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Does Support Lead to Ignorance? National Parliaments and the Legitimacy of EU Governance

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Does Support Lead to Ignorance? National Parliaments and the Legitimacy of EU Governance

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Abstract

What explains cross-national variation in the involvement of the fifteen member state legislatures in EU governance? To answer this question, this article will discuss how national parliaments scrutinize European legislation, and will examine the organizational solutions adopted by the legislatures. We then employ longitudinal public opinion and party data to investigate the correlation between support for integration and parliamentary activity in EU matters. We hypothesize that countries with more Euro-sceptical publics and parties have tighter scrutiny mechanisms, whereas more pro-integrationist member states have accorded their parliament a weaker role. In the concluding section we analyse the input of national parliaments in terms of legitimacy and organizational efficiency. Focusing on the role of specialized standing committees, we propose measures which we argue would improve national parliaments' role in EU governance and enhance their impact on European policy-making.

1 Introduction

National parliaments are normally described as the losers in European Union (EU) decision-making. Their role has arguably become ever more marginalized as power has shifted to the supranational institutions, including the transfer of monetary policy to the European Central Bank (ECB). However, member state legislatures remain, at least potentially, important forums for formulation, scrutiny and implementation of EU legislation. Perhaps more significantly, they legitimize European matters by providing a channel for incorporating public opinion into the governance of the Union, a function highlighted recently in the debates on democratic deficit and deparliamentarization of European governance.

Member state legislatures are involved in European decision-making in four main ways: they contribute to national policy formulation on Union legis-

lation; they monitor the behaviour of their governments in the Council of Ministers and the European Council; and they have certain Treaty-regulated functions, such as the ratification of Treaty amendments and the implementation of directives. In this article we are interested in the first two functions. When a national legislature wants to influence European legislation, this must occur through its national government. Our dependent variable is the *overall ability of national parliaments to scrutinize European matters*. The overall ability has two inter-related components: the constitutional rules of the member state, and the political will of the MPs to become involved in EU matters.

The independent variables are *party positions* and *public opinion on integration*. Our research hypothesis is that *countries with more Euro-sceptical publics and parties have tighter scrutiny mechanisms, whereas in more pro-integrationist member states parliaments play a weaker role*. The hypothesis is primarily based on the reasoning that pro-European member states are more willing to leave the handling of European matters to the EU institutions, the European Parliament (EP) and their governments in the Council. The more support for European integration there is in a member state, the less emphasis there is on national scrutiny. The period under analysis is the duration of the membership of each country, with emphasis on the post-Maastricht situation.

The article begins with a discussion on how and when national parliaments are involved in European matters. We explore the organizational differences and similarities between the parliaments, analyse their functions in EU decision-making, and discuss the findings of previous research. In the third section we trace party opinion on integration in the fifteen member states. Empirical data consists primarily of party behaviour in Euro-elections and of country-specific literature. Relying on Euro-barometers, the fourth section presents similar data on public opinion. The analysis of the results is in the fifth section. The concluding section focuses on the practical implications of our findings, arguing that national scrutiny of European issues is particularly significant in terms of legitimacy.

2 National parliaments and EU governance

2.1 European regulations

The adaptation of national parliaments to integration has been an incremental process. From the 1950s until the Single European Act in 1986, the legislatures paid only sporadic attention to Community matters. Council decisions were largely based on unanimity and EC competence was limited primarily to commercial and agricultural policies. The Danish and British legislatures

adopted a more active approach when their countries joined the EC in 1973. Parties and the public were divided over membership, and the parliament had traditionally occupied a central place in both the Danish and British political systems. The real catalyst for change was the internal market project, as the Community's jurisdiction was extended to new areas and the introduction of qualified majority voting meant that national governments could now be outvoted in the Council. The implementation of internal market legislation served as an efficient reminder of the erosion of national sovereignty. New, special European Affairs Committees (EAC) were established or the competence of the existing ones was strengthened. The Maastricht Treaty was the real watershed. Supranationalism was greatly extended, and the objectives of the Treaty – including the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) – signalled a change from economic cooperation to deeper political integration. The public apparently realized this, as opinion surveys reported that citizens were becoming increasingly sceptical of integration. Some parliaments made their ratification of the Maastricht Treaty conditional upon receiving greater power, mainly through the improvement of their rights to receive information. For example, the French, German and Portuguese constitutions were amended to give their parliaments a greater role in scrutinizing European legislation. The Maastricht Treaty also included two non-binding Declarations on national parliaments, which emphasized national parliaments' access to information, without, however, imposing any time limits or sanctions. The development of relations with the EP was also encouraged (Judge 1995; Norton 1995; Raunio 1999a). The Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 provided for the first time binding regulations through a 'Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union.' The Protocol set a minimum time limit – six weeks – for enactment of legislation, and detailed which documents should be forwarded to national legislatures. Documents included all Commission consultation documents (green and white papers, and communications) and Commission proposals for legislation. The latter "shall be made available in good time so that the government of each Member State may ensure that its own national parliament receives them as appropriate." National parliaments were guaranteed a six-week period to scrutinize legislative initiatives:

A six-week time period shall elapse between a legislative proposal or a proposal for a measure to be adopted under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union being made available in all languages to the European Parliament and the Council by the Commission and the date when it is placed on a Council agenda for decision either for the adoption of an act or for adoption of a common position pursuant to Article 189b or 189c of the Treaty establishing the European Community, subject to exceptions on grounds of urgency, the reasons for which shall be stated in the act or common position.

