strongly anti-European stance throughout this period. Therefore, a categorisation which captures newspapers' particular stances on the EU is needed.

The most commonly used form of categorisation is to divide the UK press into Eurosceptic and Europhile (or pro-European) camps. This is done by studies focusing on EU news coverage (for example Anderson and Weymouth 1999; Anderson 2004; Daddow 2006,

2007; Gavin 2001; McLeod 2003) and by wider political studies relating to European issues (see for example, Baker 2001; Carey and Burton 2004; Wallace 2005).

The categorisation is not only used by academics, but also by politicians, pressure groups and journalists themselves, as in the following example written by Steven Glover in the *Independent* (July 2, 2007):

...Europe is nonetheless bound to be a bone of contention for the Mail unless Mr Brown calls a referendum, though so far it has been less worked-up than *The Sun*. Mr Brown might do himself a great favour if he did change his mind. The **Europhile** press will make much less of a din if he calls a referendum than the **Eurosceptic** press will if he did not. (emphasis not original)

Looking in more detail at this form of categorisation, the current distribution of UK national daily titles is as follows:

- **Eurosceptic press:** *The Daily Telegraph, The Times, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Star, The Sun*;
- **Europhile press:** *The Independent, The Guardian, Financial Times, The Daily Mirror*.

This summary is a revised version of that observed by one of the most comprehensive studies of EU press coverage to date (Anderson and Weymouth 1999). Since that study the *Daily Express* and *Daily Star*, under the ownership of Richard Desmond, have moved towards a strong anti-European editorial stance. This shift has been identified by one of the original authors (Anderson 2004) and subsequently confirmed by others (Firmstone 2004; Price 2008).

The above summary, when looked at purely in terms of numbers of titles, may seem to suggest a fairly even balance of opinion among the UK press. However, when circulation is taken into account, Eurosceptic newspapers make up 77 per cent of the national press, with the Europhile titles accounting for just 23 per cent. This means the Eurosceptic press reach a potential readership of around 24 million people (ABC, November 2008). Furthermore, as suggested above, while the Eurosceptic press are often vehement and consistent in their attacks on the EU, the more Europhile titles are not equally supportive. Their general backing for the EU project is often tempered by caution and vigilance concerning specific proposals.

The use of Eurosceptic / Europhile categories to characterize EU related matters is not exclusive to news reporting. The terms are often used to distinguish between the positions of political parties, or to describe public opinion on EU issues. However, studies in these related fields have begun to usefully dissect the categories, and in particular the concept of Euroscepticism, to provide deeper and clearer understandings of opinions and positions in relation to the EU. For example, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003) have defined political parties in terms of hard Euroscepticism (principled and total rejection of the EU) and soft Euroscepticism (contingent objection to particular elements of the EU). Similarly, Sorenson (2008) has deconstructed public opinion in to classifications of economic, sovereignty, democratic and political based Euroscepticism.

One of the benefits of these approaches is that they go beyond rather simplistic definitional categories to develop fuller awareness of complex social realities. For example, Sorenson's approach leads her to observe how public Euroscepticism can take many different forms in different member states across periods of time. This allows more nuanced and considered conclusions about the capacity of EU campaigns to foster public support.

Another benefit of these approaches is that by dissecting a term such as Euroscepticism, researchers are able to obtain much clearer definitions, and, therefore, more useful understandings of the matters under consideration. A common weakness of previous research has been the diversity and vagueness with which the term Euroscepticism has been applied. As Hooghe and Marks (2007) have commented, the term has many varieties and assumes different forms in different contexts. It has been used as a catch-all term for a number of diverse phenomena, and has the potential to mask important contextual variations. As Sorenson (2008: 7) says: "Conceptual disagreements have hindered the accumulation of knowledge". What is required, therefore, is a precise definition of the term. One way of achieving this is by dismantling it into concepts appropriate to the context under review.

Despite these benefits, to date, no such deconstruction of EU classifications has been applied to news coverage. It is argued here that the typical Europhile / Eurosceptic means of describing EU news coverage is neither a useful nor an accurate form of classification. In fact, the categories, and the terminology used to describe them, hide important variations in news production while providing a distorted picture of the overall character of EU news.

