INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MAGAZINE STUDIES (2025) Vol. 2, Nº. 1 pp. 23-38

ijms.ulusofona.pt
doi: 10.60543/ijms.v2i1.10034

COSMOPOLITANISM IN PRINT: *THE ATLANTIC* VS. *THE ECONOMIST*

FRANCISCO SEOANE PÉREZ
UNIVERSIDAD CARLOS III DE MADRID (SPAIN)

Francisco Seoane Pérez (PhD, Leeds, 2011) is associate (tenured) professor in Journalism Studies at the Department of Communication, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. His specialism is on qualitative research in political communication, having observed and interviewed political activists, journalists and politicians in Spain, USA, the UK and the European Union institutions in Brussels. His book *Political Communication in Europe: The Cultural and Structural Limits of the European Public Sphere* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) won the THESEUS Prize for Promising Research in European Integration. An avid reader of politico-cultural magazines, he conducted interviews with journalists and editors of publications like *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *The Economist* and *The Nation* as part of a research project on their digital transitions, funded by the BBVA Foundation in 2015. From 2007 to 2025 he has been an editor for the *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* (Intellect). He is the academic coordinator for the Asociación de Comunicación Política (Association for Communication in Politics, ACOP).
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4680-558X

Corresponding author
Francisco Seoane Pérez
francisco.seoane@uc3m.es
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
C. Madrid, 126, 28903
Getafe, Madrid
Spain

Schedule for publication
Paper Submitted: 3rd February 2025
Accepted for Publication: 29th April 2025
Published Online: 13th August 2025

Abstract

This essay offers an interpretation of the ideal readers of *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* magazines as representatives of two kinds of cosmopolitanism, vernacular and Western, respectively. This claim is grounded in several sources of evidence: their editorial missions, their content, and their 'media kits', which refers to commercial documents where the editors promote the publication to potential advertisers. *The Economist*'s ideal reader is a Western cosmopolitan, often encouraged to hold the torch of liberalism as a civilizatory universal creed. *The Atlantic*'s implied reader is a vernacular cosmopolitan, concerned with continuing the so-called American experiment by re-creating a national identity marked by diversity. These two understandings of cosmopolitanism have been present in the publications from the outset: *The Economist* was born to fight protectionism, and *The Atlantic* to end slavery.

Keywords: magazines; journalism; cosmopolitanism; liberalism; *The Economist*; *The Atlantic*

Introduction

The roots of cosmopolitanism can be traced back to classical Greece's Stoics and Immanuel Kant's search for a perpetual peace but the resurgence of the term as an overpresent contemporary trope owes much to the globalization phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is easier than ever before to feel like a citizen of the world when modern mass media brings home distant suffering, cheap air travel makes the globe smaller and transnational risks (climate change, terrorism) highlight the interdependence of any place on Earth.

The Economist's emergence as the magazine of record for the global business class and other cosmopolitan types (academics, NGO workers, high flying college graduates, etc.) has run in parallel to globalization, the presumable 'end of history' and a renewed interest in one-worldism. There are many ways to define a cosmopolitan but there is only one publication that a cosmopolitan cannot miss: *The Economist*.

In this essay, I argue that if this 182-year old publication has become the reading of choice for the transnational thought leaders of globalization, then it is because it has become the voice of a particular kind of cosmopolitan, what sociologist Craig Calhoun calls the 'constant traveller', a figure that thinks of himself (the masculine might be forgiven in this case due to *The Economist*'s overwhelming masculine audience) as far more rootless and disinterested than he really is (Calhoun, 2003a; 2003b). This 'Western cosmopolitan' is tightly linked to the magazine's concept of liberalism, as if the 19th century ideology has finally come closer to realization than ever.

To explain *The Economist* as the voice of Western liberal cosmopolitanism, I will use a comparative heuristic, contrasting this sort of cosmopolitanism with that of another centenary publication, *The Atlantic*. Where *The Economist* carries much of the civilizatory overtone of British colonialism, trying to make the world more liberal, then *The Atlantic* has purported from its beginning in pre-Civil War America to represent and help build 'the American idea', a nation defined, however contradictory it may sound, as cosmopolitan. Where *The Economist* is the voice of the cosmopolitan ideology of liberalism, then *The Atlantic* is the voice of a new nation that wants to be defined by cosmopolitanism.

One of the great pleasures of reading *The Economist* is learning by comparison. The magazine offers answers to the question of why airfares are cheaper in Europe than in the US, or why mobile phone adoption has been slower in the US than in the EU. Tocqueville's famous quote that "without comparisons, the mind does not know how to proceed" is dropped from time to time in the magazine's reports. Learning by comparison is a heuristic device undertaken frequently by *The Economist*, and it is also how this essay will proceed. The brand of cosmopolitanism lauded by the British publication will be defined more sharply by comparing it to the cosmopolitanism of one of its American rivals (or companions) in the market, *The Atlantic*. First, I will distill the cosmopolitanism of these publications by paying attention to their editorial mission (established in their respective foundational moments but often recreated in recent editorial pieces). Second, I will reflect on their content, citing examples of reports representative of their core principles. Third, I will infer the cosmopolitanism of their respective audiences by looking at the descriptions of their ideal readers (as explained in the magazines' promotional materials to advertisers) and the available readership data in the U.S. (to allow for a better comparison, although I will also make reference to their global audiences).