Thus, national legislatures have a minimum of six weeks to scrutinize legislation; however, it is at their own discretion how they make use of this opportunity.

The Maastricht Declaration and the Amsterdam Protocol also recognized the collective input of national parliaments. The Maastricht Treaty mentioned the possible development of the Assises, the joint conference of the EP and delegations from member state legislatures, which met for the first time, and to date also for the last, in 1990. The Amsterdam Treaty instead recognized the Conference of the European Affairs Committees (COSAC), which meets once every six months in the country holding the Council Presidency, bringing together delegations from the respective EACs and the EP. Basically, COSAC is a forum for the exchange of information: it controls its own agenda, but its statements are not binding for national parliaments or the EU institutions. There is also bilateral and multilateral cooperation between committees from the EP and the national parliaments. Finally, a Conference of Presidents and Speakers, bringing together the Presidents or Speakers of the EP and the member state legislatures, convenes biannually. These various forms of interparliamentary cooperation fall outside the scope of this article (see Raunio 1999a).

2.2 How and when legislatures participate

National legislatures have four basic functions in EU decision-making: 1) contributing to national policy formulation on European legislation; 2) monitoring government behaviour in the Council of Ministers and in the European Council; 3) Treaty ratification; and 4) national implementation of Community directives. The first two are not regulated at a European level, whereas the other two are Treaty obligations. The Treaty-regulated functions involve national parliaments after the decision has been taken in the Council or the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), whereas the first two functions involve the legislatures before decisions are taken. We focus on legislatures' ability to contribute to national policy formulation on European legislation and to monitor government behaviour. The following is a brief summary of how these two functions are carried out. For national variations, the reader should consult the relevant country-specific literature.

The member state governments are obliged to inform their parliaments of Commission's legislative proposals that fall within the competence of the legislatures. In most countries this obligation covers also the preparation of international agreements between the EU and third parties, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) and CFSP matters, and the Commission's proposal for the EU budget. National parliaments also receive the Commission's annual

legislative programme, thus giving them the chance to prepare for the forthcoming initiatives. The government and the parliament debate the proposal separately, and form their individual viewpoints. Usually, the parliament's stand reflects, or is directly based on, the government position. It is essential that parliaments are kept up-to-date throughout the processing of the bills, as legislative initiatives are often amended quite significantly by the Council and the EP.

Of particular importance is the input of specialized standing committees. Due to their far superior organizational resources and their regular participation in Council and Commission working groups, the governments enjoy a huge informational advantage over the legislatures. Parliaments can reduce deficit by delegating authority to standing committees, the members of which have more sectoral policy expertise than their colleagues in the EACs. Despite their central position in domestic policy-making, standing committees have only a secondary role in European matters in most member state legislatures. In all legislatures the EAC is the main forum for the scrutinization of European legislation, rather than being a mere coordinating body. Even in parliaments where the EAC remains weak, it is still the most important committee on integration affairs.

The EACs control the behaviour of their governments in the Council. The Committees convene in advance to discuss the Council agenda items and to mandate the ministers. The Committees usually receive the agendas of the meetings as finalized by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), as well as a government summary, stating the government's position on the issues. The EAC then 'mandates' the government, normally by simply discussing the matter and indicating which outcomes are unacceptable. Straightforward voting instructions constitute a small minority of all instructions. Afterwards the EACs have the right to receive reports from the government. In some legislatures the ministers must appear in the Committee to explain the proceedings of the meeting.

2.3 Categorization of European Affairs Committees

All member state legislatures have established a European Affairs Committee (see Table 1). The bicameral Belgian, Irish and Spanish parliaments have each set up a joint committee on European Affairs. In all other member countries upper houses are excluded. Therefore, for the other bicameral legislatures – Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK – only data on lower chambers is presented. Upper houses, notably the House of Lords, may show considerable interest in European issues, but they lack the formal political tools to scrutinize the government. Data are compiled from the

following sources: EP (1998), Bergman (1997), Fitzmaurice (1996), Laursen and Pappas (1995); Norton (1996); Smith (1996); Wiberg and Raunio (1996); Wiberg (1997).

The size and composition of the committees vary considerably. Members of the European Parliament (MEP) are represented in the Committees in Belgium, Germany, Greece and Ireland. The average size of an EAC is 7.4% of all representatives (the maximum being 18.3% in Luxembourg, and the minimum being 2.5% in the UK). The frequency of committee meetings varies also. The Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish, and British committees meet every week, the others less often. We argue that the more often the EACs convene, the better positioned they are to scrutinize European matters. The jurisdiction of all EACs covers the first (EC) pillar of the Union. About half of them have the right to handle second (CFSP) and third pillar (JHA) questions. In other legislatures, CFSP issues fall normally under the competence of the Foreign Affairs Committee. EACs' jurisdiction in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK covers all three pillars. The EACs of the Austrian Nationalrat and the Danish Folketing have the right to issue binding voting instructions to government representatives.¹ In certain countries – such as Ireland, Italy and Spain – the committee is primarily a forum for exchanging information. The remaining legislatures fall somewhere between the two: EACs issue some recommendations to their governments (Bergman 1997).