But why does this matter? The world is not black and white, but shades of grey; and an understanding of the shades of EU news production is important for the following reasons:

- First, if the EU's communications service wishes to successfully engage with the producers of EU news, it requires an informed and nuanced understanding of the nature of EU news production. Without this, the EU is likely to misdirect its attentions and resources.
- Second, an over-simplified categorisation of press coverage is not helpful for those wishing to suggest improvements in the nature of EU news reporting. Politicians and others who take a normative view of journalism must grasp the complexities of coverage before they can make meaningful calls for change. Ambitions for a fairer and more balanced reporting require a full account of any perceived distortions or imbalances in EU news.
- Third, a more nuanced understanding of EU news is important for those actually involved in its production – the journalists themselves. If journalists share the tendency of others to simplify and polarise the nature of EU news, they are missing the inevitable complexities of the real world. The need to simplify is a necessary characteristic of all forms of journalism; however, a reflexive journalism, aware of the nature and consequences of its simplifications, and aware of the complexities bubbling beneath these surfaces, is arguably a better journalism.

These issues offer a strong case for the need to offer a more nuanced version of the EU news landscape. They will be returned to in the conclusion of this article in the light of the findings presented below.

Methodology

The new empirical material discussed in this article is based on a combination of interviews with journalists and press officials, and analysis of EU news texts.

The selection of interview subjects used a purposive sampling technique in which subjects were identified according to their relevance to, and knowledge of, EU news reporting in the UK press. Twenty four interviews were conducted with Brussels based journalists, UK based political journalists, and members of the European Commission's press service. This press service was selected as it has been identified as the main focus for journalists

covering the EU (Baisnee 2001; Meyer 1999). The inclusion of UK based journalists in the sample was seen as being of particular significance as these reporters have been largely ignored by previous research in this field. While there has been some recent attempt to rectify this, studies have tended to draw on a relatively small number of sources (Firmstone 2004; Statham 2008).

The Commission's potential sample population therefore comprised spokespeople in its Brussels based DG Directorate General for Media and Communications and four press officers based in its UK Representations. Of these, 10 were interviewed. These were selected for interview following initial discussions with press officers and journalists to determine which officials played the key roles in relation to the UK press. Seven interviews were conducted face-to-face with interviewees; the other three were telephone interviews.

Interviews with journalists consisted of the following:

Table 1: *Interviews Conducted*

Newspaper title	Interviews with UK based journalists	Interviews with Brussels based journalists
Eurosceptic press		
Daily Express	NA	Regular freelance contributor
Daily Mail	Political editor	Regular freelance contributor
Daily Star	NA	NA
Daily Telegraph	Political editor	Brussels correspondent
Sun	Westminster correspondent	Regular freelance contributor
Times	Political editor	Brussels correspondent
Europhile press		
Daily Mirror	NA	NA
Financial Times	NA	Brussels bureau chief
Guardian	Political editor	European editor
Independent	Political editor	Brussels correspondent

All interviews with journalists were conducted on a face-to-face basis. The only newspapers not represented in the study are the *Daily Star* and *Daily Mirror*. This is due to the fact that neither newspaper has regular Brussels correspondents, nor were their UK based political journalists available during the times interviews were being carried out. However, the interviews conducted provide a thorough examination of the UK national daily press, incorporating titles from across the market sectors and from a variety of political stances. In particular, the gaining of an interview with a journalist from the Sun newspaper is significant as the title has been traditionally obstructive to researchers in this field (for example Anderson and Weymouth 1999; Firmstone 2004).

Interviews used a semi-structured approach, with an interview schedule designed to encourage interviewees to reflect on the nature of EU news and the potential factors shaping its production. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

Data analysis consisted of identifying emergent themes from interviews, as suggested by the approach of Miles and Huberman (1994). These themes, and the quotes used as evidence for findings below, have been selected as being reflective of a consensus among

interviewees. However, instances in which these themes are contested or contradicted will be noted and explained in the text.

Content analysis was conducted on a sample of EU news texts representative of a two-year period of news coverage from July, 2003, to June, 2005. This involved analysing four constructed weeks of coverage, amounting to 348 texts, to control for systematic variations in news production (Lacy *et al.* 2001; Riffe *et al.* 2005). In particular, content analysis was used to examine the character of EU news reporting across a range of variables including newspaper title, editorial agenda (Eurosceptic or Europhile) and the role and location (Brussels correspondent, other foreign correspondent, UK based political journalist, or other UK based journalist) of journalists. Texts were coded as being neutral, positive or negative in the positions they took in relation to the EU. Texts which were predominantly critical of the EU were coded as negative; those which were fundamentally approving of the EU were coded as positive; while texts meeting the journalistic norm of objectivity - defined in line with McNair (1998) as containing a balance of opinion, validated by sources - were coded as neutral.