Cosmopolitanism in the editorial mission

The foundational moments of *The Economist* and *The Atlantic* are surrounded by a sense of urgency and opposition that animates both publications to this day. *The Economist* was born to support free trade, oppose protectionism, and became the voice of liberalism. *The Atlantic* was born to oppose slavery

and to develop what their founders enigmatically named as 'the American idea', embodying and shaping the spirit of a new nation.

The Economist was launched in 1843 by supporters of the Anti-Corn League, a movement of British middle-class industrialists who encouraged free agricultural trade and wanted to repeal the Corn Laws that protected the economic monopoly of traditional landowners (Schonhardt-Bailey, 2006). Even to this day, the magazine states on its masthead that it was created to take part in "a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress."

The ideology of *The Economist* is the object of much debate. It could be defined as classic liberalism, arguing for little state intervention, free trade, and privacy. Very tellingly, the author of a recent comprehensive study about liberalism, Edmund Fawcett, worked at *The Economist* for more than three decades. In his book *Liberalism: The Life of an idea* (2014), Fawcett defines "the liberal outlook" (p. 10) as comprised of four guiding principles (pp. 10-19): 1) the unavoidability and positive character of social conflict (channeled as competition, conflict can be the source of argument and creativity; social harmony is neither sought nor desired); 2) the need to control and divide economic and political power (so as to avoid domination by any single interest); 3) a belief in constant progress (an optimistic belief in the possibility of always advancing towards a better society); and 4) respect (understood as a triple protection from "intrusive power", that which "might interfere with property or with opinions" (p. 15), "obstructive power", which "might block mechanical innovation or imaginative invention" (p. 15) and "exclusive power", which "might deny civic protection to the poor, the unlettered, the unorthodox" (p. 15).

From time to time, *The Economist* allows a glimpse into its working ideology when commenting on current events. In June 2013, the magazine reported on a survey that showed young Britons to be critical of state intervention and tolerant of social and cultural difference. *The Economist* celebrated British youth's embracing of liberalism's "old tune" with a cover featuring a photomontage that replaced the faces of the Rolling Stones with the faces of classical liberal thinkers: Adam Smith (on lead guitar), John Stuart Mill (bass), William Gladstone (vocals), along with the then-leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, on the drums (2013, June 1). In its editorial, the magazine claimed that for the past 170 years, it had "consistently advocated free trade, punctured government bloat and argued for the protection of individual liberties," so it celebrated that "the young want Leviathan to butt out of their pay cheques as well as their bedrooms." "Young Britons", *The Economist* observed, "are classical liberals: as well as prizing social freedom, they believe in low taxes, limited welfare and personal responsibility. In America they would be called libertarians." More recently, when discussing the many meanings of liberalism, the publication reminded that its founder, James Wilson, had been a Liberal member of Parliament in the 19th century. "This liberalism, the sort that this newspaper champions, emphasises individual freedom, free markets and a limited state" (2016, July 30, p. 66).

Liberalism and cosmopolitanism are intimately linked (Sánchez-Flores, 2010). Where democracy thinks of community and particularities, liberalism thinks of the individual and universalism. Where democracy is guided by the respect of the majoritarian principle, liberalism is guided by the respect of the individual as a human being (Bellamy and Baehr, 1993). The contemporary emphasis on human rights could be seen as the consequence of the expansion of the Western liberal ethos beyond the confines of Western liberal democracies (Langlois, 2007). To present *The Economist* as the voice of such high principles is, granted, controversial. David Harvey's critical view of certain cosmopolitan discourses as "an ethical and humanitarian mask of hegemonic neo-liberal practices of class domination and financial and militaristic imperialism"

(2009: 84) could very well be applied to *The Economist* if the eye of the beholder is that of the frequent reader of neo-Marxist publications like *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Theres is no vision from nowhere, and no cosmopolitanism, as Calhoun argues, is devoid of local and particularistic overtones (Calhoun, 2003b). Therefore, I would like to define *The Economist*'s cosmopolitanism as 'Western', however universalistic liberalism might purport itself to be.

Also following Calhoun and his claim that cosmopolitanism need not be opposed to localism or nationalism (Calhoun, 2003b), I will argue that *The Atlantic's* founding ethos is that of building a cosmopolitan nation. Its first issue was published in 1857 on the eve of the American Civil War, carrying the views of New England's abolitionist intellectuals. These included a group of noted Bostonian writers (Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes, among others) who aimed at "forging a national consciousness", and wanted "to educate and reflect America, to welcome contrary ideas but often to promote the liberal, to represent all the country but to trade on Boston's cultural capital" (Fletcher, 2012). Even its literary tone, subdued in recent years, had a political underpinning: "the magazine believed in the power of American literary realism to create a national identity" (Fletcher, 2012).

