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## **EUROPE IN THE NETHERLANDS:**

### **POLITICAL PARTIES**

*H. Pellikaan, H. Vollaard and S. Otjes*

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# **1 DUTCH POLITICAL PARTIES**

## **1.1 Introduction**

'We didn't care a damn about the mass public at that time', said former PvdA leader Van der Goes van Naters frankly about the Dutch parliament discussing the first steps towards European integration in the early 1950s (Harryvan et al. 2001: 71). And for more than fifty years the mass public remained virtually of no interest for the parliament with respect to European integration. Europe has been of no relevance in any of its post-war elections, although the Dutch parliament takes the most important decisions on European integration on behalf of the Netherlands. Still in 2003, the VVD party decided to drop European enlargement as issue in its national election campaign, because it would have too little mobilising force. The direct elections of the European Parliament since 1979 did not attract much attention of both political parties and voters. Moreover, the Dutch parliament did not only care little about the mass public with respect to Europe, they also lost soon interest in the issue of European integration itself, apart from a few specialists, particularly in the politically less visible Senate.

Political parties are crucial in parliamentary elections and debates in relation to European integration. They recruit the members of national and European parliament, they choose to campaign on Europe or not, they select the members of government and informally co-select the Dutch member of the European Commission, they can present views and decide on European integration in parliament, and they can scrutinise the European activities of the Dutch government and the European Commission through parliament. For long, Europe did not raise much dust within parties' electoral and parliamentary activities. No divisive debates followed in the parties of SP, SGP, GPV, RPF, and GroenLinks, when they turned less oppositional or even positive to European integration in the 1990s. Discord on the EU membership of Turkey however resulted in a split from the VVD party in 2004 (GroepWilders). After political parties in the Dutch parliament decided to organise a referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty (which they supported in a large majority) in 2005, the mass public turned out in relatively great numbers to vote on the European Constitutional Treaty, and rejected it. Most political parties subsequently adjusted their opinions, promised to listen more to the mass public, and decided to scrutinise the European activities of the Dutch government more thoroughly through parliament.

Thus, the Dutch voters' rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty by referendum in 2005 has finally put both the mass public and European integration (temporarily?) on political parties' agenda. That can be considered very positive from a democratic point of

view, because parties have been an essential link between the mass public on the one side and the parliament and executive power on the other side. However, gloom is all over the place. According to quite a few commentators, the apparent difference of opinions between a majority of the mass public and a majority of parties on the European Constitutional Treaty would indicate no less than a legitimacy crisis; a legitimacy crisis of parties because they were unable to foresee the difference of opinion with their voters on such a weighty issue, and a legitimacy crisis of the European Union because it can no longer rely on the unconditional support of one of its founding members to create a safe and wealthy Europe. Although the Dutch government appreciates the politicisation of the issue of European integration in Dutch politics, but it therefore expresses its concerns that that may hinder the capacity of the European Union to act and to deliver, resulting in a (further?) deterioration of the EU's legitimacy.

In response to those concerns, this chapter explores which role political parties have played and can play in the functioning of the European Union. It particularly focuses on the questions whether and how political parties can foster the legitimacy of the European Union. Section 2 presents the concepts to analyse the role of political parties in the European Union and its legitimacy. A historical overview of parties' opinions and activities related to European integration follows in section 3. An exploration how politicisation of European integration may mark the Dutch party system is presented in section 4. Based on experiences abroad, the subsequent section discusses how Dutch political parties can deal with future referendums on European issues. The chapter rounds off with a conclusion whether and how political parties can foster the legitimacy of the European Union.

## **1.2 Analysing political parties in the European Union**

Scholarly literature on the European Union and its predecessors have discussed at great length whether it is rather similar to states, federations, empires, international organisations or international regimes. The European Union is however distinctive of all those types of polities, reason to label it often as a unique polity, a polity *sui generis*. Yet, distinctive does not mean it is not comparable to other polities (Mair, 2006). Political science offers sufficiently abstract concepts to compare and thus to analyse systemically the peculiarities of the structure and functioning of any political system including the European Union. For example, the concept of political system refers to a system containing institutions for collective decision-making to allocate (im)material values ("output"), citizens and groups to express their demands ("input"), and continuous feedback from those citizens and groups regarding the output. Indeed, the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice can decide to distribute resources across the

European Union, while citizens and groups in the European Union can express their demands through voting or lobbying (cf. Hix, 1999: ch.1; Mair, 2005). The Dutch parliament is also part of the political system of the European Union, because it decides whether the EU will expand geographically and policy-wise, and it controls the European activities of the Dutch government in the Council. In addition, Dutch political parties are active in the European political system both at national and European level, because they (among other things) select the members for the Dutch and the European Parliament. To note, the Dutch parliament and Dutch political parties are not only participating in the European political system, but also in the Dutch political system, in which input and output are organised for the Netherlands and its members.

Essential to the stability of any political system is the conversion of input into satisfactory output for the members by the decision-making institutions (Easton, 1965). In the long run, dissatisfaction among the system's members (citizens and groups) about the output and the lack of possibilities for corrective feedback may undermine the support for the political system itself. For this purpose, the political scientist David Easton distinguishes specific from diffuse support. Specific support relates to the demands of citizens and groups, while diffuse support regards the political community as a whole and the political regime (the values, norms and structures of authority). Diffuse support is often measured by the level of identification with fellow members, the trust in the system's institutions and policies, and the adherence to the basic norms and values of the political community.

The stability of political system can be put under stress if citizens and groups demand too much in terms of volume or content in a too short time. That stress will increase if the institutions of decision-making are not well-organised to process (an overload of) demands and to deliver satisfactory output. Increased effectiveness and efficiency in output delivery may therefore prevent a decline in diffuse support for a political system. After the European Council decided in 1993 to accept new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (in addition to the former DDR), the EU has attempted three times to strengthen its decision-making capacity to be able to problem-solving in an enlarged union; unsuccessfully thus far. The Amsterdam Treaty, the Nice Treaty and the (temporarily?) 'dead' European Constitutional Treaty do not offer the required effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making yet. Concerns has therefore risen whether the EU decision-makers are able to meet the demands of the various members in the EU satisfactorily (cf. Scharpf, 1999).

In addition, the political systems of the European Union and its Member States are intertwined. Political actors like governments, parties and civil servants are both active in the

European and their domestic political systems. That may result in confusion among citizens and groups directing their demands to the wrong system. For example, while they want rather the Dutch political system to deliver a stable economy and military security, it is only through the European political system these demands can be delivered. Dutch political actors may yet successfully express their citizens' demands in the European political system and take for the credit for it. The Dutch political system may thus enjoy an increase in diffuse support through the European political system – a European rescue of national legitimacy.

The European political system covers a large diversity of citizens and groups, and presumably therefore a large diversity of demands. Too large diversity of demands can also put stress on the European political system, because it may not be able deliver satisfactory output for all citizens and groups permanently. Decentralisation of decision-making is therefore another remedy to avoid stress and instability in a political system. More homogeneity in terms of citizens, groups and demands is usually to be found at lower level of government, facilitating the effective and efficient organisation of satisfactory provision of output. In the EU, the principle of subsidiarity is sometimes referred to as the guideline for administrative and political decentralisation to the national and also regional level to address the demands of the members more effectively and efficiently.

Stress may also be alleviated through engendering a stronger sense of community among the citizens and groups of a political system. The more they are committed to the political system and its members, the less enduring dissatisfaction and decline in diffuse support may be expected. Then, some members accept less satisfactory output as a sacrifice for the sake of other members, because they are perceived as belonging to 'us' and are trusted to be benevolent to the community in future (cf. Scharpf, 1999: 8 and Føllesdal, 2004: 15). The creation of a European identity through the introduction of European citizenship in the early 1990s and the definition of common European values and norms under the Dutch EU-presidency in 2004 can be seen as attempts to foster a European sense of community. The sharing of power, money and labour in an ever enlarging and closer union requires a solidaristic sense of community at European level, particularly in rich, old and small member states like the Netherlands. Citizens' increasing (exclusive) identification with their nation in the six old member states during the 1990s (except for Luxembourg) indicates the limits of a European sense of community (Dijkink and Mamadouh, 2006). The principle of subsidiarity is more often used to express those socio-cultural limits.

Another option to deal with stress in a political system is the selective filtering of demands by so-called gatekeepers. Gatekeepers aggregate and articulate demands from citizens and



groups and formulate subsequently a coherent program. This 'filtering' of demands facilitates their effective and efficient conversion into output. The most common examples of gatekeepers in national political systems are interest groups and political parties. The question is whether political parties also function as gatekeepers in the European political system. Article 138a of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union suggest they should: "Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union." Yet, the empirical questions are whether political parties have spent some effort to be a link between the citizens of the Union and the (European) executive powers, and whether political parties have had the possibilities in the European political system to be a gatekeeper. As will be shown in the historical overview below of Dutch political parties in the European political system, Europe did not matter for them until recently. A referendum on a European issue may however wake this "sleeping giant", suggested political scientist Ruud Koole in 1998 (Koole, 1998; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). Now the referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005 has taken place, section 4 explores how Europe has been politicised in the Dutch party system, in other words to see how political parties articulate and aggregate the European demands of the Dutch citizens. The concluding part of the chapter discusses whether the continuous reconstruction of Europe allows political parties yet to be meaningful gatekeepers both in the national and European political system.

A crucial concept here is legitimacy. Regarding European integration, it is widely discussed in scholarly literature particularly since the ratification crisis of the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s. Long before, the discussion on the legitimacy of political parties and party-based democracy has started. In these discussions, legitimacy has been defined and measured according to various normative yardsticks and empirical criteria (see e.g. Føllesdal, 2004; Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999). Following David Easton (1965), this chapter defines legitimacy empirically as the diffuse support for the political regime, which consists of the values, norms and structures of authority. Based on the Eastonian reasoning presented above, diffuse support of the European Union may decline if

- a. the citizens and groups are confronted with unsatisfactory output and
- b. the EU is not expected to be effective and efficient enough to improve the output,
- c. while they have limited opportunities for corrective feedback through input channels because of malfunctioning gatekeepers
- d. and do not feel committed to their fellow-members in the European Union.