The consistency and accuracy of content analysis was tested using inter-coder reliability. Coder agreement was calculated using Scott's pi formula (1955). Matters of fact, such as newspaper title, achieved full inter-coder agreement. The coding of the positive/negative/neutral nature of texts achieved a pi score of .78. This result is lower but within acceptable levels of inter-coder reliability. As Wimmer and Dominick (2006: 185) observe: "If a certain amount of interpretation is involved, reliability estimates are typically lower. In general, the greater the amount of judgemental leeway given to coders, the lower the reliability coefficients will be".

The focus of this article is on news production in one EU member state. While this places obvious limitations on its findings, there are also significant benefits to this approach.

First, case studies allow for a depth of analysis often not found in pan-national studies. This article draws on interviews with journalists from eight out of ten UK national, daily newspapers and analyses content from them all. Cross national studies tend to make their generalisations from a much narrower range of sources - for example, Gleisner and de Vreese (2005) only analysed material from three UK newspapers.

Second, pan-national studies have suggested a lot of common ground between EU coverage in the UK press and its coverage in other member states. For example, de Vreese *et al.* (2006) found a common negative pattern in EU coverage in the old 15 member states. Therefore, there is good reason to believe that the findings of this in-depth case study have a much wider significance. In short, both national and pan-national studies have strengths and weaknesses and should be seen as complementing one another.

Third, many of the ambitions of this article are outward looking in scope. Underpinning aims for research, set out in the introduction, included making recommendations about the communications strategy of the EU and for better informed criticism by those wishing to see improvements in press coverage of the EU. These aims are by their very nature designed to have a wider resonance than for the UK alone.

Research findings: the need for a new means of classifying EU news

This section presents some arguments for why the typical means of classifying EU news needs to be improved. First, it is argued that the current means of classification does not accurately reflect or describe differences in EU news production across the range of national newspapers. Second, it is argued the current system is overly simplistic, hiding

significant variations in how EU news is produced within individual newspapers and by different types of journalist. In particular, there are crucial differences in how news is produced by Brussels based and UK based journalists.

Mapping the landscape of EU news

A major problem with the current means of classifying EU news is that its categories and terminology do not fairly depict the overall landscape of EU news reporting in the UK press. Similar weaknesses in literature on political parties and public opinion have led researchers in other fields to dissect the term into more detailed and useful categories (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003; Sorenson 2008). Such an approach is now needed to better capture the character of EU news reporting.

Findings of content analysis suggest that a majority of EU news is actually neutral in nature. Two-thirds of EU news in the UK press meets the standard of objective reporting. This is not to say that this reporting is free of any criticism of the EU, but that any criticism is balanced and validly sourced (McNair 1998). This finding is perhaps a surprise to those who would criticize the UK press en masse for its hostile reporting of the EU. What it suggests, is that critics of the press would be better to offer a more refined judgement of news coverage which targets sections of reporting that are genuinely negative in nature.

If we restrict findings to the third of EU news that deviates from being objective, we see that this is overwhelmingly negative in nature. Around 30% of UK press coverage of the EU is negative – while just over 3% is positive. This reinforces previous studies which have highlighted a strong negative tendency in EU news (Anderson and Weymouth 1999; Gleisner and De Vreese 2005; Morgan 1999; Norris 2000; de Vreese *et al.* 2006). However, what has been missing from this literature is a detailed, systematic breakdown of how this negativity is dispersed across the spectrum of press coverage.