A text published by Randolph Bourne in *The Atlantic* in 1916, intriguingly titled 'Trans-national America', outlines the theory of a cosmopolitan nation that the magazine founders may not have been able to encapsulate better. Rather than arguing for a melting pot that would result in a bland and soulless assimilation into the Anglo-Saxon heritage, Bourne believes in a country marked by difference, an essay of a would-be world federation:

> In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation (…) What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogenous peoples under the sun. (…) Only the American (…) has the chance to become that citizen of the world. America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality (Bourne, 2007 [1916]: 583).

Unfortunately, the coexistence of different cultures and races has not been as peaceful as Bourne had dreamed of. The very founding drive of *The Atlantic* (anti-slavery) has come back recently with the discussion about the pending institutional "reparations" that African-Americans deserve as a historically discriminated ethnicity (Coates, 2014, June).

Cosmopolitanism in the content

The very structure of *The Economist*, with regular sections on Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle-East and Asia, along with a section called 'International', is ideal for the fulfillment of the three indicators of cosmopolitan coverage outlined by Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2013): 1) cosmopolitan monitoring (covering a wide variety of foreign countries), 2) cosmopolitan debating (including voices from other countries different than those of the publication's country of origin), and 3) transnational diversity (making sure that the range of foreign countries covered is ample enough so as not to focus on just a few).

Assessing how well *The Economist* meets those three ideal criteria would demand a dedicated content-analysis. One of the dangers of global media is falling prey to national bias or a "North-Western elite perspective", as Dencik (2013) found in her study of the satellite TV channel BBC World News.

Whatever counts as a 'global news interest' was filtered through a national journalistic culture dominated by the political rhetoric of domestic political powers (e.g. "war on terror"). The BBC news gathering was found to be shaped by British military engagements and its colonial legacy. Although *The Economist* might be liable due to having the same biases, it would not be too daring a claim to say that the magazine excels at the cosmopolitan monitoring function. As Hirschorn (2009, July/August) eloquently wondered, which other publication would you turn to to keep up with Africa?

A key issue when assessing the degree of cosmopolitanism in any publication is what counts as the 'we': who is the implied addressee? To which community do the publishers and journalists belong to, if any? *The Economist* does not hide away from its Britishness. Actually, "that hint of pseudo-Dickensian creakiness in its prose" is part of its appeal in North America (Bakshian Jr., 2012: 84). But whenever reporting about Britain, the publication tries to maintain some distance, either positioning itself as an outsider whose ideas are not properly represented by anyone (with the partial and occasional exception of the Liberal Democrats) or by casting a pitiful glance at some perennial British problems, be it youth binge drinking or the excessive centralization exerted by London. *The Atlantic* prides itself as being a quintessentially American publication but one-third of its online audience comes, at present, from outside the United States, so their editors are now talking of "the United States" instead of "we" (Seoane Pérez, 2016). According to the typology of transnational media suggested by Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009), *The Economist* would be a global medium (its audience is larger abroad than at home). *The Atlantic*, due to its increasing international online audience and especially since the opening of a London bureau in the summer of 2017, could be considered a national media outlet with a transnational mission (*The Atlantic*, 2017, March 27). Very much like the Deustche Welle, it might very soon become a benchmark publication for expats.

By sifting any news through the interpretive frame of liberalism, *The Economist* adds a Western cosmopolitan tone to its coverage. Again, just as no one political party ever rightly holds the torch of *The Economist*'s classical liberalism, no one country ever fulfills its call for economic and social openness. Still, the publication celebrates the intellectual figures and governments who support free trade and tolerance. After the arrival of Donald Trump to the presidency of the U.S., *The Economist* claimed from its cover that liberty had moved north to Canada. Trudeau's policies, "liberal on trade and immigration, activist in shoring up growth and protecting globalisation's losers," are "a reminder that the centrist formula still works," and evidence that "tolerance and openness are wellsprings of security and prosperity, not threats to them" (2016, October 29: 9). The rise of populism and ethnic nationalism in France, Russia, and the U.S., among other countries, moved *The Economist* to long for a more conciliatory "civic nationalism" and "enlightened patriotism" (2016, November 19: 9). What is more, it deemed the "new political divide" between open and closed regimes and societies as "the gravest risk to the free world since communism" (2016, July 30: 7). On the eve of Trump's victory, *The Economist* published a special report in defense of globalization, linking this position to the foundational moment of the publication:

> The case for openness remains much the same as it did when this newspaper was founded to support the repeal of the Corn Laws. There are more—and more varied—opportunities in open economies than in closed ones. And, in general, greater opportunity makes people better off. Since the 1840s, free-traders have believed that closed economies favour the powerful and hurt the labouring classes. They were right then. They are right now. (*The Economist*, 2016, October 1: 9)

To be fair, it should be acknowledged that although *The Economist* lamented Britain's exit of the EU after the 2016

referendum, it celebrated the frustrated referenda of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Though supportive of European economic integration, the magazine has kept a very British weariness about further political integration. Time and again, it has cast doubt on the value of a European Parliament, preferring instead a deeper involvement of national parliaments. In this regard, *The Economist* has been inconsistent, at times regretting the sinking of the EU as "the world's greatest experiment in post-nationalism" (2016, November 19: 9), while celebrating any break to a further federalization of the EU.