From this perspective, the present politicisation of Europe in Dutch politics is very positive, because it can stimulate the 'blood circulation' in the European political system. This politicisation may incite Dutch political parties to articulate and aggregate demands of Dutch citizens and groups and convey them into the European political system. As a consequence, Dutch citizens and groups do not only feel their demands are acknowledged and expressed in the European Union, but can expect the European Union is correcting its output to a more satisfactory level. Due to the pro-European permissive consensus, only Euro scepticism could result in the politicisation of the European issue in party politics. Euro scepticism would therefore rather a sign of Dutch willingness for normal engagement with the European issue like all other issues than of declining legitimacy of the European Union (cf. Taggart and Scszerbiak, 2005). An improved blood circulation in Europe yet requires political parties to understand well the concerns and demands of the Dutch citizens and groups, as well as the (parties') opportunity to converse these demands into more satisfactory output through the European political system. A large majority of the Dutch electorate still support democracy as guiding principle in the Dutch as well as European political regime. Political parties are deemed essential to democracy (Mair, 2005), and may therefore be indirectly necessary for the diffuse support for the European Union. If parties would be less and less trusted by the Dutch public, and political parties cannot deliver citizens' demands into the European Union, the EU would face a serious problem with its legitimacy. A crucial question is therefore whether the legitimacy of the European Union can and should be sustained without democracy and parties.

## **2 DUTCH POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL SYSTEM**

### **2.1 Europe in Dutch party politics: 1945-1979**

Just after the Second World War, foreign policy was foremost the domain of the minister of foreign affairs and the government at large. The parliament was not actively involved in foreign policy issues, except for a few instances like the desired compensatory annexation of parts of Germany and the war in the Netherlands Indies (although these instances can be considered domestic, too). International treaties were often discussed in parliament after the negotiations were closed. The activism of a few parliamentarians regarding European integration between late 1947 and 1952 is therefore striking. They urged on the Dutch cabinet members like minister of foreign affairs Stikker (VVD) and prime-ministers Drees (PvdA) to relax their anti-supranational stance on European integration before the negotiations started on the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defence Community. The support for European integration in parliament mainly came from the social-democratic PvdA and the catholic KVP. Their ideologies gave room to envision co-operation across national borders, through which Germany and its neighbours can mutually reconcile and can create<sup>1</sup> an economic bulwark against communism. The protestant parties CHU and ARP and the conservative-liberal VVD were more reluctant to share sovereignty of the Dutch nation with the continental neighbours and to integrate economies at a regional rather than worldwide scale. Some of their parliamentarians therefore refused to approve the treaties of Paris and Rome. The ARP took also into account it could face electoral competition from the orthodox-protestant SGP and GPV. These marginal parties resisted the cession of God-given sovereignty of a protestant nation to a “tower of Babel” from mixed catholic and secular origin. The communist CPN also objected European integration, but because of its anti-communist and capitalist origin.

In the 1960s and 1970s the VVD turned more favourable to European integration, because of a change in leadership and the unexpected high economic benefit for the Netherlands from the customs union and the Common Agricultural Policy. The new democratic-libertarian D66 were committed European federalists, because that would also for democracy at European level. While the KVP remained committed to the European ideal, the social-democratic PvdA lost some of its European faith. They felt the European customs union as a protectionist trade block would violate international solidarity and national social policy. The CPN as well as the new left-wing parties of pacifists (PSP) and Christian-radicals (PPR) were also very critical on European integration because of its capitalistic nature. Although not represented in parliament until 1994, the Maoists (SP) joined this negative stance on European integration. Europe was barely an issue in the large protestant parties, although the split of a small section of the ARP and the ensuing establishment of another orthodox-protestant party

(RPF) was partly motivated on controversies on European integration. The other two orthodox-protestant parties remained staunch opponents of European integration. The GPV has been [the only] party in the time period 1945 till 1979 to use Europe as electoral item in the early 1960s, related to its defence of “Queen and Fatherland”. Yet, the GPV qualified its opposition in the 1970s. As soon as the European integration would serve better its Christian values than the Dutch state, it would no longer object to use Europe as an instrument.

The Dutch political parties developed their views on European integration based on their ideologies. Apart from the 1947-1952 period, parties were however not actively involved with European politics. As long as European integration served Dutch trade and agriculture, and it created no competitor to the military alliance of the Northern-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – they rather left it to the Dutch ministries of economic affairs and foreign affairs. Parties’ grandiloquent texts on European integration were therefore somewhat non-committal. Moreover, these texts were rather the typical Dutch moral packaging for, above all, the national interest in trade for supporting European integration (Singelsma, 1979, p. 49). In parliament, only a few specialists or assistants were involved in European politics, often those who enjoyed their trips to Strasbourg because of their mandate in the European Parliament. Thus, Dutch political parties did not spend much effort to convey citizens’ demands to the European political system in the period 1945-1979. Despite 30% of the electorate sceptic or negative about European integration in the early 1970s, Europe had been barely an issue in the parliamentary elections. European integration being largely an issue of the executive powers (ministers), parties also had few opportunities to get those demands through the gates of the European political system.

## **2.2 Europe in Dutch party politics: 1979-2005**

The direct election of the European Parliament since 1979 reduced the knowledge of the Dutch parliament to European issues. The abolition of the double mandate in Dutch and European Parliament resulted that specialists in European integration were now only in Strasbourg and not in The Hague anymore. Although the direct elections were aimed at fostering the democratic link between the citizens and the European Communities, Dutch voters have rather learned not to vote, and thus have learned that democratic elections do not always matter (cf. Mair, 2000). The turn-out for those elections was relatively low, also because Dutch political parties did not really spend much effort in campaigning [check DNPP overview EP elections]. And if they did so, they rather framed them as national than European contests, partly to avoid internal fissures on the European issue. Many voters also voted rather because of national concerns than European policy issues (Van der Brug & Van der Eijk, 1999). Thus, voters have also learned through the direct EP elections to vote without

knowing what really is at stake. Although quite some voters could yet differentiate parties on the left-right dimension, many faced problems in differentiating parties on specific policy positions in EP elections, particularly regarding the European Union itself (Van der Brug & Van der Eijk, 1999; Schmitt & Thomassen, 1999). The picture of uninformed voters and reluctantly informing parties was valid until the referendum of the European Constitutional Treaty, when parties became more active in explaining their position on European integration and voters increased their knowledge on European integration (Aarts and Van der Kolk, 2005).

In the 2004 EP elections, for the first time a major party campaigned on European issues. The conservative-liberal VVD would like to set limits on European integration and the Dutch net contribution. However, it is rather the national parliament deciding on more or less European integration and national governments deciding on contributions. Parties and their voters concerned about the extent of integration and net contributions therefore direct their demands to the wrong platform (Mair, 2000). As said, most Dutch parties have never made Europe an issue at national elections. The directly elected Second Chamber of parliament discussed and ratified the fundamental Maastricht Treaty in the legislative period 1989-1994, preventing the Dutch voters to have a say in advance on European matters (in 1989 the Maastricht Treaty was not foreseen). Parties thus neglected their role as gatekeepers in the European political system, despite the gap between their more pro-European stance and their constituencies' opinions. And if voters and their representatives in European Parliament did share certain policy preferences, that was rather by accident.

Political parties were yet active in different way in the European political system.

The first direct elections of the European Parliament stimulated the further development of EP party groups in the 1970s, which emerged from the Assembly in the Council of Europe (late 1940s), the ECSC Assembly (early 1950s) and the European Parliament (since late 1950s). In addition, transnational party federations were established among Christian-democratic, socialist and liberal parties from the various Member States. These rather loosely organised federations obtained more coherence and strengthened their links with the EP party groups after the Maastricht Treaty emphasised the significance of parties within the European Union (see above). Party leaders of similar ideological background started to meet informally before European summits. The voting behaviour of MEPs suggests the EP party groups have a relatively strong ideological coherence. However, the party federations have had difficulties to write clear election programmes because of the compromises required both on left-right and more Europe/less Europe dimension. The small size of the national delegations in these party groups may rather explain their adherence to the party groups'

leadership. While MEPs were busy in Brussels and Strasbourg with European policies, interference of the Dutch parliament with European policies only began to emerge in the late 1980s, and continued to be restricted to experts throughout the 1990s (Soetendorp and Hanf, 1998: 42). Internal market regulations hitting the Dutch television system and the Dutch health insurance system raised parliament's attention only shortly, although the politically less visible Senate introduced measures to follow European policy-making more closely.

In the 1980s, fears disappeared in the PvdA that the EEC as a protectionist trade block, would sweep international solidarity, democratic control and national social policy aside (Koole and Raap, 2005). Under the leadership of the future prime minister Wim Kok, the PvdA party stopped striving for a full-blown socialist Europe. Yet the party continued to argue strongly in favour of European democratisation, even though various attempts were made to regard the success of European integration in terms of policy rather than the degree of democratisation. After its huge defeat in the 2002 national elections, the issue was further examined within the PvdA party. More emphasis was placed on the idea that European integration should benefit the Netherlands and the Dutch people in some way, and on a stricter application of the subsidiarity principle (Koole and Raap, 2005). The party underlined this after the vote against the European Constitutional Treaty, and also called for the welfare state to be organised at national level (Koole and Duivesteijn, 2005).

After the Christian-radicals, pacifists and communists merged to form the GroenLinks party (Green Left) in 1991, rejection of Europe made way for Euroscepticism and finally Euro-positivism (Koole and Raap, 2005). The GroenLinks party, not only accepted the sharing of sovereignty and the creation of a common market, but also became increasingly optimistic about the scope for creating a social and green Europe that would act as a counterbalance to the United States. An additional advantage of this change in course was that it opened up the possibility for the GroenLinks party to form a government with Europositive parties such as PvdA and CDA. After the former Maoist SP entered the House of Representatives in 1994, its outright opposition to the EU as capitalist undertaking was transformed into Euroscepticism. The SP accepted the idea of European integration, but was sceptical about the neoliberal, federalist course pursued by the Dutch and European establishments. For this reason, it voted against the Treaty of Nice (2001) and opposed the European Constitutional Treaty.

Change of leadership made the conservative-liberal VVD less positive about European integration. VVD party leader and, later, European Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, would not hear of European federalism. In his view, now that the EU had a common market and a common currency, there was nothing further to be done (Boer, 2005). In the House of

Representatives, therefore, the VVD party spoke out against the social protocol annexed to the Treaty of Maastricht. Given its support for a national veto and its Atlantic orientation in foreign and security policy, the party was also critical of European cooperation in this field. After its huge defeat at the 2002 national elections, the VVD party put the government under considerable pressure to agree to EU enlargement to ten new member states only on the condition that they did not all join at the same time and the EU budgets were reduced (Harmsen, 2004a, p. 110). Pim Fortuyn, the liberal-conservative politician murdered in 2002, and his new LPF party, did not completely reject the idea of European integration, but strongly protested against a democratically deficient and overly bureaucratic, vast, elitist and interfering institution – the “soul-less” European Union (Harmsen, 2004a). This protest sprang from Fortuyn's wish to preserve the Dutch identity. He thus placed his party firmly in the Eurosceptic camp. The D66 party was the only liberal party to remain unequivocal and optimistic about European integration.