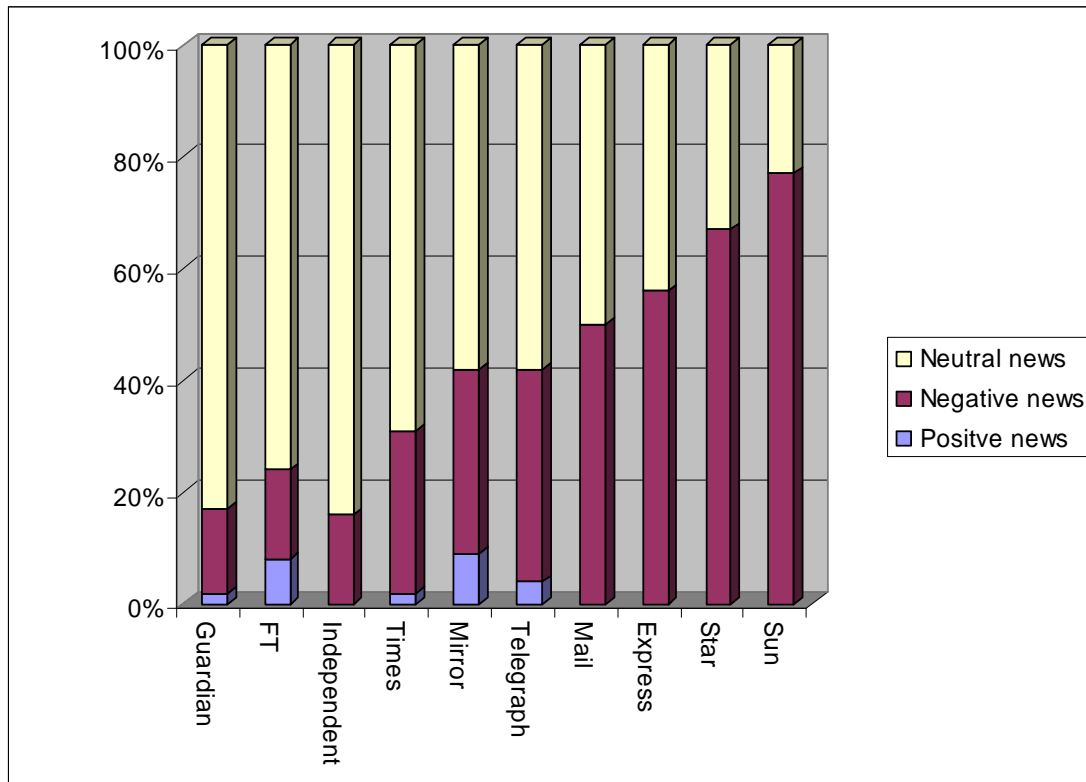
Findings here reveal that Eurosceptic titles are responsible for nearly three-quarters of negative EU news coverage in the UK press. However, that means that more than a quarter of the negative coverage of the EU is produced by so-called Europhile titles. Hostile coverage of the EU is far from confined to traditionally Eurosceptic titles and makes up a significant proportion of Europhile coverage.

Why is this? Part of the explanation must be found in the nature of journalism itself, in which news values are prone to prioritise bad rather than good news (Harcup 2003). Furthermore, normative versions of political reporting suggest it should perform a watchdog role by challenging and holding the powerful to account. This is why traditionally termed Europhile newspapers, in favour of the EU in principle, often find plenty of reasons to be critical of the EU in practice (Anderson and Weymouth 1999). Other explanations include the roles played by national sources in exploiting the EU for domestic political gain (Anderson and Price 2008), and the influence of an overwhelmingly sceptical public opinion feeding off a version of history in which Europe is seen as the 'other' (Daddow 2007; Marcussen *et al.* 1999; Smith 2006).

If findings are isolated to news emerging from Europhile titles, they show a far greater tendency for negative rather than positive coverage. Around one-in-six EU texts appearing in Europhile titles contain negative reporting of the EU, in contrast to less than one-in-twenty texts which contain positive coverage. In other words, there is around three times more negative than positive coverage of the EU in traditionally termed Europhile newspapers.

When the figures are broken down still further - as a proportion of each newspaper's EU coverage - it becomes clear that every newspaper contains more negative than positive coverage about the EU. For example, around 15 per cent of *The Guardian's* EU coverage is critical of the EU, while just two per cent is positive.

Figure 1: *The character of news as a proportion of each UK national newspaper's EU news coverage*



In light of these findings, it is argued the current means of classifying EU news, and its terminology, seems inappropriate and misleading. The term Europhile does not accurately depict a type of reporting that contains three times more negative than positive coverage of the EU. In addition, the large amounts of negative coverage mean that one term – Eurosceptic – is insufficient to usefully articulate its varying forms.

As the above findings show, the majority of EU coverage is objective in nature. However, when this objectivity is broken there is a strong tendency for it to move in a negative direction. This is true for all newspapers, regardless of their editorial position. Therefore, it is perhaps more worthwhile to distinguish between newspapers in terms of the frequency with which their objective reporting tends towards the negative. Also, it is important to understand why, and in what circumstances, a newspaper's coverage is more or less likely to take a negative character. Some of these factors will be discussed in the following section.