Table 1 provides an evaluation of the power and influence of national parliaments in European questions. The categorization is based on the overall situation, not simply on constitutional rules. Particularly relevant are the ability to mandate the government and the involvement of specialized standing committees. The former is important because it enables the parliament – and not the government – to decide the national negotiating position. The latter as it improves the legislatures' substantial expertise vis-à-vis the government, thereby reducing the informational deficit of the parliaments. As mentioned above, the Danish and Austrian parliaments are the only ones with the power to issue binding voting instructions. The involvement of specialized standing committees is strongest in Finland and Germany. In the final column in Table 1, the parliaments are categorized into three groups based on the data in the two previous columns: weak, moderate and strong. We use three categories because a dichotomy is too simplistic, and four categories would unnecessarily complicate the interpretation of the main findings. The legislatures in Denmark and Finland have a strong influence, those in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK a moderate influence, and those in Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain only a weak influence.

Table 1 European Affairs Committees in member state legislatures

Member State	Parliament	European Affairs Committee	Established	MPs (%)	Frequency of meetings**	Standing committees	Voting instructions	Overall ranking
Austria	Nationalrat	Hauptausschuß	1920/15.12.1994	29/183 (15.8)	Twice a month	weak	strong	moderate
Belgium	Chambre des Représentants / Senat	Comité d'avis fédéral chargé de questions européennes	25.4.1985 / March 1990 October 1995	30 (10+10 senators +10 MEPs) / 150 (6.7)	Once a month	moderate	weak	weak
Denmark	Folketing	Europaudvalget	11.10.1972 / October 1994	17/179 (9.5)	Once a week (Fridays)	moderate	strong	strong
Finland	Eduskunta	Suuri valiokunta	1.1.1995	25/200 (12.5)	Twice a week (Wednesdays and Fridays)	strong	moderate	strong
France	Assemblée Nationale	Délégation de l'Assemblée Nationale pour l'Union européenne	6.7.1979	36/577 (6.2)	Once a week	weak	weak	weak
Germany	Bundestag	EU-Ausschuß	September 1991 / 14.12.1994	50 (39+11 MEPs) / 656 (5.9)	Once a week (Wednesdays)	strong	moderate	moderate
Greece	Vouli Ton Ellinon	Epitropi Evropaikon Ypothesseon	13.6.1990	31 (21+10 MEPs) / 300 (7.0)	No regular meetings	weak	weak	weak
Ireland	Dáil Éireann / Seanad Éireann	Joint Committee on European Affairs	14.3.1995 / November 1997	19 (14+5 senators) / 166 (8.4)	Once every two weeks	moderate	weak	weak
Italy	Camera dei Deputati	Commissione Politiche dell'Unione Europea	10.10.1990 / August 1996	48/630 (7.6)	Regularly, even 2-3 times a week	moderate	weak	weak
Luxembourg	Chambre des Députés	Commission des Affaires étrangères et communautaires	6.12.1989	11/60 (18.3)	No regular meetings; on occasion of important Council meetings	weak	weak	weak
The Netherlands	Tweede Kamer	Algemene Commissie voor EU-Zaken	1986 / 18.5.1994	25/150 (16.7)	Once a week	moderate	moderate	moderate
Portugal	Assembleia da Republica	Comissão de Assuntos Europeus	29.10.1987	27/230 (11.7)	Once a week	moderate	weak	weak
Spain	Congreso de los Diputados Senado	Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea	27.12.1985	39 (23+16 senators) / 350 (6.6)	Once a week	weak	weak	weak
Sweden	Riksdagen	EU-nämnden	16.12.1994	17/349 (4.9)	Once a week (Fridays)	moderate	moderate	moderate
UK	House of Commons	Select Committee on European Legislation	7.5.1974	16/651 (2.5)	Once a week (Wednesdays)	weak	moderate	moderate

* In several member states the name, composition and powers of the EACs have undergone substantial changes during EC/EU membership.

** The frequency of meetings refers rather to the de facto situation than to the de jure letter.

Sources: EP (1998), Bergman (1997), Fitzmaurice (1996), Laursen and Pappas eds. (1995), Norton ed. (1996), Smith ed. (1996), and Wiberg ed. (1997), and own data.

2.4 Explaining variation

What explains this variation? Previous research indicates the primacy of domestic political culture. It has been argued that the key variable is the executive-legislature relationship, with the parliament controlling the government to the same extent in European matters as it does in the context of domestic legislation. Similarly, the contentiousness of the European dimension is important (Fitzmaurice 1976; Judge 1995; Raunio 1999a). Bergman (1997) makes the most sophisticated attempt to explain the strength of parliamentary scrutiny. In doing so, he employs five variables – public opinion, national political culture, federalism, the frequency of minority governments, and evidence of strategic action. Political culture was defined basically as a North-South dimension, whereby the Southern countries adopt a more lenient approach to scrutiny. According to Bergman all variables had an impact, but two factors have most explanatory value: the timing of membership, i.e., the later you entered the stronger the scrutiny; and the political culture factor, which includes public opinion on integration. However, Bergman did not incorporate into his analysis the extent to which standing committees are involved in the process. According to Pahre (1997), countries with domestic disagreements over foreign policy and ideal points near the status quo are more likely to establish hand-tying institutions. Pahre (1997: 165-166) identifies three necessary conditions for strong parliamentary oversight: “there must be a significant portion of the public, and at least one party represented in parliament, that prefers the status quo to further integration. Second, a country must have frequent minority governments. Third, there must be some party that would rather enjoy a policy veto through an oversight committee than join a majority government.”