Socially, the liberal ethos of *The Economist* has been loudly exposed when supporting same-sex marriage, the decriminalization of prostitution, the legalization of cannabis, and doctor-assisted dying. The magazine began supporting homosexual marriage as early as 1996. Always suspicious of seeing prostitutes as victims, the increasing offer of sexual services online—which allows for the building of a brand and the publication of customer reviews—is for *The Economist* evidence of the normalization of this practice as a "normal service industry" (2014, August 7). Uruguay's passing of a law to legalize and regulate the production, sale and consumption of cannabis, along with other socially progressive policies, made it deserve the magazine's 'country of the year' nomination in 2013 (December 18). The case for assisted dying of the terminally ill was even the subject of a dedicated international survey conducted jointly by *The Economist* and the Kaiser Family Foundation, a US think tank, in four countries (the United States, Italy, Japan and Brazil). The survey revealed that living as long as possible was a lesser concern compared with other final wishes, such as not burdening the family with financial costs and being at peace spiritually (2017, April 29). Just as with economic liberalism, *The Economist* is always ready to defend and support the spread of social liberalism, making the world more cosmopolitan in a Western way.

The evangelism of *The Atlantic* is limited to the American borders, as its is a cosmopolitanism from the inside. Following its initial concern with slavery, race relations are to this day one of the main issues for the magazine. The election of Barack Obama as president has had one of its great interpreters in Ta-Nehisi Coates (January/February, 2017). There have been, however, some inconsistences. One of *The Atlantic*'s most influential pieces, the "broken windows" article published by two sociologists, George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson in the March 1982 edition of the magazine (Kelling and Wilson, 1982, March), had mixed results. On the one hand, it inspired the policy against street violence in New York and other big American cities, as mayors like Rudolph Giuliani followed the advice of fixing any traces of violence (the broken windows) to increase the sense of safety in the neighborhoods (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006). On the other, and this speaks to the magazine's openness to review its own postulates, *The Atlantic* recently wondered if the broken windows policy had led to the generalization of the so-called "stop-and-frisk" practice, leading to the harassment of individuals that, because of their outward appearance or skin color, are deemed as suspects (Bergner, 2014, April).

If *The Economist* surveys government practices across the world to encourage the generalization of the initiatives that follow liberalism's tenets, *The Atlantic* scans foreign countries with a more nationalistic concern: how to keep America on top of the world. One of its most noted national correspondents, James Fallows, has lived in, and reported from, two of the countries challenging America's world leadership: Japan and China. This strategic surveillance of the world has both external and internal purposes. Externally, *The Atlantic* is worried about containing China's influence in the Pacific Ocean while internally, the magazine reports on how Asians might be changing the cultural fabric of the nation, with 'tiger moms' encouraging ever more competition among their progeny, turning their children into success-oriented freaks.

Passively, and more subtly, *The Atlantic* is also concerned about the currency of *the American idea* throughout the world, specially with regards to the respect of diversity. It even recently wondered whether it was time for Jews to leave Europe, given the continent's rising xenophobia (Goldberg, 2015, April). America is always seen as a beacon of tolerance whose ideals are worth spreading, a messianic tone that might remind of *The Economist*'s Western liberal cosmopolitanism. In 1917, Ellery Sedgwick, editor of *The Atlantic* from 1909 to 1938, called on the involvement of the U.S. in the First World War, as the country's success in dealing with diversity could be exemplary to Europe:

> And the United States, a world in miniature where the nations have joined together as a single people in a supreme experiment in the art of living together, can alone provide a common clearinghouse for the discussion of a worldwide pact. (Sedgwick, 2014 [1917, March]: 93).

The American cosmopolitanism, which sees the country as a 'trans-national' nation or a 'world in miniature', has an inward predicament (respect for diversity) and a seemingly disinterested transborder appeal: proving that the American experiment works and can be exemplary to the rest of the world.

Cosmopolitanism among the audience: real and ideal readers

In his classic 1940s study of "influentials" in a typical American town, sociologist Robert K. Merton (1968 [1949]) distinguished between two types of influencers: cosmopolitans and locals. Merton's cosmopolitans were respected for their technical expertise but had little sentimental attachment to the town and were ready to move out at any time. The locals, by contrast, were notable within their communities because of their social connections and could not imagine living out of Rovere, the fictional name Merton gave his site of study.