Mapping variations in EU news coverage

One of the problems with the current means of classifying EU news coverage is that it is too simplistic. The two groupings (Eurosceptic and Europhile) mask important distinctions

and divisions in the nature of coverage. While it is obviously impossible for a system of classification to accommodate every nuance and shade of reporting, it is argued here that the current system ignores some crucial differences in coverage – two of which will be addressed here. First, the current classification does not account for significant contrasts in reporting by Brussels based and UK based journalists. Second, it fails to account for crucial differences in how the EU is reported by quality and tabloid titles.

The findings of content analysis and interviews suggest that the location of journalists is as important in shaping the nature of EU news as the editorial agenda from which it emerges. Whether an EU news report is filed from Brussels or the UK is as crucial in influencing content as whether it is produced for a Europhile or Eurosceptic newspaper. News produced by UK based journalists is far more likely to be negative towards the EU than that produced by Brussels based reporters.

If we restrict findings to news produced for Eurosceptic titles, we find that UK based journalists tend to produce far more negative copy (62 per cent of their EU reporting is negative) than their Brussels based counterparts (27 per cent). It is interesting to compare these figures with the levels of negative reporting by UK based journalists working for Europhile titles (21 per cent). From this, we can see that in terms of levels of negative reporting, Brussels based Eurosceptic coverage is far more akin to UK produced Europhile reporting than nationally produced Eurosceptic news.

A similar pattern holds if we restrict findings to texts produced within individual titles. For example, in the cases of both *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, texts produced by their UK based journalists are twice as likely (just over 50 per cent) to contain explicitly negative portrayals of the EU than those produced by their Brussels based correspondents (25 per cent).

These findings are supported by the observations of press officers and journalists. The overwhelming feeling among interviewees is that reporting from the UK tends to be far more hostile than that produced from Brussels. Furthermore, the more time a journalist spends in Brussels, the less hostile their reporting tends to become – a phenomenon known as ‘going native’. Examples of these views can be found in the following two comments from a European Commission spokesperson and a UK based journalist:

The Brussels corps, even those who are fairly sceptical when they arrive, they go native very quickly. It sounds pejorative but what happens is they are favourably impressed by what we are doing and realise that we are actually doing quite a lot of sensible things that are beneficial. (Spokesperson of the European Commission)

It causes much jocularly around here when we see guys going out there ready to tear the place apart and within months they're like lambs, and I'm not decrying them, that's just the way the system is over there. You're part of a cocooned media operation and they spoon feed you lots of stuff and you can get sucked into it. It takes a real journalistic resilience to kick against that and be made a member of the awkward squad. (UK based journalist for a Eurosceptic newspaper)

Differences between Brussels based and national based reporting are important because of the high levels of UK produced EU news. In fact, perhaps surprisingly, more of the UK press's EU coverage is produced by UK based journalists than by members of the Brussels press corps (Price 2008). Part of the reason for this, is that sections of the UK press have no representation in Brussels. However, if findings are restricted to those titles that have Brussels correspondents, as much EU news is produced from the UK as from Brussels. This makes variations in the reporting practices of national and Brussels based reporters highly significant when considering the character and causes of EU news content. Any

meaningful attempt to classify EU news therefore needs to take these variations into account.

There are a number of explanations as to why there is such a difference in the nature of national and Brussels based EU news reporting. One explanation lies in the news sources favoured by journalists, with Brussels reporters using a wide variety of EU sources and national based reporters relying heavily on domestic politicians (Price 2008; Statham 2008). For example, UK politicians are five times more likely to be quoted in texts written by UK based political reporters than in those by Brussels correspondents. In contrast, EU Commissioners are three times more likely to be quoted in texts written by Brussels based journalists than in those by UK based reporters. Previous studies have shown how political actors at a member state level have a tendency to exploit the EU for short term, domestic gain (Anderson and Price 2008; Lodge 1994; Peterson 1995) The reporting of UK based journalists therefore tends to reflect these negative discourses about the EU while the more positive portrayals which may be provided by EU level sources often fail to reach the radar of these reporters. Similarly, the lack of contact between UK based journalists and EU sources means they are largely free from this potentially inhibiting influence. Journalists can produce hostile news copy in the knowledge that they are highly unlikely to have to personally face or talk to anyone who may seriously contradict, or object to, its contents.