An appeal for decentralisation became the core of Orthodox-Protestant resistance to further European integration, especially after the de-Christianized Netherlands became less worth defending. In the 1990s, the three small Orthodox-Protestant parties accepted that Dutch sovereignty should be partly ceded to a supranational Europe (they voted in favour of the Nice Treaty), but doubts about further European integration could not be dispelled. This Euroscepticism was also reflected in the opposition of the SGP and the ChristenUnie ('Christian Union', formed from the fusion of the RPF and the GPV parties) to the so-called European super state during the referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty. Although officially still in favour of further European integration, the Christian-Democratic CDA no longer delivered grandiose texts on European federalism, and focused more pragmatically on the reduction of the Dutch EU contribution.

Currently, there are no Dutch political parties in the Dutch or European parliaments that still reject the idea of European integration. The same holds true for the extreme-right CD party (in parliament from 1989-1998), for the Groep Wilders party, which split from the VVD party in 2004 after a dispute over Turkish EU membership, and the Europa Transparant party, founded by the former European Commission auditor and whistle-blower, Paul van Buitenen. The latter led his Eurosceptic party to success at the 2004 elections to the European Parliament (winning 7.3% of votes) on the platform that the European Union can only give shape to the concept of European integration if it is well organised from a financial point of view.

Despite all changes in party opinions on European integration throughout the 1990s, Europe hardly mattered in party-citizen relationship – the party political landscape therefore remained rather similar, marked by the past dimensions of class and religion. An effective linkage between domestic and European political issues and politicisation through a referendum could change that (Koole, 1998). But in what way? Joop van Holsteyn and Josje den Ridder (2005) suggest that among voters Europe resonates with social-economic issues, and more with cultural identity. The next section explores extensively whether and how a new dimension may emerge in Dutch political landscape.



### **3 POSITION OF DUTCH POLITICAL PARTIES TOWARDS EU INTEGRATION**

#### **3.1 Ideological views and the European arena**

##### 3.1.1 The source of empirical research on political parties

The object of this study is to present an inventory of the normative viewpoints of political parties regarding European politics as a basis for the description and evaluation of the current role of the parties in embedding EU policies in Dutch democracy and society. First we have to make a decision of what we are going to use as a source for the inventory of the normative viewpoints of parties towards European politics. Election programmes are a good source for analysing the normative views or ideological visions of parties on politics. Of course, election programmes are not the only source, but so far the manifestos have been a very successful source that enables political scientists to distinguish the ideological orientations of political parties (Budge 1987; Budge et al. 2001).

After deciding on what we are going to use as source - the most recent manifesto programmes of the 2004 election of the European Parliament - we have to make the next choice on how are we going to analyse the manifestos. The answer of the 'how question' depends on whether one accepts the idea that parties compete mainly by emphasizing the importance of different issues or that they compete by offering different policies on the same issues. The two modes of party competition are not mutually exclusive and 'both can be pursued simultaneously on different issues; the real question is which predominates?' (Budge and Farlie 1985: 270).

The Manifesto Research Group (MRG) with Budge and Klingemann analyses the ideological position of parties in terms of selective emphases on issues. With their approach it becomes possible to determine the ideological position of parties and party families in a comparative setting. The competition is fought over different issues in which parties distinguish themselves by advocating particular views on specific issues that are important for these parties. For example, if environmental issues are significant for a party the analysis of their election programmes by the MRG will reveal that 'green' is a salient issue. In the same manner the MRG approach can disclose what the salient issues are for each of the parties.

By establishing what the salient issue is for each party, one has identified what the core values for these parties are. In order to compare the ideological positions of political parties, the MRG assumes that the different ideological views of the party families can be placed on a single left-right continuum. In a multiparty system the concept of left-and-right has an

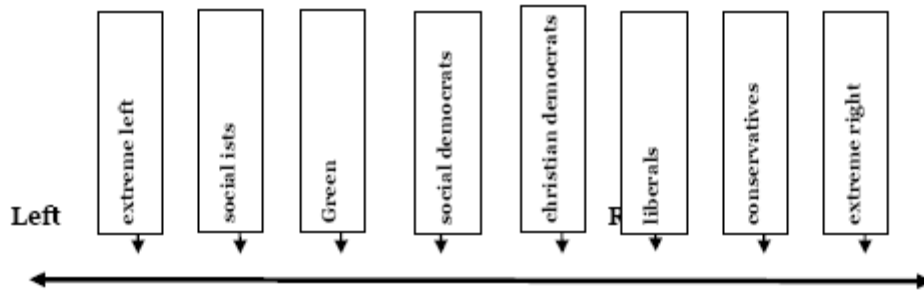
instrumental meaning that can 'be used as a common yardstick in the description of political parties' (Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983: 229).

The concept of a common yardstick covers more than the classic Downsian left-right orientation which rests on the assumption that all political questions are reduced to their bearing upon one crucial issue: 'how much government intervention in the economy should there be?' (Downs 1957: 116). The modern version of the left-right continuum does not deny the existence of issues other than the economic issues. Instead, the modern left-right dimension can be seen as some sort of 'super issue' in which economic, social, and ethical issues are clustered together (Laver and Budge 1992; Van der Brug 1997: 37). Or it can be regarded as the space of competition which encompasses the separate conflict issues between parties 'regardless of how many cleavages and/or identification dimensions exists' (Sani and Sartori 1983: 330). This left-right continuum is perceived as the factor on which the political battle is fought and this gives it the name of the dominant conflict dimension (Sartori 1976; Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983; Klingemann 1988).

If the left-right continuum is basically the same in all Western democracies, it means that for each country we can locate national parties (and for all Western countries we can position the party families) on the left-right scale. Figure 1 presents the party families on the left-right orientation. On the left end of the scale we find the parties that belong to the extreme-left (such as the Dutch New Communist Party). Moving towards the middle we pass the Socialists, the Green and the Social Democrats. In the centre of the political spectrum are the Christian democrats located. On the right side of the middle are the Liberals and moving further to the right end of the dimension we see the Conservatives and the extreme-right parties (like the New Right party of Michael Smit).

The concept of the dominant conflict dimension is a very important model because it enables political scientists to place political parties on a common scale of competition, while the political competition is in terms of the primacy of selective emphasis, i.e., to persuade the electorates with their 'own' salient issue.

**Figure 1** *The position of party families on the left-right continuum*



In this study, we follow a different method which is based on the exclusively confrontational approach of Stokes (Stokes 1966). The confrontational approach does not assume that all issues can be squeezed into a single left-right scale. The spatial model of competition is composed of different policy dimensions 'on each of which parties take up a position. In other words, parties must endorse specific proposals on each issue, so that competition unambiguously consists of a direct confrontation of different policies on common issues' (Budge and Farlie 1985: 270).

The choice for the confrontation approach is based on the judgment that a two-dimensional model with a separate EU integration dimension will give us more relevant information, than a one-dimensional model where all EU issues are squeezed into a single line together with all other national and domestic issues. This choice for the confrontational model gives an answer of how are we going to analyse the manifestos to achieve our object. We measure the position of political parties towards economic integration with issues that are stated in the Lisbon Agreement of March 2000. Furthermore, we measure the position of parties concerning EU integration which are closely related to the issues that play an important role in the EU Constitutional Treaty. Finally, we quantify to location of parties on a third dimension, a scale that makes a distinction between a national versus European cultural identity orientation. The three dimensions, the economic integration, the political integration and the cultural identity dimension form together a political space in which the normative viewpoints of political parties regarding European politics can be located. The three-dimensional model is the basis for the description and evaluation of the current role of the parties in embedding EU policies in Dutch democracy and society.

### 3.1.2 European Parliament as second-order election

In this section we review conflicting views on the subject of how political parties handle European issues. We discuss several models that give opposite emphasis on dimensions of the European policy space. For example, electoral studies on Dutch voters and parties

emphasize that European elections are second-order elections where the domestic political issues dominate the political campaigns (Oppenhuis, Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996: 304-305). During the second-order European elections the national issues completely take over the campaign for the European Parliament (Oppenhuis 1996: 209).

This feature of the European election is in agreement with Mair's division of competence between the national and European electoral arenas. According to Mair the European arena is best suited to debate about national and everyday policy questions, whereas 'the national electoral arena is best suited to the contestation of key European issues' (Mair 2000: 28). However, the normative notion of being best suited does not make it an empirical fact. Throughout the first-order elections of the Dutch Parliament the EU issues did not have any influence on the voting behaviour of the Dutch citizens (Aarts 1995; Van der Brug 2000; Van Holsteyn and Den Ridder 2005).

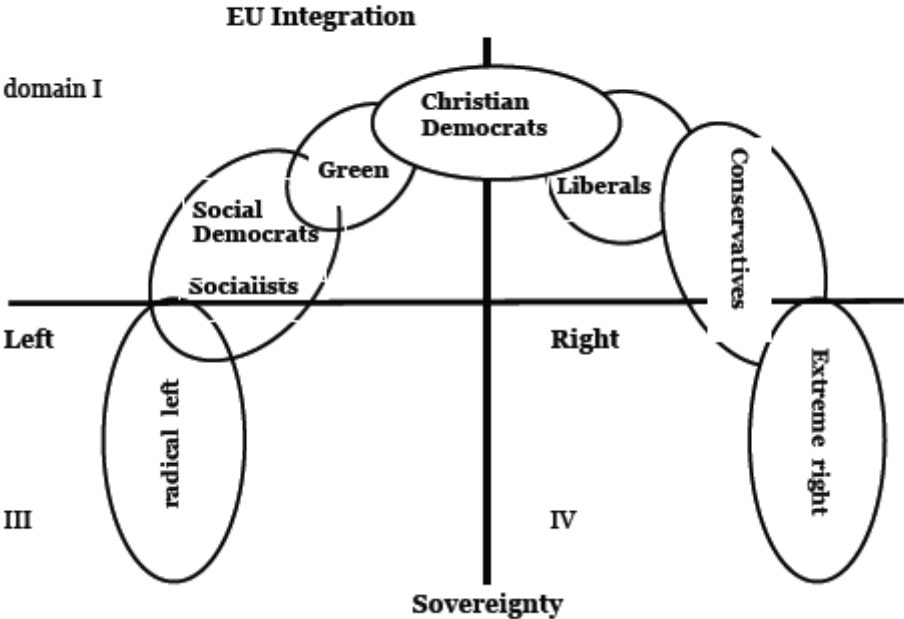
Electoral researchers demonstrate that European issues have not had much impact on the party choice at the election of the European Parliament or the national Parliament. They all agree that 'elections of the European Parliament have been described as "second-order national" elections at place to the national arena as a focus for issue and representational concerns and the national arena is quintessentially one in which left-right orientations dominate' (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004: 32). Left-right orientations of citizens are the most important grounds that explain European vote's choices at the election (Van der Eijk, Schmitt, and Binder 2005: 167).