Merton's research was commissioned by Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* magazine, "to learn the functions served by a national newsmagazine [*Time*] for various types of readers" (Merton, 1968[1949]: 442), namely the influential in comparison with more regular, 'rank-and-file' readers:

> For the rank-and-file reader, the information found in the newsmagazine is a commodity for personal consumption, extending his own conception of the world of public events whereas for the influential, it was a commodity for exchange, to be traded for further increments of prestige, by enabling him to act as an interpreter of national and international affairs. It aids him in being an opinion leader. (Merton, 1968 [1949]: 446).

The goal of Luce was to find scientific evidence of *Time*'s appeal to wealthy readers in order to charge more for its advertising. Merton provided it. It was principally the "cosmopolitan" influencers, mobile professionals who were sought for their expertise and who cared about national and international affairs, who subscribed to Luce's flagship publication. The local influentials largely rejected *Time* because they were not significantly concerned about what was going on beyond the limits of their town. According to Merton, "the so-called 'class' magazines which devote much of their content to foreign and national affairs and to the arts [Merton included *The Atlantic* among them] are read by twice as many cosmopolitans as locals" (1968 [1949]: 463).

In sum, the social roles of the readers determined their communication behavior regarding political magazines. These social roles are determined, among other factors, by education. Lazarsfeld and Wyant (1937) studied magazine reading habits in 90 American cities. *The Atlantic* was among the

publications in their sample, and they found that it was most popular in state capitals on the East Coast "where school expenditures are high and the per cent of population over forty-five is high" (1937: 38).

It is the claim of this essay that cosmopolitan influencers can still be found among the readers of political magazines, and that two ideal contemporary types of cosmopolitans can be identified. The first type is the 'vernacular' or 'rooted' cosmopolitan (Bhabha, 2000; Appiah, 2005; Cohen, 1992; Knowles, 2007), who is concerned about world affairs but who sees global events through the lenses of their nation-state. This would be the prototypical reader of *The Atlantic*. The second type of cosmopolitan may be an individual who is part of the 'global elite' (Friedman, 2000) or the 'new cosmopolitan class' (Shiller, 2006), whose national identity is posited as secondary to the status they hold among their peers from other countries for having lived a transnational life as constant travelers or international businesspeople. This would be the characteristic reader of *The Economist*.

The rooted cosmopolitan could also be a reader of *Time* and the global cosmopolitan may have a soft spot for publications like *Monocle*. But *Time* lacks *The Atlantic*'s foundational quest of a cosmopolitan nation, and *Monocle* is more of a lifestyle magazine that does not explicitly stand as the torch carrier of Western liberalism. Their different cosmopolitanisms (one national-American, the other Western-liberal) make the publications compatible. According to *The Economist*'s Andreas Kluth, "In America, readers in our segment are more likely to read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and *Wired* than *Time* and *Newsweek*." (quoted in Oberholzer-Gee, Anand, and Gomez, 2010: 6).

The demise of newsweeklies like *Time* or *Newsweek* as the publications of choice for cosmopolitans was analyzed by *The Atlantic* itself: "the audience it [the newsweekly] was created to serve—middlebrow; curious, but not too curious; engaged, but only to a point—no longer exists" (Hirschorn, 2009). There is only one newsweekly that, far from faltering, is thriving in the digital age: *The Economist*. For Hirschorn, the British magazine was ahead of its time in providing a comprehensive survey of world affairs to a global elite.

The editorial mission of political magazines has been "'to inoculate the few who influence the many'", to use the words of Robert Manning, former *The Atlantic* editor (quoted in Sherman, 2002: 188). In its 2013 media kit (the document magazines use to present potential advertisers with data on their readership), *The Economist* labels its readers as "the ideas people". Given that political magazines are not mass-media, a key selling-proposition for them is the presentation of their readers as influencers, as the "molecular opinion leaders" that would tell their neighbors whom to vote for or what to buy (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2006 [1955]). Magazines must convince advertisers that their influence far exceeds their circulation (Fletcher, 2012). By this logic, for *The Economist*, its readers are:

> […] the rainmakers of this new world. Their thinking wins others over. They are the buyers and influencers who make things happen. And when they believe in an idea—or a product or service- they champion it through their personal and business networks. (*The Economist* Group, 2013: 1).

The gold dust that magazines seek to convince advertisers they possess is redolent of the "two-step flow" model formulated by Lazarsfeld and colleagues (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2006 [1955]). In other words, the readers of the prestige magazine, as a matter of course, influence the people around them.