We argue that party positions and public opinion are the strongest factors in explaining parliamentary scrutiny of EU matters. The variables are at least partially inter-related. While partisan ideology reflects, to a varying extent, public opinion, it can be argued that parties, and party leaders in particular, have a strong impact on citizens' attitudes with fairly abstract and new issues such as European integration parties. Moreover, it is the MPs, and not the voters, who carry out the scrutiny, and thus we lay more emphasis on party positions. Before testing our hypotheses, we shall, in the next two sections, present the longitudinal data for each member state.

3 Party positions on European integration

The first independent variable is party positions on European integration. This variable was chosen because national European policy is formulated by

political parties, and because the intensity and volume of government scrutiny is designed by MPs who are, by definition, party politicians. In this sense integration politics is party politics. Party positions influence public opinion and vice versa. Parties reflect societal cleavages but they also have an impact on the development of public opinion.

Empirical measurement of party attitudes on Europe is very difficult. Some parties support the establishment of a federal European state, while others favour reductions in the power of the EU or even the withdrawal of their country from the EU. However, the majority of parties are somewhere in between these two extremes. For example, all parties are Eurosceptical, to a varying extent. They may want to see the competence of the EU extended or limited, but for different reasons and in different policy sectors. Parties may not be against integration as such, but oppose the current form of the process (Taggart 1998). Our dataset consists of party behaviour in Euroelections (Blondel et al. 1998; Corbett 1998; van der Eijk & Franklin 1996; Lodge 1996), comparative studies on the European policies of national parties and party families (Bomberg 1998; Featherstone 1988; Gaffney 1996; Hix & Lord 1997; Taggart 1998; Westle & Staeck 1998), expert judgments of parties' integration attitudes (Ray 1999), and country-specific literature mentioned in the text. These are the most reliable indicators, as there are no comprehensive longitudinal or comparative studies on parties' European policies.

In Table 2 we have grouped the member states into three categories: weak, moderate and strong party support for integration. The second column lists electorally significant Eurocritical parties. We define 'electorally significant' as parties that have received about 10% or more of votes in national elections or in elections to the European Parliament for a sustained period of time (a decade or more). 'Eurocritical' refers to parties that have either opposed further integration or have called for their country's withdrawal from the Union over a sustained period of time (a decade or more). The third column shows the names of anti-EU lists in the 1994 Euroelections, together with the percentage of votes they gained. Note that this is not the total vote share won by Eurocritical candidates. Member states that use intra-party preference voting enable the electorate to choose between candidates of the same party or list who have differing opinions on Europe. Such opportunities are facilitated by a low level of intra-party consensus on integration. For example, in the 1996 and 1999 Finnish Euroelections, the parties allowed their candidates to run their own campaigns, including candidates who deviated strongly from the official party line.

Member states with weak party support for integration are Denmark, Sweden and the UK. In Denmark the membership issue produced a notable cleavage in 1972, when 63% of the voters supported membership in the referendum. Nearly all parties, and the Social Democrats in particular, remain

Table 2 Party positions on European integration in the 15 EU member states

Member state	Electorally significant Eurocritical parties*	Anti-EU parties specific to 1994 Euroelections (vote share %)**	Party support for integration
Austria	Freedom Party		moderate
Belgium	Vlaams Blok (Flanders)		strong
Denmark	Socialist People's Party	June Movement, People's Movement Against the EC (25.5)	weak
Finland		Alternative to EU, Vapaan Suomen Liitto (2.7)	moderate
France	Communist Party, National Front	Alternative Europe (12.3)	moderate
Germany		Free Citizens' Alliance (1.1)	strong
Greece	Communist Party		strong
Ireland			moderate
Italy	National Alliance		strong
Luxembourg			strong
The Netherlands			strong
Portugal	Communist Party		strong
Spain			moderate
Sweden	Left Party		weak
UK	Conservatives	UK Independence Party (1.0)	weak

* Parties that have received around 10 % or more of the votes in recent elections.

** Lists or parties whose primary purpose is to resist deeper integration or to seek the withdrawal of their country from the EU. The column thus excludes established parties that have taken anti-integrationist positions.

Sources: Blondel et. al (1998), Corbett (1998), van der Eijk and Franklin eds. (1996), Hix and Lord (1997), Johansson and Raunio (2000), Lodge ed. (1996), Ray (1999), Taggart (1998), Raunio (1999b).

divided over integration. The centre-right parties are in general pro-integration, while the Socialist People's Party and, to a lesser extent, the Radicals and the Progress Party have been critical of integration throughout membership. Denmark has two anti-EU parties specific to Euroelections, the June Movement and the People's Movement Against the EC. In 1994 these two parties gained 25.5% of the votes.

In Sweden the membership referendum of November 1994, when 52% voted

in favour, was indicative of party positions on integration. The very Eurosceptical public has constrained party leaders, with only the conservative Moderate Party and the Liberal Party clearly committed to EMU and integration. Factionalization has occurred in nearly all parties, including the governing Social Democrats. The Left Party and the Greens are very hostile to integration, and the Green Party even advocates Sweden's exit from the Union (Johansson & Raunio 2000).

