



Europe Importing American Tea (Party)?

America has no monopoly on bailouts. The New American has chronicled the forced public financing of the otherwise unsustainable social welfare schemes of several European nations.

Decades of ever-expanding public-sector spending have left the countries of Europe burdened with debilitating debt. The leaders of those nations are reliably reluctant to cut spending and would rather continue the march toward absolutism and the financial enslavement of their people by appealing to the European Union (particularly the still solvent nations in that collective) for handouts and loans.



The people of the United States also know something of the seemingly inescapable pitfalls that pock this path to patriarchal government. Our own elected representatives have forged similar fetters in fires kindled with the treasure and liberty of those to whom they owe their political fortune.

In our Republic, resistance to the ongoing extortion of funds from the middle class by the legislative and executive branches has given rise to a potent and influential political phenomenon known as the “Tea Party movement.”

After experiencing a rapid growth spurt, Tea Party adherents flexed their collective muscle during the mid-term elections of 2010, sending scores of new representatives to Capitol Hill with orders to reduce the size of government by cutting spending and reconstructing the barricades separating the branches of the federal government and protecting the sovereign states from the constant encroachments of the marauding national authority.

The ultimate success or failure of the coalition of the Tea Party and other unaffiliated constitutionalists in eliminating bailouts, ending entitlements, and dismantling a roster of other schemes and programs not permitted by the enumerated powers granted to the federal government, is still in question. It is sad but true and borne out by a reflection on the lessons of history that once a candidate becomes an incumbent, something in his nature changes, leaving him vulnerable to contracting the amnesia-inducing, principle-pilfering, Potomac Fever.

Given the distinctly American flavor of the “Tea Party” label, readers may be surprised to learn that many of our disaffected European cousins, weary of their own governments’ runaway socialism fed by repeated trips to the taxpayer trough, have adopted the beverage monicker themselves in an homage to the struggle on this side of the pond.

The brief history of the European crusade (In both continental Europe and island nations) against the invading Leviathan was recently recited by the venerable [Financial Times](#):

It is a sentiment that appears to be spreading. Popular anger at bail-outs, austerity and general economic uncertainty has already toppled leaders on the eurozone’s periphery: first in Ireland,



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then Portugal and arguably Spain, where José Luis Zapatero has said he will not seek a third term as prime minister.

Now, anger is beginning to infect Europe's prosperous core, where mainstream parties are losing ground to populist outsiders playing on resentment and frustration triggered by austerity and falling living standards.

In France, President Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right UMP party took a drubbing in regional elections last month amid a strong showing by the far-right National Front. In Belgium, Flemish nationalists have prevented the formation of a government for a year and, observers say, are likely to emerge even stronger if forced into another election. The minority Dutch government has relied on the anti-EU party of nationalist Geert Wilders to keep it in power for six months.

Even in Germany - where the idea of a right-wing populist party feeding on economic discontent is the subject of whispered concerns - anger over mainstream handling of the economy led the traditional parties to lose ground in the state of Baden-Württemberg last month. Resentment, fuelled by the tabloid press, grew so intense that one mainstream party, the liberal Free Democrats, appeared to toy with an openly anti-EU platform ahead of the vote.

We are witnessing Europe's own Tea Party moment. Like Barack Obama, US president, leaders of European nations with the might to rescue a continent from crisis are hamstrung by voters who have had enough bailing out others.

And this additional insight from [Reason.com](#)'s Michael C. Moynihan:

Sitting at breakfast last week in Oslo, I opened the newspaper Dagbladet and did a Tex Avery-like double take. Is that a photograph of Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity and professional tax-hatin' bogeyman of the Rachel Maddow show, in a Norwegian newspaper? Indeed it is! And according to the article, Phillips recently spoke about grassroots organizing to members of the right-leaning Progress Party, prompting outrage amongst the country's intelligentsia.

And just days ago, the people of Iceland overwhelmingly rejected their own government's proposal to bailout the northern European country's failed banks. The story as told by [The New American](#)'s Alex Newman:

Voters in Iceland infuriated bankers and European governments yet again by rejecting for a second time a proposal to force taxpayers to cover the massive debts of private Icelandic banks that failed during the economic crisis. But the battle is not over yet.

After the polls closed over the weekend, the final tally showed that about 60 percent of the electorate voted against the scheme. And that was despite a lengthy international intimidation campaign waged against the North Atlantic nation of 320,000 people.

The seriousness and popularity of the European Tea Party is evinced by the existence of a Facebook [page](#) devoted to the movement.

The site is decorated with a logo consisting of a tea bag and the phrase: "Give Me Liberty...Not Debt!"

Under the heading "About," the managers of the site explain the *raison d'être* of the group:

Europe lacks a strong voice for reducing public-sector spending and debt. A voice against bailouts for banks or countries. We rally around the principle of individual rights and liberties against the burden of big government.



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Sounds very similar to the notes intoned by the American chorus of tea partiers. Witness the information printed on the official Facebook [page](#) of the Tea Party Patriots, a stake of the large American tea party tent:

Tea Party Patriots is a coalition of ordinary American citizens from all political affiliations that believe in free-market values who are concerned about the direction of this country's fiscal policy.

WHY? - The American people are tired of working hard for their families only to see politicians with the same failed answers of more spending, more government, and more debt for future generations. The Tea Party Patriots will not tolerate it any longer. The politicians must be told that they can work with us, or find new jobs.

The list of "Likes" on the European Tea Party page is illustrative, as well:

Free State Initiative, Carl Menger, Jean-Baptiste Say, Frédéric Bastiat, The Tea Party Movement in the UK, Individual Rights, Small Government, free markets, and liberty! 3 things we can all believe in, Ayn Rand

A couple of those names are often cited by American tea party participants as influences and inspirations, Frederic Bastiat and Ayn Rand, in particular.

Regardless of the dovetailing of interests and inspirations, the American and European tea parties will find their own independent fortunes. The respective histories of America and the countries of Europe will inform the progress and potency of the various tea party organizations. Their ability to derail the respective trains presently hurtling toward tyranny and economic servitude along the tracks laid by taxpayer money may depend on the willingness of supporters to sacrifice short-term affluence in favor of long-term financial and political viability.

Photo: European Central Bank headquarters



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