The Economist and *The Atlantic* have retained and perhaps increased their appeal to influentials. *The Economist* has greatly benefited from the status of English as a global language (Bakshian Jr., 2012) and the worsening of foreign reporting in the U.S. (Hafez, 2007). *The Atlantic*'s cover pieces have

become more influential thanks to their circulation on social networking sites (Seoane Pérez, 2016). However, neither publication is free from the problems affecting the magazine industry, notably the unstoppable decrease in newsstand sales. According to data from the Alliance for Audited Media quoted by the Pew Research (2014), since 2008, *The Economist* has lost 54 percent of its single-copy sales in the United States. *The Atlantic* lost 33 percent of its single copy circulation in the same period. *The Atlantic* sold an average of 33,468 p copies er issue in 2013, *The Economist* 32,279. However, most of the circulation of both publications comes from subscriptions. According to *The Atlantic*'s media kit, 93% of the 477,990 copies it sold in 2013 were to subscribers (2014). In the U.S., where *The Economist* has half of its global subscription base (*The Economist* Group, 2013), the magazine sold 803,528 copies, 96% through subscription. Subscriptions have been flat for the past few years but, as the authors of the State of the News Media 2014 report warn, "these are normally kept from declining through discounts or special offers" (Pew Research Center, 2014).

When the data available in the magazines' media kits is compared, the readers of *The Atlantic* turn out to be more balanced by gender (60% male, 40% female) than the American readers of *The Economist* (86% male, 14% female). They are also older. The median age of *The Atlantic* readers is 55 years, whereas the median age of *The Economist* subscribers in the US is 48 years. The readers of *The Economist* are considerably wealthier than those of *The Atlantic*: subscribers to the British magazine have an average household income of $250,000, whereas the readers of its American rival have a median household income of $96,690.

The worldwide readership figures for *The Economist* print edition confirm the inference of its elite cosmopolitan character: 63 percent of its readers have lived abroad for 3 months or more, 11 percent of them are expatriates, and 71 percent are prepared to work abroad (The Economist Group, 2013). *The Atlantic* readers could be considered what Elvestad (2009) calls 'local cosmopolitans' (those who have an interest both in local and foreign affairs). They are also portrayed by the magazine as "influential" (holders of executive positions), "connected" (they share contents online), "affluent" (but certainly not so much so as the readers of *The Economist*) and "educated" (holders of college or graduate degrees) (*The Atlantic*, 2014).

More than half a century ago since Lazarsfeld and colleagues coined the "two-step flow" model, the contemporary magazine media kits keep on insisting on the influential character of their readers. Here, 86% of *The Economist* print readers agreed with the statement "I am good at persuading people to see things from my point of view" (*The Economist* Group, 2013: 5).

When considering their online audiences, *The Atlantic* seems to be the publication that could be more affected by its increasing international audience (approximately one-third of its current online readership) (Seoane Pérez, 2016). *The Atlantic* is widely seen as one of the finest examples of how a legacy media magazine can become a successful media brand in the digital age. In 2011, it reported that more than half of its advertising revenue was coming from digital media, with 10 million unique visitors to its website. In March 2014, it reached 16 million unique visitors. *The Economist*, however, did not manage to secure its full name for its domain (it operates with economist.com) but its print circulation in North America grew 119 percent in 2000s (*The Economist* Group, 2012), the decade when the penetration of the Internet reached three quarters of the adult population in the U.S. (Rainie, 2010). As Hirschorn says, "unlike its rivals, *The Economist* has been unaffected by the explosion of digital media; if anything, the digital revolution has cemented its relevance" (Hirschorn, 2009). *The Economist*, nevertheless, is now trying to recover lost ground. It redesigned its website in 2010, adding several editorial blogs but hiding its print contents behind a pay wall. In June 2012, it claimed 6.9 million monthly

unique browsers worldwide (3.2 million in North America), with 57,314 digital subscribers.

The Atlantic's most successful digital bet so far has been *Quartz*[1], with content focused on global business and technology news that has mobile and tablet-readers in mind and relies on sponsors. It is obviously a direct competitor to *The Economist* (of which *Quartz*'s editors are declared fans). In July 2013, for the first time, *Quartz* surpassed the online audience of economist.com in the United States, reaching more than 2 million unique visitors in a month, while the British magazine website stood at 1.6 million (Fiegerman, 2013). *Quartz* was eventually sold to Uzabase, a Japanese media company (Purdy, 2018, July 2).

Conclusion: Two brands of cosmopolitan journalism

The two cases studied here, *The Economist* and *The Atlantic*, are publications that represent two sorts of contemporary 'cosmopolitan influentials': rooted and global. *The Economist* animates and is animated by its readers' global lives, marked by frequent travel and international business relations, whereas *The Atlantic* seeks to respond to the demands of Americans who are concerned about the status of their country in this global world.

The Atlantic readers are worried about their country's future, as one of the consequences of globalization is that the fate of one's national community is no longer in the hands of that community (Held, 1995). *The Economist* readers, though more global in their shape and scope, are not avatars of a one-world, unified global society and demonstrate that globalization is more fruitfully seized, and perhaps even enjoyed, by an elite public. The magazine's readers may, in this view, be interpreted as forming an imagined international community of fellow 'new cosmopolitans' (Shiller, 2006) that are nevertheless detached from their co-nationals (Freeland, 2011). Their community is the community of their peers. *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* readers exemplify the limitations of contrasting cosmopolitan public spheres: that is, their readers are, respectively, either constrained by their national blinkers or by their belonging to an elite class. Both *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* could be deemed as 'specialist media' that serve a particular segment of the audience, so the cosmopolitan project extolled by authors like Held (1995) still lacks a global 'general media sector' (capable of reaching heterogenous publics) that Curran (2007 [2000]) sees as essential to a fully democratic media system. Rather than reflective of a near-to-be one-world, *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* might be better understood as cultural products of their respective "imperial" motives (Curran, 2011). *The Atlantic*'s concern about keeping America on the technological edge is another way of trying to keep the 21st century as American as the twentieth. *The Economist*'s quest is that of making the world more liberal, and it carries with it the colonial overtone of its country of origin, Britain, the former imperial head of a commonwealth of nations. As if the fight for liberalism were, to paraphrase the famous poem by Rudyard Kipling, "a white man's burden". To quote Calhoun:

> To some extent, the cosmopolitan elite culture is a product of Western dominance and the kinds of intellectual orientations it has produced (…) It is the culture of those who attend Harvard and the LSE, who read *The Economist* and *The New Yorker* (…) The cosmopolitanism of most theories reflects the experience of business, academic, and public sector elites (…) It is neither freedom from culture nor a matter of pure individual choice, but a cultural position constructed on particular social bases and a choice

1 https://qz.com/

> made possible by both that culture and those bases (Calhoun, 2003b: 543-544)

Political magazines emerged at the end of the nineteenth century "as a conscious response to the mass-circulation newspapers, which many intellectuals saw as a threat to civilized and enlightened public discourse" (Jacobs and Tonwsley, 2011: 31). In the twenty-first century, publications like *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* are trying to serve their initial editorial mission: shaping American identity and defending liberalism, respectively. Both missions have a cosmopolitan overtone: creating a national identity that respects diversity (*The Atlantic*) and fostering a world that is cut by the principles of Western liberalism (*The Economist*).

References

Appiah, K.A. (2005). *The ethics of identity*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Atlantic, The. (2014). The Atlantic media kit. http://advertising.theatlantic.com/static/img/upload/pdfs/The_Atlantic_Media_Kit_-_2014_-_Marketing_Site.pdf

Atlantic, The. (2017, March 27). The Atlantic grows international presence across the Atlantic. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/press-releases/archive/2017/03/the-atlantic-grows-international-presence-across-the-atlantic/520872/

Bakshian Jr., A. (2012, September/October). Voice of the new global elite. *The National Interest* 121: 81-89. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42896552

Bellamy, R. and Baehr, P. (1993). Carl Schmitt and the contradictions of liberal democracy. *European Journal of Political Research* 23: 163-185.

Bergner, D. (2014, April). Is stop-and-frisk worth it? *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/04/is-stop-and-frisk-worth-it/358644/

Bhabha, H. (2000). The vernacular cosmopolitan. In Ferdinand Dennis and Nasseem Khan (eds.), *Voices of the crossing: The impact of Britain on writers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa* (pp. 133-142). London: Serpent's Tail.

Bourne, R. S. (2007 [1916]). Trans-national America. In Robert Vare (ed.), *The American idea: The best of The Atlantic Monthly* (pp. 576-583). New York: Doubleday.

Brüggemann, M., and Schulz-Forberg, H. (2009). Becoming pan-European? Transnational media and the European public sphere. *International Communication Gazette* 71(8): 693-712. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509345064

Brüggemann, M., and Kleinen-von Königslöw, K. (2013). Explaining cosmopolitan coverage. *European Journal of Communication* 28(4): 361-378. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323113484607

Calhoun, C. (2003a). The class consciousness of frequent travelers: toward a critique of actually existing cosmopolitanism. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(4): 869-897. https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-101-4-869

Calhoun, C. (2003b). Belonging in the cosmopolitan imaginary. *Ethnicities* 3(4): 531-553. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796803003004005

Coates, T-N. (2014, June). The case for reparations. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

Coates, T-N. (2017, January/February). My president was black. *The Atlantic*.
https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/

Cohen, M. (1992). Rooted cosmopolitanism: Thoughts on the left, nationalism and multiculturalism. *Dissent* 39: 478-83.

Curran, J. (2007 [2000]). Rethinking media and democracy. In Raph Negrine and James Stanyer (eds.), *The political communication reader* (pp. 27-31). London and New York: Routledge.

Curran, J. (2011). *Media and democracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Dencik, L. (2013). What global citizens and whose global moral order? Defining the global at BBC World News. *Global Media and Communication* 9(2): 119-134.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766513479716

Economist Group, The. (2012). Circulation trends.
https://downloads.ctfassets.net/2h5kbjx7tvqe/66lcde7d6psPWyjfkZIQVh/8d98973ce8ad3d54c592e9b0e89952cc/annual_report_2012_final_for_web.pdf

Economist Group, The. (2013). The Economist subscriber survey: The ideas people 2012.
http://www.economistgroupmedia.com/files/4513/7968/6225/IP3-brochure-final-low-res.pdf

Economist, The. (2013, June 1). The strange rebirth of liberal England. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2013/06/01/the-strange-rebirth-of-liberal-england