Looking at the election programmes for the European Parliament of 2004 - varying from the communists tot New Right party - one can establish that the issue of the EU integration is not easily compressed into left-right dimension. The problem is that the extremes on both end of the dimension in Figure 1 are in agreement with each other in their anti-EU integration position, while most main parties around the middle of the scale are in favour of the process of centre formation. The only way to preserve the position of party families on the left-right continuum and at the same time include the EU integration issue is to construct a two-dimensional policy space. The two-dimensional model would involve the national left-right issues and the European topics concerning the political integration of the EU. Figure 2 illustrates this two-dimensional political space with a dominant conflict dimension in the form of the inverted U-shape band of ellipses.

The ellipses in Figure 2 represent the ranges of the member parties in the different member states in Europe who belong to the same party family. The horizontal axis in Figure 2

represents the national left-right dimension, which is similar to the continuum in Figure 1. The vertical axis stands for the European integration issue, with the pro-integration position on top and the anti-integration at the bottom. The configuration in Figure 2 shows an inverted U-shape band of political parties with the Christian Democrats on the top of the horseshoe.

**Figure 2** *The horseshoe of the left-right continuum and EU integration*



This position of the Christian Democrats is in harmony with their important role in the process of European political integration. At both ends of the horseshoe we find the extreme-left and extreme-right parties who are fiercely against any loss of national sovereignty. The other parties have a position somewhere in between the location of the Christian Democrats and the extreme left and right parties. The position of the parties in Figure 2 is curve-linear and this so-called horseshoe configuration of parties is a strong indication that the underlying structure is one-dimensional (Bowen 1975; Kruskal and Wish 1978; De Heus, Van der Leeden and Ganzedam 2001: 235).

With the help of the construction of the two-dimensional horseshoe configuration of parties, the left-right continuum remains the central organizing dimension in Western Europe. The curve linear relationship between the left-right and the EU integration dimension can only survive if the parties in Western Europe have stable positions on either side of the EU issues. According to Hix and Lord the main parties in Europe do not have a strong coherent position towards the desirability of the EU integration: “the ‘core’ families of all the domestic

European party system, in contrast, are fairly coherent on the left-right dimension, but have wide ranges on the integration-sovereignty dimension' (Hix and Lord 1997: 49).

### **3.2 Models of political space**

#### 3.2.1 The scores on the three dimensions

The left-right dimension in the Hix-Lord model is some sort of super issue which includes all national issues. In our model we have selected the economic issues of the Lisbon summit meeting by the 15 member states in 2000. At this meeting the European Union formulated an ambitious programme to make Europe the most competitive economic region in the world by 2010. The acceptance or the ideological preference of political parties for more liberalization or more political involvement by the EU is an empirical indication of what the position of these parties are towards Economic Reform in Europe. The manifestos of the above mentioned parties are coded on 10 economic items. For example, if a party agrees with the liberalization of a part of the energy market, such as the production of gas, than this party gets a 'plus score'. If a party is against privatisation of the energy market, it gets a 'minus score'. And, if a party has no clear position towards the liberalization it will get a zero score. With 10 economic items the highest score is plus ten and the lowest is minus ten.

During the 2004 election for the European Parliament a voter could choose between fifteen lists of candidates. The two parties with a Protestant denomination, CU and SGP, had one joint list of candidates and both parties have one seat in the European Parliament.

Table 1 portrays all nine parties that were elected in the European Parliament plus three other parties that did not receive enough votes to get a seat in the European Parliament. Partij van het Noorden (PvhN), Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) and Nieuw Rechts (NR). Nonetheless they are included in this research because with the PvhN the position of a regional party becomes clear and with the LPF and NR the point of view of the moderate and the extreme right parties are specified. By including the regionalist and the extreme-right parties in the empirical analysis it becomes possible to compare the result of the analysis of the Dutch parties with other EU countries in the Hix-Lord model.

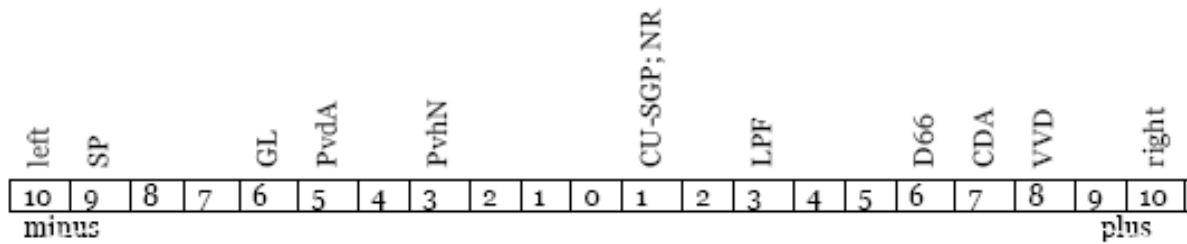
**Table 1** *The Dutch Political Parties*

			27 seats
<i>Liberal</i>	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	VVD	4
	Democaten 66	D66	1
<i>Confessional</i>	ChristenUnie	CU	1
	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	SGP	1
	Christen Democratisch Appel	CDA	7
<i>Socialist</i>	Partij van de Arbeid	PvdA	7
	Socialistische Partij	SP	2
	GroenLinks	GL	2
<i>New</i>	Europa Transparant	ET	2
	Lijst Pim Fortuyn	LPF	-
	Nieuw Rechts	NR	-
<i>Regional</i>	Partij van het Noorden	PvhN	-

Figure 3 shows a well-known ranking of political parties on the Economic Reform dimension. The socialist party SP is located on the left end of the scale and the liberal party VVD occupies the other extreme of the dimension. Election programmes for the European parliament show that not only the VVD has accepted the neoliberal European program, but also the CDA and the D66 have approved most of the proposals of the Lisbon agreement. Although the positions on both extremes are familiar, the CDA and D66 are more towards the right pole than expected. On the other side of the dimension are the parties that do not endorse the neoliberal economic reform. The SP is against the idea of liberalization of public services and the Green party (GL) is also not in favour of privatising public utilities. The Labour party is less radical than the SP or the GL, but the PvdA is more outspoken against the neoliberal program than one would expect after eight years coalition with the liberal parties.

The opposition parties are located on the left end of the scale in Figure 3 and the coalition parties, CDA, VVD and D66, are situated on the right end. Figure 3 shows that the political competition between opposition and governing parties has become more antagonistic on economic issues than during the era of the purple coalition.

**Figure 3** *The Economic dimension*



What is noteworthy is that the parties that are usually associated with the ‘right’, the CU, the SGP, and the LPF do not enthusiastically support the neoliberal economic reform of the European economy. The NR associates itself in its election programme with Lega Nord, Front National and Vlaams Blok. This means that the NR appoints itself as a part of the extreme right. The notion of extreme right is mostly interpreted as being a party that also has strong rightist beliefs on economic issues. However, the NR does not support any of the neoliberal reforms of the European economy. Instead the NR bases its identity solely on cultural values.

Figure 4 presents the distribution of the parties on the political integration dimension. Political integration in the context of the EU means the willingness of the political parties to transfer the national responsibility and authority towards the EU level. This dimension is also based on 10 items for which each party can have a plus, minus or a zero score. All major parties that are considered to be potential members of coalition are on the pro-integration side of the scale. The smaller parties, which most probably will remain in opposition, are on the anti-integration segment of the dimension.

The CU and SGP acknowledge the positive consequence of economic integration, but they do not grant any constructive outcome in more political integration. According to the CU and SGP political unity requires cultural unity and a common identity. The New Right and the LPF share this idea that cultural identity is a necessary requirement for political integration and this condition is not fulfilled in Europe. The SP is also against more political integration, because the socialists consider Europe mainly as a neoliberal project that they do not want to support. In contrast to the Labour party and the GreenLeft are the socialists pessimistic about the possibilities to influence the European arena.

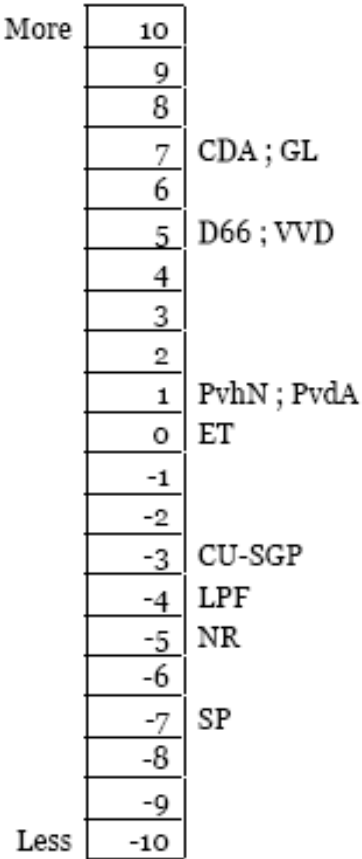
On the other end of the dimension, the Christen Democrats and the Green party are the most willing parties to shift national sovereignty to the European level. The reason behind this compliance to state-building of the EU is that the CDA has agreed to the European People’s Party’s manifesto, which states that the EU as a political union must play an important role in



the forming of the new world order. The object of the world order is to promote democracy and an open society. In other words, the goals of the EPP and the CDA correspond with the ambition of the United States. The motive of the GL for the 'Republic of Europe' is to create a countervailing power that stops, in the language of the green party, the aggressive manner in which Washington forces its Pax America on the rest of the world.

The social liberals, D66, encourage the notion of political unity, because in their view the member states do have a cultural unity and they share the same values. The labour party is less enthusiastic about political integration but the PvdA foresees a role for the EU in restoring international law and dealing with poverty in less developed countries.

**Figure 4** *The Political Integration dimension*



The liberal party VVD recognizes the necessity to transfer some of the national responsibilities to a higher level, but the motive behind this political integration is pure pragmatic. A stronger EU is better equipped to guarantee a free market for entrepreneurs. For the liberals the EU is only an instrument to handle the trans-national problems that member states cannot solve on their own. The regional party, the PvhN, does not say much

about the specific issues (nor does it present other items) that are the basis of the political integration dimension.

Figure 5 presents the ranking of parties on the cultural identity dimension. The concept of cultural identity includes the notion of shared Western values, such as Christian-Judaic-Humanist culture and the emphasis on national and regional identity. The New Right party takes the farthest position on the left end in identifying its politics in nationalistic and cultural terms. This means that the NR has taken over the extreme position of Fortuyn's party. Although the location of the LPF is the closest to the NR, its position is less radical than one would expect from the statements that Fortuyn made during the election of May 2002. It is notable that the LPF, two years after the murder of Fortuyn, gives attention to the rejection of migrants and blocking the admission of Turkey, but its focus is no longer on Western values such as the Christian-Judaic-Humanist culture, which was the crux of Fortuyn's program.