The attitude of British parties has been highly reluctant and sceptical overall. All parties are internally divided over Europe, with factional rivalry particularly visible in the Conservative Party. The Labour Party was initially opposed to integration, and campaigned for Britain's withdrawal from the Community until the mid-1980s, but has since become more pro-integrationist than the Conservatives. We have categorized the Conservative Party here as Eurocritical, since it opposes EMU and further reductions in national sovereignty. The Liberals and the Scottish Nationalist Party are somewhat more pro-European than the two main parties. The anti-EU party, the UK Independence Party, won one per cent of votes in the 1994 Euroelections (Baker & Seawright 1998).

Moderate party support for Europe is found in Austria, Finland, France, Ireland, and Spain. 66% of Austrians approved EU membership in the June 1994 referendum. The two main parties, Social Democrats and the People's Party, are solidly pro-European. The extreme right-wing Freedom Party campaigned against membership, and is an electorally significant Eurocritical party. In Finland, a majority of 57% favoured membership in the October 1994 referendum. Most parties were divided over the issue, especially the Centre Party, the Left Alliance, and the Green League. While no party is against membership or integration, none are federalist either. The most pro-European are the Green League, the Swedish People's Party, the National Coalition and the Social Democrats, which all support limited extensions in supranationalist decision-making. However, with the qualified exception of the Greens, the nation-state logic prevails among Finnish parties. In the 1994 Euroelections the two anti-EU lists received a combined share of less than three per cent of votes (Raunio 1999b).

In France, the respective presidents have been influential in shaping French European policy. Most famous was De Gaulle's opposition however, Mitterrand's determined support for greater integration was also important. Most French parties have been divided over Europe, and such divisions were particularly evident in the 1990s. The Communist Party, the National Front and the Greens have been more united in their opposition. Internal splits have occurred among the Gaullists (RPR), the centre-right (UDF), and the social democrats (PS), with dissidents presenting separate lists in the 1994 Euroelections, in which the anti-EU Alternative Europe won 12.1% of votes (Wood 1997).

When Ireland joined the Community in 1973, only the Labour Party and the marginal Sinn Fein and the Communists were against membership. In the referendum 83% favoured membership. Since then all the main parties have been supportive of integration. With the exception of the marginal Green Party, the Workers' Party, and the Democratic Left, all parties supported the Maastricht Treaty. 69% of the voters did likewise in the referendum. This broad consensus is largely explained by the economic benefits derived from membership (Coakley et al. 1997). Membership has also brought significant benefits for Spain, both through regional funds and by helping the country to distance itself from its authoritarian past. In Spain, the dominant parties – the conservative Popular Party and the social democratic PSOE – are solidly pro-integration, and only the United Left (IU) has offered qualified opposition to integration.

Strong party support for integration exists in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. All three Benelux countries are rather solidly pro-European. Euroelections tend to be rather dull, low-key events, as all electorally significant parties are in broad agreement over Europe. In Belgium, all parties are more or less in favour of further integration, and all main parties supported the EMU. Opposition to integration manifests itself mainly through the far-right Vlaams Blok and Front National. In the Netherlands, only the minor Calvinist parties (SGP, GPV, RPF) are against integration. All the electorally significant mainstream parties have supported moves to extend the powers of the EU. The same applies to Luxembourg, where only the Greens are more critical of integration.

With the exception of the Communist Party (KKE), which advocated Greece's withdrawal from the Union in the 1994 Euroelections, all main Greek parties are federalist. The social democratic PASOK was Eurocritical in the 1980s, but has altered its position since. Portuguese parties have offered the electorate more variation. The Social Democrats (PSD) and the Socialists (PS) are in favour of integration. The Communist Party has been Eurocritical throughout membership, and after Maastricht the right-wing Center Social Democrats provided similar opposition, although since 1998, under new leadership, it has adopted a more pro-integrationist attitude. While Italian parties have become less enthusiastic about integration since the Maastricht Treaty, they have been solidly pro-EC/EU throughout membership. The only exceptions have been the extreme right National Alliance and the various communist parties. Italian pro-Europeanism is something of a class of its own, as it is related to dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Italy.

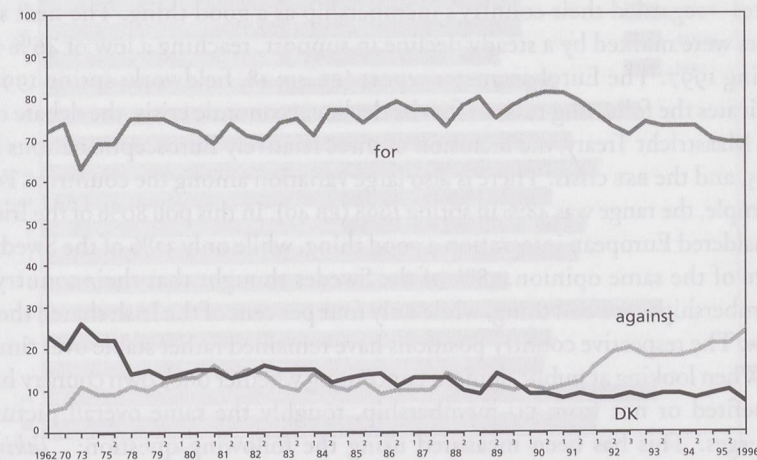
The inclusion of Germany in this category is not so straightforward. While all four main parties – CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, B90/Grünen – have steadily supported integration, and have provided key leadership through individuals such as Helmut Kohl, their ranks also include Eurosceptical factions.