Economist, The. (2014, August 7). A personal choice. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2014/08/07/a-personal-choice

Economist, The. (2013, December 18). Earth's got talent. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2013/12/18/earths-got-talent

Economist, The. (2016, July 30). Liberal blues: The many meanings of liberalism. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2016/07/28/liberal-blues

Economist, The. (2016, July 30). The new political divide. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2016/07/30/the-new-political-divide

Economist, The. (2016, October 1). Why they're wrong. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2016/10/01/why-they-re-wrong

Economist, The. (2016, October 29). Liberty moves north. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2016/10/29/liberty-moves-north

Economist, The. (2016, November 19). The new nationalism. *The Economist*. https://www.economist.com/leaders/2016/11/19/the-new-nationalism

Economist, The. (2017, April 29). How to have a better death. *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/04/29/how-to-have-a-better-death

Elvestad, E. (2009). Introverted locals or world citizens? A quantitative study of interest in local and foreign news in traditional media and on the Internet. *Nordicom Review* 30(2): 105-123. https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0154

Fawcett, E. (2014). *Liberalism: The life of an idea*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fiegerman, S. (2013, August 15). Quartz passes *The Economist* in U.S. web traffic. *Mashable*. http://mashable.com/2013/08/15/quarts-tops-economist-traffic/

Fletcher, C. T. (2012). The Atlantic and the American identity. [Book review] *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research*, 13(2). https://doi.org/10.1353/jmm.2012.0009

Freeland, C. (2011, January/February). The rise of the new global elite. *The Atlantic*. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/the-rise-of-the-new-global-elite/308343/

Friedman, J. (2000). Americans again, or the new age of imperial reason? Global elite formation, its identity and ideological discourses. *Theory, Culture & Society* 17(1): 139-146. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760022051068

Goldberg, Jeffrey. (2015, April). Is it time for the Jews to leave Europe? *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/04/is-it-time-for-the-jews-to-leave-europe/386279/

Hafez, K. (2007). *The myth of media globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.

Harcourt, B. E. and Ludwig, J. (2006). Broken windows: New evidence from New York City and a five-city social experiment. *University of Chicago Law Review* 73: 271-320.

Harvey, D. (2009). *Cosmopolitanism and the geographies of freedom*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Held, D. (1995). *Democracy and global order*. Cambridge: Polity.

Hirschorn, M. (2009, July/August). The newsweekly's last stand: Why The Economist is thriving while Time and Newsweek fade. *The Atlantic*, 48-51. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/07/the-newsweeklys-last-stand/307489/

Jacobs, R. N. and Townsley, E. (2011). *The space of opinion: Media intellectuals and the public sphere*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P. F. (2006 [1955]). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Kelling, G. L. and Wilson, J. Q. (1982). Broken windows: the police and neighborhood safety. *The Atlantic Monthly* 249(3): 29-38. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/

Knowles, S. (2007). Macrocosm-opolitanism? Gilroy, Appiah, and Bhabha: The unsettling generality of cosmopolitan ideas. *Postcolonial Text* 3(4): 1-11. https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/731

Langlois, A. J. (2007). Human rights and cosmopolitan liberalism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 10(1), 29-45. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230601122396

Lazarsfeld, P. F. and Wyant, R. (1937). Magazines in 90 cities: Who reads what? *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1(4): 29-41. https://doi.org/10.1086/265121

Merton, R. K. (1968 [1949]). *Social theory and social structure* (Enlarged edition). New York: The Free Press.

Oberholzer-Gee, F., Anand, B., and Gomez, L. (2010). *Case study: The Economist*. Harvard Business School. http://hbr.org/product/the-economist/an/710441-PDF-ENG

Pew Research Center (2014). Key indicators in media and news. *State of the News Media 2014*.https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2014/03/26/state-of-the-news-media-2014-key-indicators-in-media-and-news/

Purdy, C. (2018, July 2). Quartz is being sold to Uzabase, a Japanese business media company. *Quartz*. https://qz.com/1319054/quartz-sold-by-atlantic-media-to-uzabase-of-japan

Rainie, L. (2010, January 5). Internet, broadband, and cell phone statistics. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2010/01/05/internet-broadband-and-cell-phone-statistics/

Sánchez-Flores, M.J. (2010). *Cosmopolitan liberalism: Expanding the boundaries of the individual*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schonhardt-Bailey, C. (2006). *From the Corn Laws to free trade: Interests, ideas, and institutions in historical perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Sedgwick, E. (2014 [1917, March]). Waiting. *The Atlantic: World War I Special Commemorative Issue,* 92-93.

Seoane Pérez, F. (2016). Prospective journalism redux: The new life of political magazines in the digital age. *The International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 12(3): 357-375. https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.12.3.357_1

Sherman, S. (2002). Going long, going deep. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 41(4): 48-57.

Shiller, R. J. (2006, December 15). The new cosmopolitans. Project Syndicate. http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-new-cosmopolitans