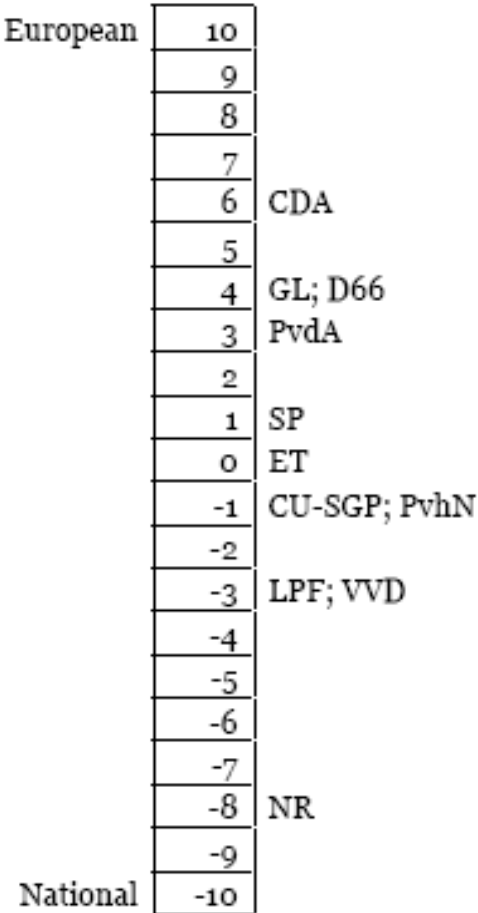
The orthodox Calvinist parties and the VVD are also on the bottom side of the dimension but for different reasons. The CU and SGP want to protect Christian culture and they are against the proposal to let Turkey enter the EU. The VVD has no explicit position on the issue of Turkey, but the liberals are stressing the cultural identity of the Dutch society and the need to protect it.

On the other side of Figure 5 is the Green party located, which recognize the positive contribution of the migrants and the GL has sympathy for the multicultural society. Furthermore, the GL is supporting the enlargement of the EU with Turkey and Eastern European countries. D66 is the only party that talks about the common European history, which is, in the view of the social liberals, in agreement with the enlargement of the EU. The Labour party is in favour of Turkish EU membership and the PvdA believes in the notion of European citizenship. However, the social democrats are less European-minded than one would expect from a party with a universal orientated ideology. Christian Democrats have an ambiguous position towards cultural identity, on the one hand the CDA accepts Turkey as a new member, but also subscribes the Christian roots of Europe. On the whole, the CDA has with GL the most pro-European attitude.

Given the aspiration of the regional party to gain more political power on the local level, one would expect that the PvhN would distinguish itself by taking a more national or regional position. On this dimension of cultural identity the distance between the leftist parties, the SP, GL and the PvdA, is smaller than on the other two scales. Furthermore on the subject of cultural identity is the disagreement between the coalition parties the biggest.

All major parties, with the exception of the VVD, are on the positive (European) side of the scale, and the smaller parties are on the negative (national or regional) part of the cultural identity dimension.

**Figure 5** *The Cultural Identity dimension*



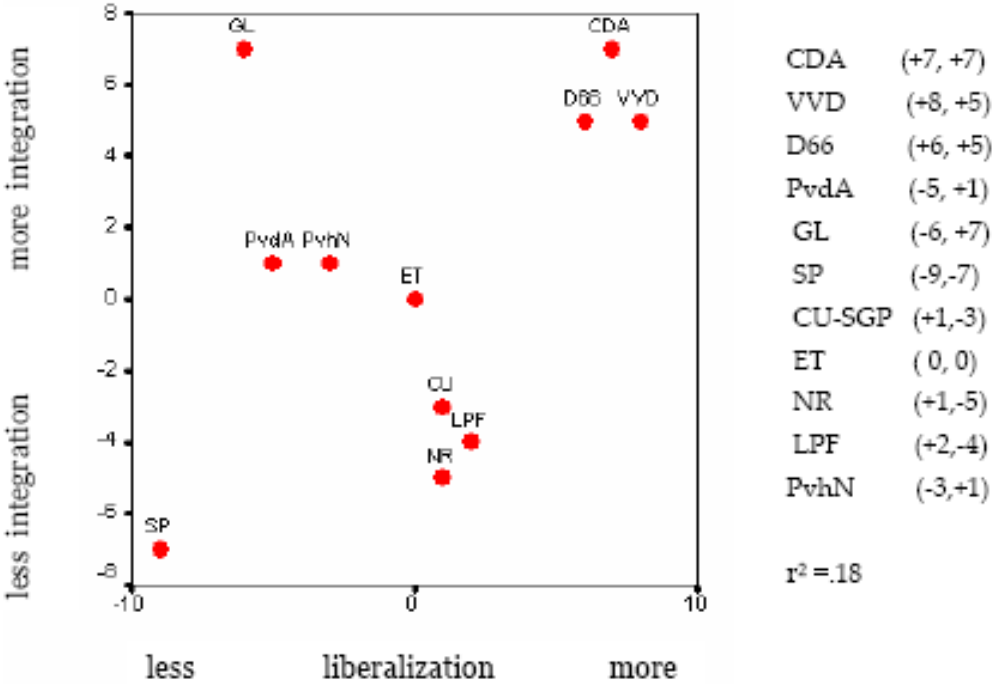
With the presentation of the results in Figure 5, we have concluded the positions of parties on the three dimensions. The next step is to combine the dimensions and construct a three-dimensional spatial model, which gives more detailed information than the cubical space in Figure 8. In the next section we present the three-dimensional spatial model by showing a pairwise combination of the three dimensions. In other words, we show the view of the front of the cube, the view on the side, and the view from above.

**3.3 European integration in a spatial model**

Figure 6 shows the front of the three-dimensional space, with the economic dimension on the x-axis and the political integration dimension on the y-axis. Given the configurations of the parties it is clear that the relationship between the two dimensions is small. The lack of

association means that the space must be interpreted as a typology with four sectors. As said before, there is some equivalence between the main positions of each party family in the Hix-Lord figure and the locations of parties in Figure 6.

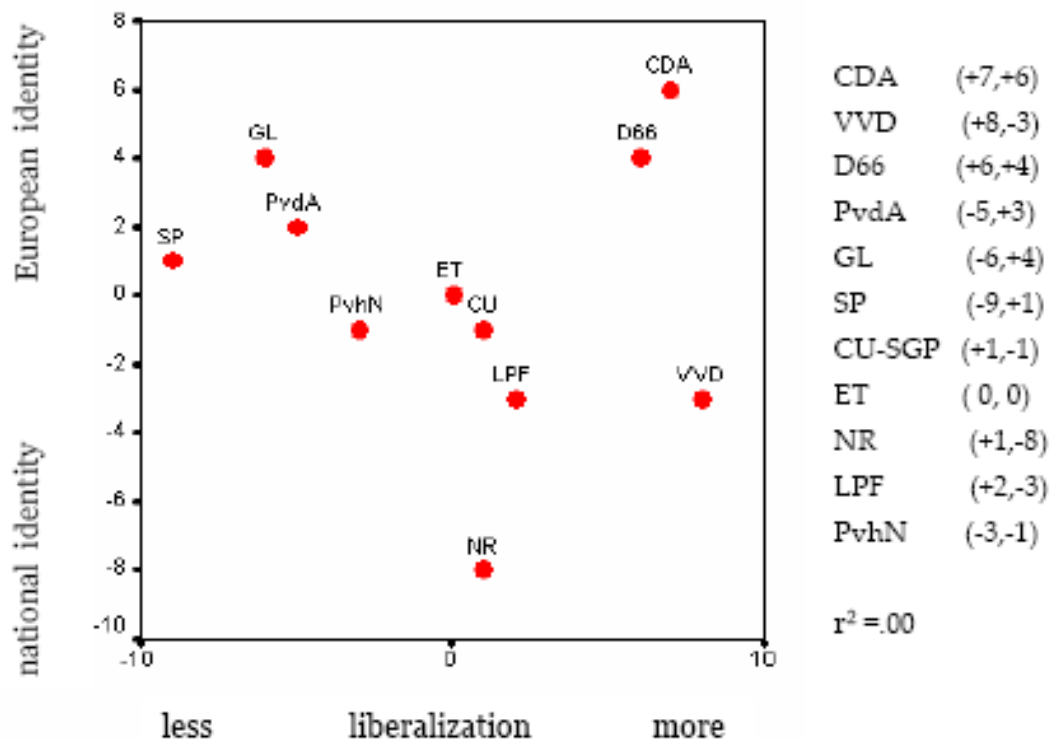
**Figure 6 Economics (x-axis) & Political Integration (y-axis)**



In the first square, the upper left part of Figure 6, are the parties, the PvdA and GL, which want to protect the social-democratic welfare regime. The second square, the upper right section, shows the coalition parties, the CDA, VVD and D66, which are in favour of a more liberal welfare regime within the context of an integrated Europe. The third square, the bottom left in Figure 4, contains the socialists who are against the neoliberal economic program. Finally, the fourth square on the bottom right part presents the parties, the LPF, the New Right and the orthodox Protestants, that slightly endorse a more liberal welfare regime in a national context.

Figure 7 presents the view from above with the economic and the cultural identity dimension. The leftist parties, the PvdA, GL and the SP, are clustered in the first square. This means that there is no socialist, social democratic, or green political party in Dutch politics, which profiles itself with a national cultural identity. Only the regional party PvhN combines a leftist economic view with a very moderate local identity. The coalition parties are no longer together in the second square, since the VVD drops eight points to the bottom of the figure.