Further explanations can be found in the differing reporting cultures in which Brussels and UK based journalists operate. While Brussels based journalists predominantly perceive of their role as information provider, UK based political journalists prefer to conceive of themselves in the more active role of watchdog (Price 2008). In Brussels, the reporter's role is seen predominantly as one of providing a bridge between the remote complexities of the EU and the everyday lives of the public. In the UK, the role is primarily seen as one of holding officials, politicians and institutions to account. The latter of these roles encourages the tendency for national based journalists to produce hostile and negative reporting.

Similarly, Brussels based reporters work in a largely communal culture in which much information is shared among journalists and the enemy is perceived as the home newsdesks. In contrast, UK based journalists, and Westminster based political journalists in particular, operate in a much more competitive and belligerent environment (Price 2008). This latter, adversarial culture further promotes a negative tendency in news coverage produced from the UK.

We turn now to a second significant variation in the nature of EU news production – the difference between tabloid and quality coverage. Findings here suggest that tabloid coverage is far more likely to deviate from the journalistic norm of objectivity to present a polemic, negative version of events. Of course, this tendency is not exclusive to EU news and is a characteristic that has been observed in wider tabloid news coverage (Sparks and Tulloch 2000).

In terms of the EU, this characteristic manifests itself most obviously in tabloids following a Eurosceptic editorial agenda: the Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Star and Sun. The EU news of these titles contains a minority of objective coverage, with the majority consisting of critically polemic portrayals of the EU. This sets these titles apart from the others and supports the observations of many journalists who claim the tabloids report the EU in a fundamentally different way to the rest of the press. For example:

I think the Eurosceptic papers like the Times and the Telegraph are in a completely different category to the tabloids like the Mail and the Sun, because they have

correspondents here who take their jobs seriously, and maybe they are working under more difficult circumstances but I'm sure that none of them, while I've been here, would deliberately write stories that they know to be untrue... but that is very different from the Mail and the Sun. (Brussels based journalist)

There are, however, interesting findings when we look at the case of the *Daily Mirror*. Although the *Mirror* has a Europhile editorial agenda, findings show that around a third of its coverage is negatively hostile towards the EU. The majority of the *Mirror's* reporting (59%) is objective in nature, distinguishing it from the Eurosceptic tabloids, but only 8% is of a positively polemic nature. What these findings suggest is that the tabloid trait of producing non-objective, negative reporting outweighs the influence of a positive editorial agenda when it comes to the EU.

One factor at work here is likely to be that none of the tabloids have a permanent presence in Brussels. The above section highlighted tensions between Brussels correspondents and their UK newsrooms, suggesting these correspondents took a more positive view of the EU and had a mellowing influence on the negative tendencies of their UK colleagues. In the case of the tabloids, this mellowing effect is absent.

One outcome of this is that the current means of classifying EU news seems to place its divisions in misleading places. The Guardian, FT and Independent contain the lowest proportion of negative EU news, while the Eurosceptic tabloids contain the most (a majority) of negative coverage. In the middle, *The Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror* produce surprisingly similar content (a majority of objective reporting, around a third of negative news and a small amount of positive reports), although obviously in a very different journalistic style. While the Eurosceptic editorial agendas of *The Times* and the *Telegraph* are tempered by the reports and influence of their Brussels correspondents, the Europhile agenda of the *Mirror* is outweighed by the tabloid love of negativity, without a Brussels presence to act as a restraint.

What is clear is that the make-up of the UK press is more complicated than a simple division of Europhile and Eurosceptic titles. Instead of thinking in terms of a clear distinction between Eurosceptic and Europhile sections of the press, it would be useful to think in terms of a more complex spectrum of coverage accounting for actual variations in objective, negative and positive reporting. There are important differences in the nature of reporting not just between newspapers, but also within individual titles. A new, more nuanced form of categorising EU news is needed to capture these differences

Concluding comments: towards a new classification of EU news

This article has argued that the current means of classifying EU news coverage is insufficient in its complexity and misleading in its terminology. There are crucial factors shaping different forms of EU news which the current classification does not take into account. Crucial among these factors are whether a title belongs to the tabloid or quality sector, and whether the news is produced by Brussels or UK based journalists. Therefore, this article will now offer an alternative means of classifying EU news production which better captures the landscape of press coverage and takes into account the crucial factors of market sector and location of journalist.