Reflecting the situation found in other Green parties, the German Greens have changed their stance from outright opposition to strong, but still qualified, support. The only Eurocritical parties are the extremist Republicans and the Party of Democratic Socialists. A specific anti-EU party, Free Citizens' Alliance, campaigned in the 1994 Euroelections, but gained only one per cent of votes.

4 Public opinion on integration

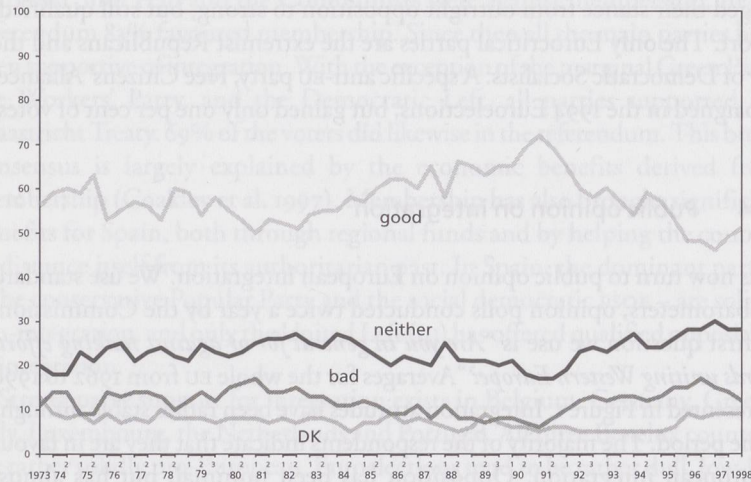
Let us now turn to public opinion on European integration. We use standard Eurobarometers, opinion polls conducted twice a year by the Commission. The first question we use is "Are you in general for or against making efforts towards uniting Western Europe?" Averages for the whole EU from 1962 to 1996 are presented in Figure 1. Integration attitudes have been rather stable throughout the period. The majority of the respondents indicate that they are in favour of European integration. Opposition has been minimal, but has almost doubled since Maastricht. The proportion of those who do not have an opinion is also small, around 10%.

Figure 1 Attitude towards integration



The public has also been asked what they think of their own country's membership: "Generally speaking, do you think (our country's) membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, don't know?" The results are shown in Figure 2. Roughly half of the respondents regard their own country's membership as a good thing. Less than one third consider it a bad thing, and less than one in five do not know what to think. Support for membership declined after Maastricht. However, the graph

Figure 2 Attitude towards membership



indicates that the EU is slowly regaining its popularity. Support was highest in 1990 when 72% of the citizens – in what was still a Community of 12 member states – regarded their country’s membership as a good thing. The next six years were marked by a steady decline in support, reaching a low of 46% in spring 1997. The Eurobarometer report (EB 49: 18, fieldwork: spring 1998) indicates the following reasons for the decline: economic crisis, the debate on the Maastricht Treaty, the inclusion of three relatively Eurosceptic nations in 1995, and the BSE crisis. There is also large variation among the countries. For example, the range was 48% in spring 1998 (EB 49). In this poll 80% of the Irish considered European integration a good thing, while only 32% of the Swedes were of the same opinion. 38% of the Swedes thought that their country’s membership was a bad thing, while only four per cent of the Irish shared their view. The respective country positions have remained rather stable over time.

When looking at public opinion concerning whether one’s own country has benefited or not from EU membership, roughly the same overall picture emerges. This has been measured using the following question: “Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (our country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union (Common Market)?” (Figure 3). Roughly half of the respondents think that their country has benefited from membership. However, the sceptics are more numerous here. Typically, more than one-third think that their country has not benefited from membership and one-fifth do not know. The trend has been a declining one for quite some time, but, again, it seems that the Union is gaining more support. Like support for EU membership, the graph shows that positive