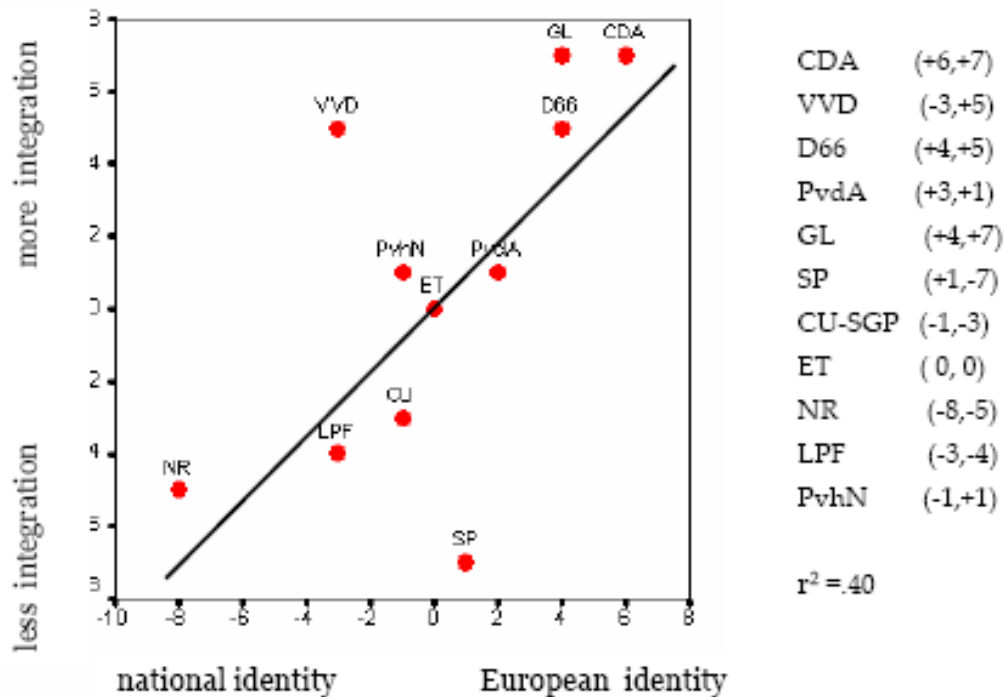
**Figure 7 Economics (x-axis) & Cultural Identity (y-axis)**



Apparently the Christian Democrats and the social liberals have more in common with each other than the two liberal parties that are part of the same European fraction, i.e., the ELDR. The programmes of the CDA and D66 show a strong belief in the European dream. The VVD is in Figure 7 in the same square with the LPF, the New Right and the orthodox Calvinist parties. Although, they combine a preference for neo-liberal economic reform with a national cultural orientation, these parties have different ideological motives. For example, the Calvinist parties want to preserve the religious values of the Dutch Protestants denomination. While, the LPF, the NR and the VVD aspire a secular nation that shares the Western values of the Enlightenment.

Figure 8 confirms that there is a strong relationship between the cultural identity and political integration dimensions. Most parties can be placed on a straight regression line, only the VVD and the SP are the outliers. The VVD is more in favour of political integration than expected, based on their position on the cultural identity dimension. Meanwhile the SP is less in favour of European integration than their place on the cultural identity scale would envisage.

**Figure 8 Cultural Identity (x-axis) & Political Integration (y-axis)**



The diagonal that runs from the bottom left to the top right corner illustrates the strong relationship. On the top end of the joint dimension are the Christian Democrats and the Green party. The New Right, the orthodox Calvinist parties, the LPF and the SP are on the lower side of the scale.

The three coalition parties, the CDA, D66 and the VVD display a positive stance towards the EU. Furthermore the largest opposition party, the PvdA and GL are located on the positive (European) side. The LPF, the New Right, the SP and the orthodox Calvinist parties show an anti-EU standpoint. This means that there is not much discrepancy between the largest parties on the joint scale. The disagreement is between the established parties on the one hand and the protest and religious parties on the other.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The Lisbon agreement, concerning increasing liberalization and privatisation, has had important consequences for the welfare regime in each country. The socialists and the green are against the neoliberal economic reform program. The orthodox Calvinist parties, the New Right and Fortuyn's party – and all the rest of the parties - take a centre position in these economic matters. Only the coalition parties - CDA, VVD and D66 - want to implement the economic reforms. The Cabinet Balkenende II is committed to the idea that the EU must be

an economic force that can match the United States. The coalition parties cherish the thought that in order to be more competitive the member states must undertake a transition from a social-democratic to a more liberal welfare regime. Such a transition would not have been possible if the Christian Democrats were in office with the Labour party.

However, within the coalition there is a discrepancy about the purpose of this transition towards a liberal welfare regime. The liberals do not support the concept of a political unity; their feeble support for political integration is solely an instrumental effort to strengthen the working of single European market. The VVD considers the instalment of a liberal welfare regime as simply the goal of general economic reform. On the other hand, the Christian Democrats and the social liberals consider welfare reform, not as a goal in itself, but instead as an instrument to create the economic means they see necessary for the realisation of the process of state-building. In this respect the European agenda can create a predicament for the coalition parties.

Not only do the coalition parties have different goals, they also stand-alone. The Labour party and the Greens do support the object of creating political unity, but they disagree on the notion that a liberal welfare regime is a necessary step in that direction. On the contrary, for the social democrats and the Greens a united EU is the instrument to tackle the problems of unemployment, social justice and the global environment. In other words, for them political unity is an instrument for protecting the social welfare regime. The socialists share the same goals of Labour party and the GL, but the SP has no faith that the European unity will help to realize these goals. The political taxation of the SP is that the process of unification will lead to an even more liberal economic regime.

Although the orthodox Calvinist parties, the New Right and the LPF have some sympathy for the economic reform, they are fiercely against any notion of European state-building. This means that the Lisbon Agreement and the plans for political integration are not just issues that matter for the European parliament; these decisions directly affect the political debate in the Dutch context. One can expect that the European agenda will polarize Dutch politics on the national level.

#### 3.4.1 Euro-sceptical parties

With the three-dimensional policy space we can examine to what extent the normative viewpoints of parties, i.e. their position in the policy can be explain Euro-scepticism of each of the parties. According to Taggart, the left-right contradistinction does play a part in the positioning of parties on the dimension of European political integration. Taggart holds that

in the eyes of the left, the European project is too exclusive. That is to say, the parties to the left are thought to feel that it is too focused on the wellbeing of Fort Europe and that it does not give enough thought to the global consequences. The political unification of the EU should mostly serve capitalist interests to the detriment of the working class in the non-European countries. In the eyes of the right, according to Taggart, the European project is not exclusive enough. Political integration does not take into account the differences in the European countries. The extremely right-wing parties and the conservative parties want more consideration for cultural and national identities and for the homogeneity of the population (Taggart 1998: 365-367).

Taggart's analysis is based on a large research project which compared many countries, and which showed the green parties to be Eurosceptical as well. In our analysis we only examined the Dutch parties. The views of GroenLinks matches Taggart's description that the EU behaves too much like the protector of Fort Europe and concerns itself too little with global problems. However, GroenLinks supports a strong Europe and it is not Eurosceptical. According to GL a strong Europe will mean a positive contribution to global problems. Of course, it is possible that the green parties in other EU countries tell a story that is completely different to the Dutch party, but that would imply that these parties are situated far outside the oval of their party family.

Based on the comparison of the Dutch and Flemish parties however, it would seem that the difference between Eurosceptical and non-Eurosceptical parties must be explained by something other than Taggart's notion of too exclusive or not exclusive enough. The aspect that eurosceptical parties have in common is more that they are very defensive in their attitude. They are afraid that further European political integration will lead to a loss of something they deem very valuable. Christian-orthodox parties fear the loss of Christian identity. The right-wing parties fear the loss of cultural identity as well as the national homogeneity of their own people. And the socialists are afraid that the only interests served will be the capitalists'. The supporters of political integration are not afraid of such side effects, they are predominantly idealistic. The ideals they strive for differ in content, but these ideals are all far-reaching and vary from creating a new world order to offering an alternative to the Pax Americana. Only the liberals cherish no dreams to play with in international politics, all they want are those political institutions that are necessary to facilitate international trade.

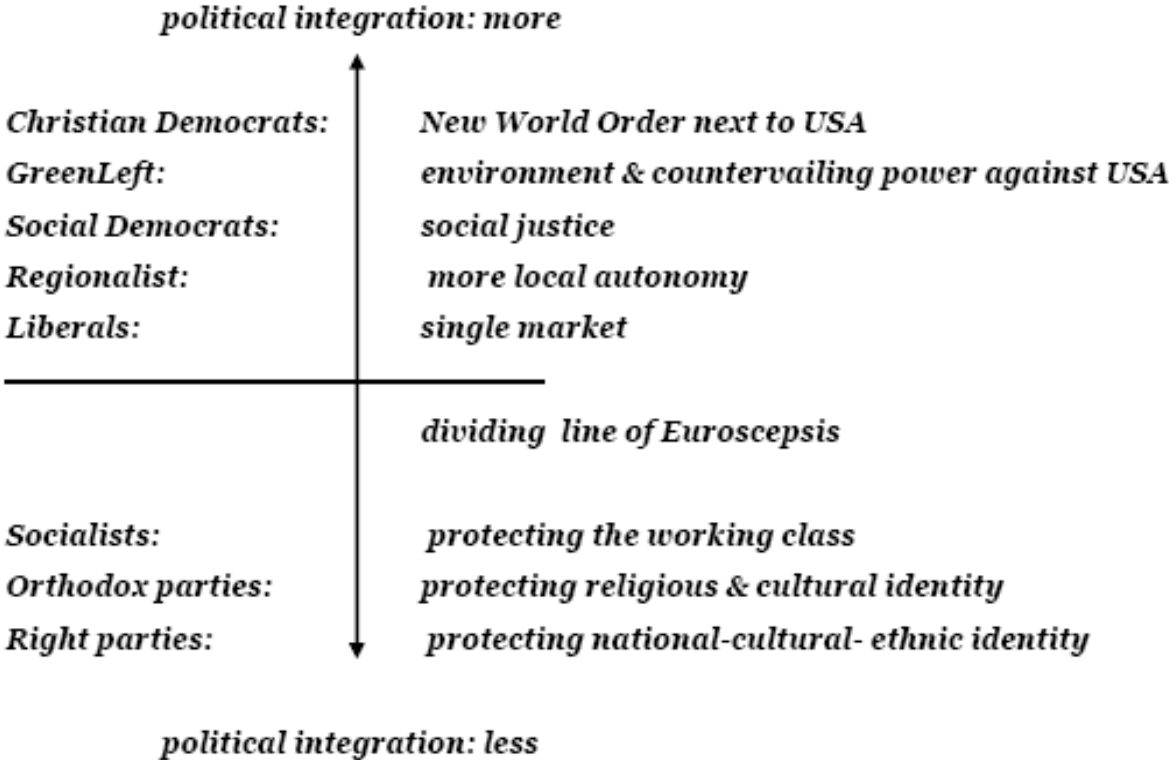
Based on the manifestos of the Dutch political parties, we can draw a tentative conclusion. Although the economic integration issue adds more colour to the underlying motives of political parties, the horizontal dimension gives no indication as to whether a political party



is Eurosceptical or not. The vertical dimension suffices if you want differentiate the Eurosceptical parties from the non-Eurosceptical parties. On the positive side are the supporters of political integration and on the negative side are the Eurosceptical parties. The third dimension, the cultural identity gives us a better understanding of why the parties are located on the positive or the negative side of favouring further political integration in the EU.

Although the political integration dimension makes a clear division between supporters and opponents, the dimension in itself is not the dividing line. The dividing line of Euroscepticism stands at a right angle to the vertical dimension. Figure 14 illustrates the relationship between the vertical dimension of political integration on the one hand and the horizontal dividing line of Euroscepticism on the other. The line divides the vertical dimension into two: the non-Eurosceptical parties above the line and the Eurosceptical parties below the line. For the sake of clarity we have stated the distinguishing aspect of Euroscepticism for the various party families in Figure 9. The distinguishing element is that the Eurosceptical parties are against further European political integration because they want to protect 'something'. This 'something' differs per party or party family. The socialists want to protect the interests of the working class. The small Christian parties protect cultural identity, where culture must be understood to mean Christian identity. The right-wing parties also want to protect the cultural identity, but here culture is defined by ethnicity and nationality.