Findings above show that the majority of EU news in the UK press is objective in nature. However, when coverage deviates from this it is far more likely to be negative and only very rarely of a positive nature. The findings suggested there was an increased tendency towards negative reporting when news emerged from a tabloid newspaper, and when the news was produced by a UK based journalist. Conversely, news was more likely to

maintain its objective character when reported by a quality title, and when it was produced by a Brussels based journalist. When added to the editorial agendas of newspapers, this produces the following influences on the character EU news:

Table 2: *Factors shaping the objective/negative nature of EU news production*

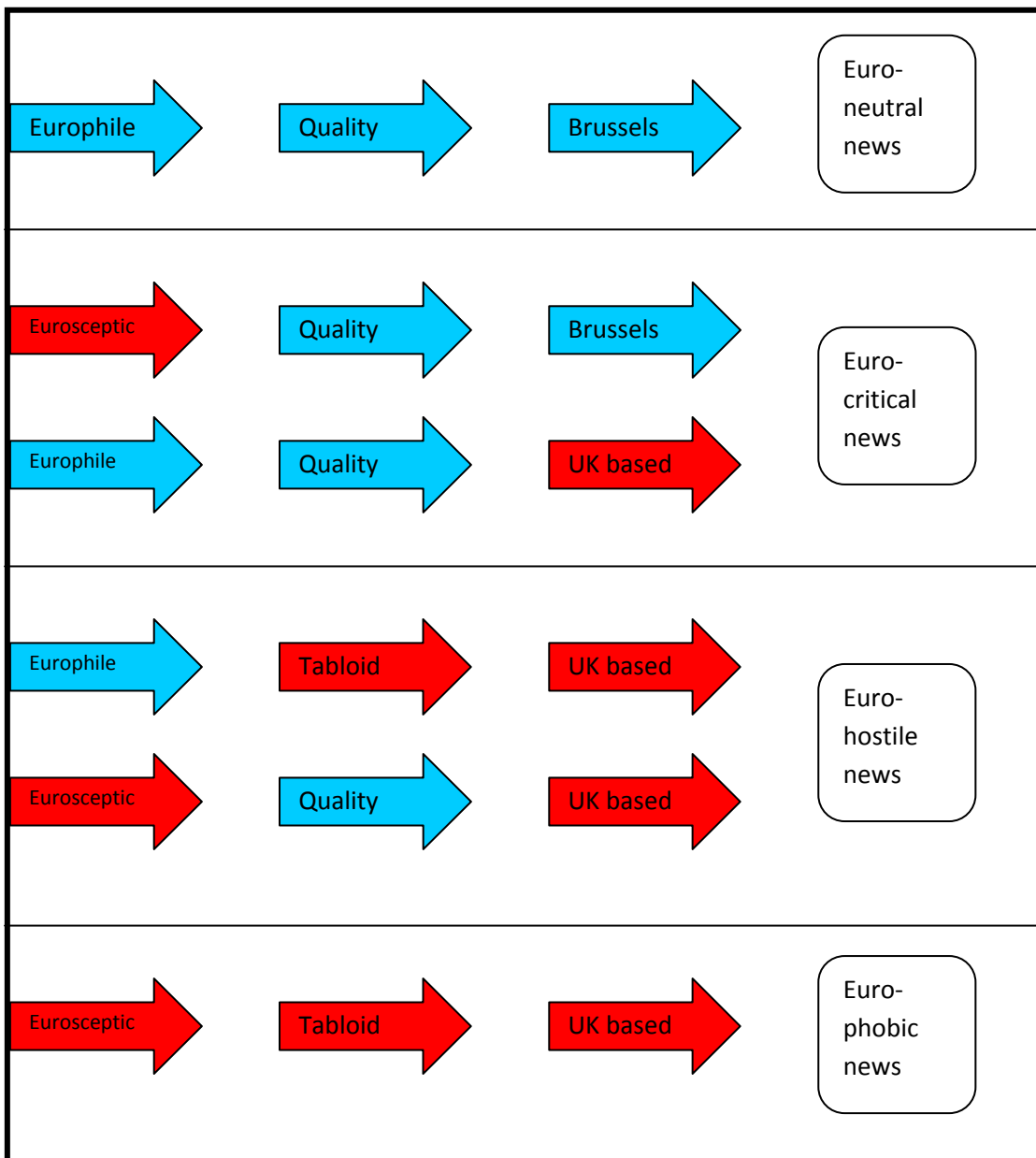
	Editorial agenda	Market sector	Location of journalist
Factor maintaining a tendency towards objective reporting	Europhile	Quality	Brussels
Factor encouraging a tendency towards negative reporting	Eurosceptic	Tabloid	UK