Figure 3 Benefit from membership

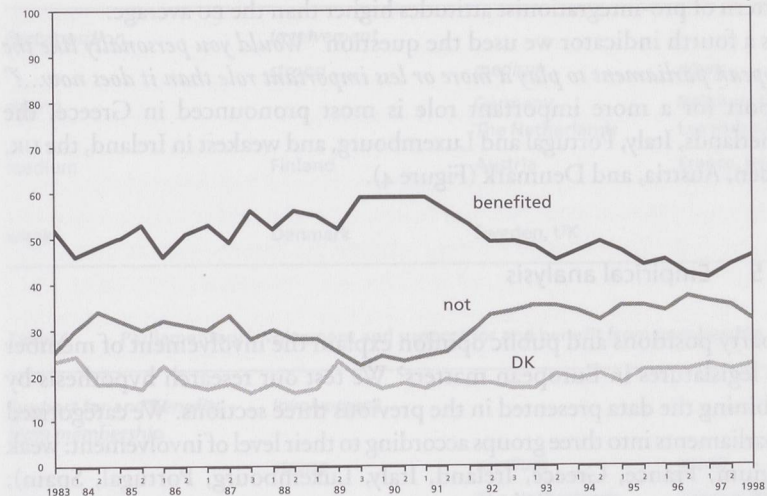
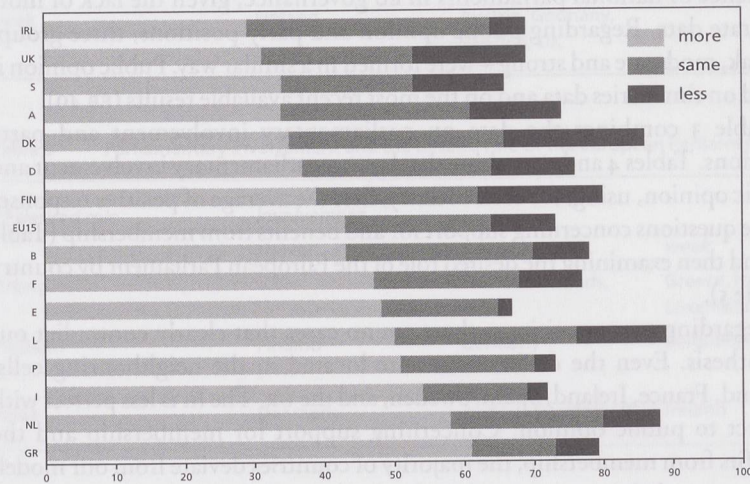


Figure 4 Desired role of EP



responses reached a high (59%) in the late 1980s and early 1990s and then dropped steadily over the next few years to reach a low of 41% in the spring of 1997. Here again we have huge variation among countries. In the latest poll 85% of the Irish responded positively, while only 20% of the Swedes shared their opinion. Only five per cent of the Irish thought their country had not benefited, while the majority of respondents in two countries were of the opposite opinion (Finland 52%, Sweden 55%). Six countries – Belgium,

Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal – display over time a pattern of pro-integrationist attitudes higher than the EU average.

As a fourth indicator we used the question “*Would you personally like the European parliament to play a more or less important role than it does now...?*” Support for a more important role is most pronounced in Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal and Luxembourg, and weakest in Ireland, the UK, Sweden, Austria, and Denmark (Figure 4).

5 Empirical analysis

Do party positions and public opinion explain the involvement of member state legislatures in European matters? We test our research hypothesis by combining the data presented in the previous three sections. We categorized the parliaments into three groups according to their level of involvement: weak (Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain); moderate (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK); and strong (Denmark, Finland). We acknowledge that this categorization is not methodologically very sophisticated, but it is the most realistic way of measuring the influence of national parliaments in EU governance, given the lack of more accurate data. Regarding public opinion and party positions, three groups – weak, moderate and strong – were formed in a similar way. Public opinion is based on time series data and on the most recent available results (EB 49).

Table 3 combines the data on parliamentary involvement and party positions. Tables 4 and 5 combine the data on parliamentary involvement and public opinion, using, for each country, first the average of positive responses to the questions concerning support for and benefits from membership (Table 4), and then examining the desired role of the European Parliament by country (Table 5).

Regarding party positions, there are no cases that clearly contradict our hypothesis. Even the deviant cases are located in the neighbouring cells: Finland, France, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. The fit is less perfect with respect to public opinion. Concerning support for membership and the benefits from membership, the majority of countries deviate from our model. Six countries behave as expected: Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, and Portugal. However, again, the countries that deviate from our model are located in the neighbouring cells. Regarding the desired role of the European Parliament, evidence is more mixed. Six member states – Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, and Portugal – validate our hypothesis, but the majority falsify it.

Therefore, we are unable to confirm our hypothesis. Six countries – Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK – never

Table 3 Parliamentary involvement and party positions

Party position	Involvement		
	strong	medium	weak
strong		Germany, The Netherlands	Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal
medium	Finland	Austria	France, Ireland, Spain
weak	Denmark	Sweden, UK	

Table 4 Parliamentary involvement and support for and benefit from membership

Support for and benefits from membership	Involvement		
	strong	medium	weak
strong		The Netherlands	Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal
medium	Denmark		Belgium, France, Spain
weak	Finland	Austria, Germany, Sweden, UK	

Table 5 Parliamentary involvement and the desired role of the European Parliament

EP desired role	Involvement		
	strong	medium	weak
strong		The Netherlands,	Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal
medium	Finland	Germany	Belgium, France, Spain
weak	Denmark	Austria, Sweden, UK	Ireland

confirm our hypothesis. Denmark deviates once from our model. Austria, Finland, Germany, and Ireland behave contrary to our hypothesis twice. Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, and Portugal follow our model. The party positions seem to give a satisfactory explanation for parliamentary involvement, but the results on public opinion are more mixed. Even though our data does not directly falsify our hypothesis, the findings demonstrate that other explanatory factors need to be taken into account. Ad hoc explanations alone

are not sufficient²: cross-national models that lend themselves to theoretically derived empirical testing are required. Once such models are available, we believe that they can be generalized to cover other aspects of adaptation to integration, not just parliamentary scrutiny. Further research should include other variables, such as the powers of committees in processing legislation. However, considering the scarcity of empirical, comparative studies on European legislatures, such categorization is likewise highly problematic (see Döring 1995; Norton 1998). We also need a more systematic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of existing institutional arrangements, especially national MPs' own perceptions of the efficiency of domestic scrutiny. Our current knowledge of parliamentary scrutiny is still primarily based on descriptions of the formal procedures, not on comparative survey data or other quantitative indicators.