**Figure 9 The divide between Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic parties**



The non-Eurosceptical parties want to achieve ‘something’. Again, the content of this ‘something’ varies per party. The Christian democrats want to achieve a new world order so that they can establish democracy everywhere – with or without the help of the United States. The greens strive for improvement of the environment and it also strives for the creation of a strong Europe which, as a countervailing power, can withstand the Pax Americana. The regional parties want to achieve more regional power. The social democrats want to achieve a just society within Europe and outside of it. And as for the liberals, they want to achieve a large common market with free competition. This liberal goal could at some point clash with a strong Europe. In the case of further political integration, the EU’s political power could interfere with free economic competition. Then the liberals could find themselves below the dividing line, as their goal will have changed from striving for ‘something’ to protecting ‘something’.

Theoretically, the same could happen to the regional parties. If the political unification of Europe becomes too confining and regional influence decreases, the regional parties will also find themselves below the dividing line, because they would want to protect this influence. The dividing line between Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic parties illustrates the political assessment parties have made as to how European political integration serves their ideological goals. At any point a party may decide that further political integration carries

with it a potential danger. This assessment will vary per party and per country and this implies that different parties will be above and below the dividing line in each country. However, for the Dutch parties the dividing line is quite clear.

If this analysis is in any way plausible, it means that Euro scepticism is first of all a politically strategic choice that cannot be traced back to one ideological line of one party family. A party family is defined here as a group of parties that share a coherent ideology (Mair & Mudde 1998). As a consequence, no Eurosceptical party family will (or can) be found at the European level. What we do find is a range of different parties which are Eurosceptical and which reject further political integration on various ideological grounds.



## **4 DEALING WITH REFERENDUMS: LESSONS FROM ABROAD**

Parties use different strategies to boost the legitimacy of the European Union. In a referendum these strategies are put to the test: are these strategies effective in boosting the legitimacy of the European Union under the population? Four strategies will be presented here, which have been used by parties in referenda on the European Union. All of these have played a role in boosting European legitimacy. These are allowing internal dissent, non-partisan campaigning, responsive government and open-ended referenda. Two things should be noted: first, it is not the claim of this research that referenda per se boost the legitimacy of the European Union. They provide an important moment to test whether the strategies used by parties have worked. Second these strategies have been observed by different students of politics in different referendum campaigns. The strategies all share one characteristic however: the legitimacy of the European Union is increased as by-product of a free and open debate on the European Union. Here these four strategies will be presented; this will be followed by a discussion of possible counter arguments to these strategies.

### **4.1 Internal Dissent**

The rise of new political cleavage, like European cleavage, can cut right through political parties. This can lead to a rise in internal dissent and even secession. A referendum can be an issue that splits political parties. In some countries parties have been able to manage internal dissent effectively. By allowing internal dissent parties have made the referendum a non-partisan issue, and have allowed an open debate on the issue. By doing so they have increased the legitimacy of the European Union. Finland provides an interesting case of this phenomenon.

In Finland several parties allowed prominent party-members to campaign on the side of their own choice during the 1994 accession referendum, in which 57% of 74% of the electorate supported accession (Raunio and Tiilikainen, 2003). Some parties like the Green League and the Left Party decided explicitly not to take a stance in favour or against European accession. For the Greens this was a way of dealing with its divided leadership and electorate, being nearly evenly split between yes and no-voters. The social democrats went even further, they fostered internal pluralism before, during and after the referendum. Before the national referendum the Social-Democratic Party held an internal referendum on accession. The party leadership refrained from making recommendations, and a Eurosceptic section was set up within the party with funds and approval of the party-board. After the internal referendum, which resulted in a 'yes', party members were allowed to advocate their own points of view, without fear of repercussions. This accommodation was continued after the referendum: the

Eurosceptic section continues to exist, and plays an important role in the party, having its 'own' ministers, MPs and members of the party-board.

Finland is not the only case where accommodation of internal dissent increased European legitimacy, in Sweden (Bartolini, 2005), Denmark (Dinan, 2004 and Ferrara and Weishaupt, 2004), and the United Kingdom (Dinan, 2004) parties also have allowed dissent within their own ranks at the time of EU referenda, leading to positive results in the referenda. Internal dissent however also has negative effects: the French Referendum of the Maastricht Treaty was nearly lost by the 'yes'-side, an important reason for this was the deep division within both the Gaullists and the Socialists on the issue (Dinan, 2004). In France instead of forming Eurosceptic factions within the established parties, the opposition to the Maastricht treaty split and set up their own parties, creating political instability (Bartolini, 2005). It should also be noted that parties, which are divided on the European Union, tend to perform worse in European Parliament elections (Ferrara and Weishaupt, 2004).

#### **4.2 Non-partisan Campaign**

Similar to allowing internal dissent, organizing non-partisan campaigns also has a positive influence on the legitimacy of the European Union. Again the issue of European integration is not made into a partisan issue, but an open debate is held on Europe, and this increases the legitimacy of the European Union. Two examples of this are presented here: the United Kingdom case, where parties cooperated and Denmark where they were failed to do so.

In United Kingdom European Community referendum of 1975 leading politicians from both parties (i.e. the Conservatives and Labour) campaigned together in a bipartisan "Britain in Europe" campaign, led by Labour moderate Roy Jenkins and former Conservative PM, Edward Heath (Dinan, 2004), this harmonious campaign helped the proponents win the referendum. Meanwhile the opposition to the European Union was also allowed their own separate campaign.

The merits of cooperation within either the 'yes' and 'no'-side can also be seen in the Danish referendum on the Euro. The four 'yes' parties (the social-democrats, the left-liberals, the conservatives and the agrarian-liberals) were unable to cooperate, mainly because the parties were saving money for the upcoming general election, in which they would be competitors. On the other side, the 'no'-side cooperated quite well, mainly because the far-right Progress Party and the far-left Socialist People's Party did not compete over the same electorate in the national elections, and the third player, the June Movement, only entered in European elections (Qvortrup, 2002).

### **4.3 Responsive Government**

Two cases are of particular interest in this research: in Denmark and Ireland a European treaty was put to a referendum two times: Denmark on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992-3 and Ireland on the Nice Treaty in 2001-2. In both cases, citizens accepted the treaty the second time, after considerable accommodation towards the 'no'-voters by the European leadership. If citizens feel that their voice is heard in European Union decision-making, their faith in the European Union is greatly amplified.

The Danes rejected Maastricht with a margin of 30,000 votes (50.7% of 83% of the electorate voted against). In reaction to the Danish electorate's concerns, mainly connected to the power of Germany in the EU, Denmark's environmental standards and a loss of sovereignty, the Danish government renegotiated the treaty. It now included a more precise definition of subsidiarity to appease Danish concerns (Dinan, 2004). Furthermore Denmark opted out of several controversial policies, such as the EMU, and parts of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Home Affairs and Justice Policy (Bartolini, 2005): the treaty was carried by 57% of 86% of the electorate.

In reaction to the rejection of the Nice-treaty, all Irish political parties set up a National Forum on Europe. It consisted out of politicians and opinion-leaders from the 'yes' and 'no'-side. The forum was mainly instituted to listen to citizens' concerns on Europe. The forum organized several public debates through out Ireland, which gave an opportunity for both the 'yes' and the 'no'-side to present their cases, as well several plenary sessions, where individual citizens and civil society organizations could be heard (O'Brennan, 2005). It was a way to foster public participation on European questions. As such it helped ease the tensions between 'yes' and 'no'-sides, and allowed constructive dialogue between the two sides. Meanwhile, on the European level, the Fianna Fáil government had renegotiated part of the Nice Treaty, especially concerning Irish neutrality, an important issue in the referendum: this resulted in a declaration of the Irish government and the council of ministers declaring that Ireland would retain its neutrality (Garry et al., 2005). Subsequently the Nice-Treaty was returned to Irish voters, after a large public debate and a reaction towards the concerns of Irish citizens, the treaty was carried by 63% of 50% of the Irish voters (Holmes, 2005a).

These four referenda show that if governments respond to citizens' concern over European Integration, if citizens have the feeling they influence European decision making, citizens' support for the European Union increases.

#### 4.4 Open-ended Referenda

Finally organizing a fair referendum, where both the 'yes' and 'no'-side are presented as legitimate choices is another way to boost the legitimacy of the European Union. If politicians give the impression that they seriously want to hear the opinion of the population, the turnout and the 'yes' vote in the referendum are higher. Again this is based on the principle that an open debate on the European Union boosts legitimacy of European Integration. The two Irish referenda on the Treaty of Nice and the nearly lost French referendum on the Treaty of Maastricht provide interesting examples of this.

Several studies have been held on the two referenda that were held in Ireland on the Treaty of Nice. One student of the two referendum characterizes the difference between two campaigns in the following way: in the campaign on the first referendum, which the 'yes'-side lost, the 'yes'-side continually misrepresented the issue of the referendum and the position of the 'no'-side, they claimed that the referendum was about EU-enlargement and that the 'no'-side opposed this. Meanwhile the 'no'-side took every opportunity it had to stress that it was in favour of enlargement, but against the Nice-treaty (Holmes 2005b). This may have contributed to the perception that the 'yes'-side was trying to force the 'no'-side in a particular light, and that it was campaigning on images and not on substance. In the second campaign, substantive matters mattered more. This can also be seen in research for the reasons of voters' choosing either 'yes' or 'no' in the different referenda (Garry et al., 2005). In the first referendum, 'second order'-reasoning, (i.e. the performance of the current government) mattered more than in the second referendum, where 'issue voting' was prevalent. In the second referendum campaign on the second referendum European integration and the merits of the new treaty were deliberated, instead of the performance of the government. This can be seen for instance in the slogans for the second campaign. The pro-treaty opposition Labour party campaigned in the second referendum with the slogan: 'Hold Your Fire. Fianna Fáil [the governing party, SO] Can Wait. Europe Can't' (Garry et al. 2005).

During the French referendum on the Maastricht treaty the 'yes'-side also heavily relied on putting the 'no'-side in a negative daylight. The referendum was very nearly lost, with only 51% of 70% voting in favour of the treaty. This can be partially attributed to the government campaign: it took the outcome for granted and did not campaign heavily. When it did the campaign focused on dramatic themes, with some commentators equating a 'no'-vote with the rise of Hitler in Germany and others stating that a 'no'-vote would destroy the collective work of the last four presidents (Dinan, 2004).



