



CALL FOR PAPERS

Graduate Centre for Europe

University of Birmingham

11th Annual Conference

Reassessing Britain's relations with Europe: From role-model to enfant terrible?

11th-12th May 2017

The Brexit referendum on 23rd June 2016 has dealt a heavy blow to British-EU relations. Fifty-two percent of participating voters did not want to see their country as part of the European Union anymore. The referendum result comes as the latest evidence of the UK's ambivalence towards the continent. But does this mean that Britain's cultural, economic and political ties with the continent will unravel, or can we regard Brexit as a continuation of historical developments, which have always oscillated between exceptionalism – married with a vision of Britain more connected to the Commonwealth than to the continent – and partnership?

When Winston Churchill called for the formation of a United States of Europe, he did not consider Britain a part of that project. Yet today, Brexit is seen by some as heralding European disintegration. Historically, British parliamentarianism and liberalism have been role models for other European countries – but nowadays the UK's first-past-the-post election system, lack of a written constitution, and Euroskeptic tabloid press are regarded with scepticism on the continent. Has Britain thus turned from a pace-setter to a foot-dragger of progressive development in Europe?

Cultural exchange between Britain and the continent has been fostered by the de-facto adoption of English as a lingua franca in Europe, making British cultural products accessible to other Europeans. The reputation of British universities and its relative economic strength have attracted many students and immigrants from the continent. What has been the impact of this (often one-sided) exchange on Britain and other European countries, both culturally and economically?

Almost a year after the Brexit vote, the conference explores the wider context of Britain's relations with Europe from various disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. We invite paper proposals dealing with Britain's historical, cultural, linguistic, political, economic, geographical, philosophical and artistic relations to Europe. Subjects may include but are not limited to:

- Brexit as a challenge for Britain and Europe – political and economic consequences
- British polity and politics as a role-model or a unique system in Europe
- Historical relations of Britain to Europe, e.g. dynastic ties, wars and alliances
- Transcultural connections in literature, arts and music throughout history
- Trade relations and the importance of the 'City' for Europe
- Education in Britain and Europe: historical ties and prospects for future cooperation
- Influence of the English language in Europe
- British perceptions and portrayals of Europe, European perceptions and portrayals of Britain
- Interaction of European, national and regional identities in the UK
- Migration to and from Britain
- Diversity, xenophobia, and the rise of populism in Britain and Europe

A number of bursaries will be available to assist with travel and accommodation expenses. As a Centre run by a steering committee of postgraduates, we particularly encourage postgraduates and early career researchers to apply. If you would like to present at the conference, please send an abstract of 200-300 words along with your contact details and a brief biographical note to gcfec@contacts.bham.ac.uk by **20th January 2017**.