Taking these factors into account allows us to produce a more nuanced classification of EU news that better describes variations of EU news production both across and within individual titles. It is suggested that four categories, instead of two, better describe variations in EU news when market sector and location of journalist are added to the influence of editorial agenda. These categories are as follows:

- *Euro-neutral news*: comprises news produced by Brussels based journalists working for Europhile titles in the quality sector. It acknowledges that news produced by these journalists tends to be the most favourable to the EU and is overwhelmingly objective in nature. The term Euro-neutral is more accurate than Europhile due to the lack of positive portrayals of the EU.
- *Euro-critical news*: includes reports produced by Brussels based journalists working for the Eurosceptic qualities, and by UK based journalists working for the Europhile qualities. Unlike the Euro-neutral category above, this category has a key negative influence news production (either a Eurosceptic agenda or UK based location). As a result, although the majority of news is still objective in nature, around a quarter of reports contain explicitly negative portrayals of the EU. It recognises that copy produced by Brussels based reporters for *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, although influenced in subtle ways by a Eurosceptic agenda, is substantially different in character from their UK based journalists (see category below) – containing less than half the negative coverage of that of their homeland colleagues.
- *Euro-hostile news*: comprises reports produced by UK based journalists working for the quality Eurosceptic titles, and by UK based journalists working for a Europhile tabloid. Between a third and half of news texts produced by journalists in this category contain negative EU news. It is striking that the *Daily Mirror* appears in this category which, despite its Europhile agenda, is encouraged towards negative reporting by its tabloid nature and exclusive reliance on UK based journalists.
- *Euro-phobic news*: comprises news produced by UK based journalists working for the Eurosceptic tabloid press. Copy produced by journalists in this category is the most hostile towards the EU, containing a majority of negative coverage. The terminology here reflects the often zealous and emotional nature of reporting, which frequently

involves an explicitly coherent and polemic mix of news, comment and imagery designed to undermine and attack the EU. It also reflects interview findings in which many journalists identified news coverage of this kind as being a breed apart from the rest.

Figure 2: A new classification of EU news reporting in the UK press (red arrows are factors encouraging negative reporting trend – blue arrows are factors encouraging objective reporting trend).



Having set out a new classification of EU news, let us now turn to consider what lessons can be drawn from this. The introduction to this article set out some reasons why a new classification of EU news is important. These reasons included lessons for the EU's communication strategy, lessons for others seeking to challenge and change news

coverage, and lessons for journalists themselves. In light of the above findings, the following can be said:

- If the EU wishes to direct its attention to the most hostile and therefore potentially damaging news, then it needs to address news produced by national based journalists. In fact, previous studies have found the opposite to be the case, with the Commission in particular focusing its resources and attention on the Brussels press corps (Anderson and Price 2008; Baisnee 2007; Meyer 1999). Findings here suggest this is a mistake and that much more should be done to communicate with journalists based in the news rooms of the member states.
- Politicians and opinion formers who tar the so called Eurosceptic press with one brush are wide of the mark. The tabloid titles of this sector produce high levels of hostile reporting, but the majority of EU news produced by the quality Eurosceptic press (*Times, Telegraph*) is objective in nature – and this rises to a vast majority of reports in the case of their Brussels based journalists. Criticisms of this kind are therefore unfair. Similarly, those wishing to see a more balanced reporting of the EU would be wrong to ignore the Europhile press. Sections of this coverage – in particular tabloid reporting and news produced by UK based journalists – contain a significant minority of hostile reporting.
- Finally, journalists themselves may wish to reflect on the complex and varied nature of EU news production. There is clearly a tension that exists between Brussels based and UK based journalists within news organisations. Evidence here suggests that Brussels correspondents help newspapers present more balanced coverage of the EU, without losing a critical edge to their reporting. Those who believe journalism is about more than pandering to the existing prejudices of readers may reflect that having a permanent and long term representation in Brussels is a positive move – even for those critical of the EU. Surely closely informed and balanced criticism is better than a distant barrage of abuse.

This article has suggested a new classification of EU news production in the UK press and offered insights into factors affecting the nature of reporting. While it has focused on one member state, its conclusions have wider significance for understandings of EU news coverage and the relationships between politicians, citizens and the press. For those who wish to engage with EU news, an understanding of its complexities and influences is crucial if that engagement is to be a meaningful one.

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