6 Concluding remarks

We can easily think of a number of reasons why national MPs in general do not want to get involved in European matters. There are, of course, representatives in each legislature with European expertise in their special substantive policy fields (agriculture, environment, regional policy, etc.). However, these Euro-specialists are a small minority in each parliament. First, acquiring information on European matters is costly, and demands a greater amount of time than domestic issues, which are the main focus of the representatives. Second, ambitious MPs are likely to experience institutional frustration. The ability of an individual MP to influence European legislation is close to zero. Even the much-ridiculed MEPs carry far more weight than their national colleagues. Third, for the majority of representatives, European legislation is hardly the decisive factor in gaining re-election. Key issues in national elections, like education, health care, employment and tax reforms, are decided by the member states, not by the Union. However, we argue that investment in European matters is desirable for the whole parliament.

Efficient parliamentary scrutiny of European questions can be important because of its potential legitimizing effect. According to Judge (1995: 96) "national parliaments have proved indispensable in providing the overarching frame of legitimation required to develop the European Union." With extended use of qualified majority voting in the Council, member states may be overruled to an increasing extent. However, through careful examination of the Commission's legislative proposals, MPs can become well acquainted with the initiatives and their consequences. This would increase national parliaments' awareness of European issues, reduce the informational advantage of the governments, and facilitate the implementation of directives.

Parliamentary scrutiny depends to a large extent on the ability of the parties to adopt European policy goals and the most effective strategies for achieving them. Currently too little strategic planning occurs within parties, as they set their sights mainly on short-term electoral benefits. Long-term visions on Europe are also crucial if the public is to form opinions on integration. The lack of an articulate public opinion is to a great extent due to the fact that in most member states parties have not sufficiently politicized European integration. The public remains confused, as the parties have not produced clear and coherent policy alternatives over Europe. Therefore legislatures should devote more time to deep and constructive debates on the futures of Europe.

National parliaments are supposed to perform an important role by scrutinizing European legislation. In most cases the national parliaments are too weak to fulfil this task. If legislatures strengthened their control mechanisms, the legitimacy of the whole EU might also gradually be increased. The democratic deficit may be alleviated by strengthening the impact of national parliaments, which can be achieved in the following two ways, both of which are within the competence of the legislatures. *National parliaments should allocate themselves more resources to deal with European matters.* This applies especially to allocating specific personnel to the committees and party groups whose task is to monitor and prepare EU issues. Second, it is essential that *scrutiny is extended to all specialized standing committees*, not only to the EACS. Delegation of authority downwards to committees benefits both the government and the opposition parties. The parliament as an institution is eager to pressure the government, and in such situations government and opposition party groups may agree on a common stand in order to increase parliament's influence. Granting the opposition a larger role in European matters, especially on more important issues such as Treaty amendments, will also increase the legitimacy of the decisions as parties share the responsibility for the outcome (Maor 1998). Third, if the first two improvements are carried out, all MPs get a positive incentive to acquire expertise on European questions. In the end it is up to national legislatures themselves to decide whether their position is weakened or strengthened.

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Notes

1. Also the German Bundesrat has the power to issue binding instructions in matters that fall under the exclusive competence of the Länder. Both chambers of the Dutch parliament and the Italian parliament have the right to issue binding instructions in third pillar matters.

2. For example, in Austria, the strong position of the Nationalrat is primarily explained by constitutional rules. The traditional grand coalition of Social Democrats and the People's Party did not have the necessary two-thirds majority needed for constitutional reform following the 1994 national elections, and the three opposition parties – the Freedom Party, the Greens and the Liberals – used their combined strength to gain parliamentary control over European matters (Fitzmaurice 1996).

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The Perseverance of Beliefs: the Reaction of Kissinger and Brzezinski to the End of the Cold War

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Abstract

The end of the cold war has affected, in one way or another, the vision of security experts. The former so-called 'cold-warriors', or defence-conservative security experts, are especially likely to feel uncomfortable in the new situation. The central question of this paper is: how and to what extent has the end of the cold war affected the beliefs of the defence-conservative security experts? The principle aim of this study is to illuminate the reactions of these strategic thinkers and to understand how the end of the cold war has affected their ideas and belief systems. A theoretical framework is presented with which it is possible to interpret, in a systematic manner, the way in which security experts deal with and adapt to the new and challenging situation. The framework is based on the belief system approach. Furthermore, the results of an in-depth study of the reactions of two well-known security experts – Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski – will be presented. Special attention will be paid to the way in which these experts resolve dissonance.

1 Introduction

More than ten years ago the cold war came to a close with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe. This major event in world history has had profound impact on the strategic interests of the United States – the only superpower left. Reborn hope for a new world order and renewed concern about regional conflicts and inter-ethnic strife have pressured the American foreign policy elite to rethink the means and objectives of American strategy. As much remains uncertain, the debate about strategic adjustment is still going on (Katzenstein 1996; Trubowitz et al. 1999). Within this debate, ideas and beliefs play an important role, as they help to shape political discourse, institutions and, in the end, foreign policy choices (Trubowitz & Rhodes 1999). "Ideas," argue Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 12), "help to order the world [and] shape agendas, which can profoundly shape outcomes." These ideas can be new ones, but it is also conceivable that beliefs of national security experts have hardly changed in