Allowing a referendum to be an open-ended question, where both yes and no a realistic choices appears to be an important part in boosting the 'yes'-vote and the outcome of such referenda, and boosting European legitimacy.

#### **4.5 The Case for direct Cue taking influence**

The cases presented above can be summed up like this: parties cannot increase the legitimacy of European integration directly. If they organize a free and open debate on the issue the legitimacy of the European Union is increased as a by-product. There are however students of electoral politics, who claim that parties directly influence the support and legitimacy of the European Union, by giving cues to their voters. The trustworthiness of parties, as the major campaigners either in favour or against, plays an important role on their influence on the electorate.

If either the 'yes' or the 'no'-side suffer from an image of untrustworthiness, they tend to lose the referendum, because the referendum then no longer concerns the issue it self, but the trustworthiness of either side (Hix, 2005). The difference can be seen in the two different referenda on the Maastricht Treaty in Denmark. The first referendum was lost by the unpopular conservative/agrarian-liberal government, which was nearing the end of its term, while the second was held in the 'honeymoon' period of the popular social-democratic/left-liberal government. The first was lost, while the second was won (Hix, 2005).

In the three 1992 Maastricht referenda (Denmark, Ireland and France), an interesting pattern can be discerned: the governing parties, who provide the face of the campaign, via ministers and other prominent politicians, are best able to mobilize their own electorate, and tend to have little, or even negative effect on the electorate of pro-treaty opposition parties. In each of the three countries the governing parties' electorate dominantly vote in favour of the treaty (with scores around 80%, an exceptional 89% for the Danish Liberals), but the governing parties are far less able to convince members of the pro-treaty opposition parties, which half-heartedly vote in favour with 65% of the Fine Gael electorate in Ireland voting in favour for instance, of half-heartedly vote against, with 63% of the RPR electorate voting against. They are completely unable to convince anti-treaty party supports, this is exemplified by the 90% of the Front National voters in France, who voted against the Maastricht Treaty (Franklin et al. 1994). From this it could be concluded that parties' and governments' campaigns are only able to convince the adherents of that party, and they might even have negative effects on the attitudes of adherents of the opposition.

However case can also be made against direct cue taking from parties. An interesting case for this is the Czech republic. In this country, parties are not particularly strong, and they seem to have little influence on their electorate. This can be seen in its 2004 accession referendum. While 77% of 55% voted in favour of the accession Treaty, which was championed by the government coalition of social democrats, Christian-democrats and liberals, these parties polled particularly bad in the subsequent EP-elections (Perottino, 2005). The parties were even unable to get the voters out to vote (the turn-out was only 28%). The ruling coalition got only four seats out of twenty-four, with conservative and communist opposition parties, who had also opposed accession, namely the winning six and eight seats. It is clear that the Czech electorate did not base its vote on the accession referendum on the cues they took from the parties they supported.

#### **4.6 Parties in the EU**

From the cases described above the following conclusion can be drawn: political parties cannot influence the legitimacy of the European Union in referenda directly. Although in some countries voters take direct cues from parties, in others voters ignore their parties, or even worse, they are negatively influenced by the dramatic images created by politicians. The actions of political parties however can have strong effects on the electorate. If parties create a free and open debate on the European Union: a debate where both 'yes' and 'no' are legitimate choice, where the European Union is not made an issue of one particular party, and government is responsive to the opinion of the citizens expressed in the referendum, the European Union is more legitimate, but only as a by-product.

Politicisation may yet be good for democratic debate and greater engagement of the mass public in European issues, because it can foster the belief among citizens that their concerns and demands still count in the European political system. Political parties can fulfil an important role in this strengthening of the EU's legitimacy. However, the blood circulation of the European political system can only function well, if political parties are also able to let the demands aggregated and articulated be conversed into satisfactory output. Dutch parties can do so by putting forward proposals in the national Parliament, expressing people's concern in the European Parliament, and scrutinising the Dutch government and the European Commission. Yet, for political parties from small member states the political manoeuvre space is relatively small. While national policy space has been limited through European legislation, it is very difficult to form a majority in the ever enlarging union to change European legislation. In addition, non-elected expertise quango's and judges have obtained a considerable influence in the European Union (Majone). Due to (Euro sceptic) calls for more democracy and transparency in Europe, political parties may be incited to claim power from

executive bodies for legislative organs. That however requires decision-making among the 25 member states again. As the continuous treaty-drafting have shown during the 1990s and 2000s, that is a very difficult enterprise. Meanwhile, the judges, European bureaucrats, national civil servants and experts can continue shaping the European political system based on the founding idea of free movement of labour, goods, services and capital, without a direct electoral confrontation with the electorate in the EU member states.

Rich, well-educated and mobile citizens will not really care about a Europe without frontiers, because open borders offer them more choice in jobs, goods and services. They need less democracy to ask for better output, but can just find better output by going across borders (cf. Bartolini, 2005). However, poorer, less-educated and more immobile citizens will have something to lose from the European internal market. Again and again, they are asked to share their money and labour with foreigners/ strangers from new member states. Their protest can both be cast in cultural and economic terms. In contrast to mobile citizens, the economic and cultural losers of the European internal market (and globalisation for that matter) will have only the democratic channel to find better output. However, the present mismatch between input channels of political parties and democracy and output-producing executive powers in the European Union will foster their belief the political-administrative establishment does not care about them. The Eurosceptic wake-up call from Dutch voters may yet be healthy shock to the European political system to remove this mismatch. Politicisation of European integration has taken place thanks to eurosceptic parties, a referendum and eurosceptic voters. Although the Dutch government did not like the voters to vote on Europe and scared the hell out of them if they would dare to vote no, the no vote may yet be signal to enhance legitimacy in the European Union by delivering satisfactory output for the economic and cultural losers of European integration.



## 5 COUNTERFACTUAL REASONING

The last question we will analyse is the question of how Dutch EU policy could have been better embedded. This is a counterfactual question. “It has been said that ‘what if?’ (or the counterfactual, to use the voque word in academic circles) is the historian’s favourite secret question” (Cowley 2001: xiii). What if the Constitutional Treaty would have been accepted in the EU with a high turnout?’. If everything would have been the same (*ceteris paribus*) and only the outcome of the Constitutional Treaty would be different, it is very likely that all questions about the embedding of EU policy would not have risen. In other words, only by the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty the need for a better embedding of the European policy in national politics and society has surfaced. Without the negative result of the referendum the question about the democratic mandate would not have been asked by the Dutch government. In a sense the rejection can be considered as a blessing in disguise.

The idea behind the counterfactual is to deliver the solution for a reinforced democratic mandate by telling what went wrong in the past. What went wrong in the past is that political parties and governments completely ignored all signs and critics of the lack of democratic functioning of the EU politics. For a long time the lack of democratic practice did not matter because the forming of the European Community was considered by most people as a positive goal. The forming of the European Community in the 1950s was implemented by Christian Democratic parties which were the main party of government at that time (Hix and Lord 1997: 12). Christian Democrats, such as Schuman, Adenauer and De Gasperi initiated the formation of a European Community to provide cross-national bridging that could resist the nationalistic sentiments in European countries, and also would provide a collective block, the West, against the communist Eastern Block. The prevention of war - a European ‘civil war’ between France, United Kingdom and Germany - and the containment of the Eastern Block were very persuasive forces behind the political integration of European countries.

However, the pacification of the Western European countries and its mobilisation against the East were not the only reasons behind the unification. The Christian Democrats also had a strong belief that the West European reconciliation is rooted on ‘a deeper past, based on a single European civilisation of shared religious and social values’ (Hix and Lord 1997: 11).

Now, half century later the fear of an inter-European war is replaced by the view that democratic states do not initiate war against other democracies. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, also the fear for the communist Eastern Block is disappeared. This means that the West European reconciliation can no longer be build on the compelling motive of keeping the peace. Furthermore, during the fifty years Christian Democrats have lost their dominant

position in Europe and their belief of a single European civilisation of shared religious and social values is now in serious doubt. The enlargement of the European Union with 25 member states and the plans to incorporate new members like Turkey has deteriorate the notion of shared values further.

The reasons and beliefs behind the formation in the 1950s of a European Community had the status of being self-evident and these strong beliefs overshadowed the lack of democratic support for European political integration. After fifty years with the introduction of the EU Constitutional Treaty the situation is quite the reverse. The strong motive of keeping the peace is no longer existent. The enlargement of the EU has dissolved the residual belief in collective values and thus far no one has presented new reasons and beliefs which have the same compelling allure. Precisely at the moment when European political integration is not any longer supported by a strong belief in the necessity of the whole project, the citizens of Europe get the opportunity to have their say.

The introduction of the EU Constitutional Treaty is part of the political integration which is a form of state formation (or state building) or centre formation (Bartolini 2005: xiii). The answer to the question of what to do is given by Bartolini who argues that a successful state building calls for loyalty of citizens, by which he means those structures and processes of system maintenance represented by cultural integration, social sharing institutions, and participation rights. This loyalty is what Bartolini calls the system building, which is opposed to centre formation. In order to have a successful process of state building one also must take care of the development of the system building, otherwise the political integration lacks loyalty. And at this moment 'the ambitious political production of the EU centre is clearly out of balance with its weak system building capacity' (Bartolini 2005: xiv).

Based on the analysis of Bartolini, we can answer the question of how Dutch EU policy could have been better embedded. Basically, the answer is that political parties and governments should have invested in the EU system building a long time ago, when the whole project of European political integration was still received positively.

Another aspect of the counterfactual reasoning is that the threats of the governing parties and the members of the cabinets (lights will go out if the Dutch reject the Treaty, suggestions of new wars in Europe etcetera) were very counter productive. So far the political parties that favour a strong united EU only give reasons of the need of the building of a strong power (as a countervailing power against the Pax America, or as a willing coalition partner of the USA).

Both reasons for building a strong united EU are reasons that play an important role within the political and bureaucratic elite, but they are of no concern of the people in Europe.

Furthermore one must realise that further enlargement of the European Union will deteriorate the needed notion of shared cultural values. This is not a proposal to block the entrance of new members like Turkey, but it is our evaluation that most political parties and governments in the EU simply try to duck this issue. So, the bottom line is that political parties and governments must take their responsibility and discuss these EU matters openly. In order to convince the people, the political elite must come up with something that is an important part of the concern of citizens. These concerns are not abstract ideals such as having a strong united power or the working of a very efficient neoliberal common market, for most people the concerns are future expectations towards the safety of income, work, and liveability of their neighbourhood. The only thing that political parties can do is to invest in the EU system building and realise that such an investment can have results in the long term and not in the near future. This investment must be based on a positive reason why the EU system building is a good thing for the people and not only for the elite.





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## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> This section is largely based on Boer, Koole & Raap, and Vollaard in Vollaard and Boer (2005), Euroscepticism in Nederland. Lemma: Utrecht.