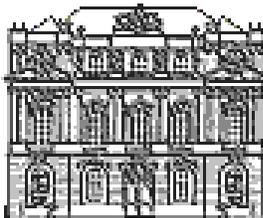


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Mass Media Publicized Discourses on the Post-Nice Process

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Do the news media influence or reflect European integration? Are national debates about Europe, as viewed through the media, enhancing or inhibiting this process? Where do battles between national and European agendas, debates and identities become visible i.e. being played out and what are the central issues?

This paper investigates the way that national news media try to facilitate and enhance public identification with Europe. The paper is based on research carried out within the research project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences on “Constitutionalism and Democratic Representation in the EU”.

The paper compares developments in news coverage of the Future of Europe debate and the Europeanisation of particular issues in different countries. By Europeanisation of news coverage, we understand the extent by which the debate on the Future of Europe and the related news coverage stimulate an intensification and convergence of public discourses, in particular across national publics (see Figure 1). Does the Convention process lead to a synchronization of public discourses. Do the debates and mediated events give enough incentives for creating or - via the media - reconstructing an European sphere of publics (Kevin and Schlesinger 2000) in which the processes and events on the EU level serve as common points of orientation both for the timing as for the substance of publicized discourses (‘Grand debate Europe’)? Or do we witness several national debates on different European themes such as the roles of parliaments or the logic behind a reformed hierarchy of norms without being explicitly linked on a cross-national basis by those involved (‘Europeanized debates’)? Or will we witness no (‘Europe à huis clos’) or isolated national debates without any direct feedbacks to EU events (‘nationalized debates’)?

Recent theoretical work has repeatedly pointed to the socially constructed nature of identity and interests (Adler and Haas 1992, pp. 367-390; Wendt 1994, pp. 384-396). Unlike classic realism, the liberal intergovernmentalist variant of neo-realism focuses on the construction of national preference building: “National interests are [...] neither invariant nor unimportant, but emerge through domestic political conflict as societal groups compete for political

influence, national and transnational coalitions form, and new political influence, national and transnational coalitions form, and new policy alternatives are recognized by governments.” (Moravcsik 1993, p. 481). The analysis of the configuration of national interests therefore includes a consideration of how groups of actors beyond the core of governments and administrations steer the definition or – as regards public opinion – the background of interests and preferences: “Groups articulate preferences; governments aggregate them” (Moravcsik 1993, p. 483). Liberal intergovernmentalism therefore shares the (neo-)realist assumption of the centrality of Member States’ actors within the EC/EU and it explicitly “denies the historical and path dependent quality of integration” (Moravcsik 1995, pp. 612-613), which neo-functionalism stresses as the rationale behind the very process of ‘supranational governance’¹ in the European Union. In following these assumptions few national institutions would become strong multi-level players, most would simply have to play the role of strong national actors.

However, the approach of multi-level governance has questioned the extent to which the nation-state represents a boundary of influence in the creation of interests and thereby excludes inputs from the European level (Sbragia 1992; Sandholtz 1993, pp. 1-40; Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996, pp. 341-378). In other words, the revisiting and substantial revision of the intergovernmental frameworks of analysis, as a result of EU dynamism over the last fifteen years, have pointed to the enhanced consideration of the role of (domestic) interests and interest formation. Also in view of the major approaches within the modern, i.e. post-1989, school of multi-level governance, the EU polity is seen as a “post-sovereign, polycentric, incongruent” arrangement of authority which supersedes the limits of the nation-state (Schmitter 1996, p. 136). Assuming a non-hierarchical decision-making process, the EU does matter but only as one realm of collective decision-making and implementation. In other words, “policy-making in the Community is at its heart a multilateral inter-bureaucratic negotiation marathon” (Kohler-Koch 1996, p. 367). Given that formal and informal networks (Héritier 1996, pp. 149-167) among different groups of actors are the decisive arenas for decision-making, formal rules are generally seen as a less important factor. From the perspective of this school of thought, member states are not seen as unified actors. Rather, they are viewed as arenas of collective decision preparation and implementation, thus

¹ See Stone Sweet/Sandholtz 1998, p. 5, who view “intergovernmental bargaining and decision-making as embedded in processes that are provoked and sustained by the expansion of transnational society, the pro-integrative activities of supranational organizations, and the growing density of supranational rules”. Consequently, they argue, “these processes gradually, but inevitably, reduce the capacity of the member states to control outcomes”.

indicating a new stage for both administrations and for the state. European governance therefore contributes to a “decrease in the unilateral steering by government, and hence an increase in the self-governance of networks” (Kohler-Koch 1996, p. 371). National actors follow a plurality of different adaptation strategies and so we would expect to see weak and strong multi-level players. In any case the monopoly of the state in steering this process would wane. In the extreme one could expect an ‘erosion’ of the traditional focus of media on the nation states and a shift of attention towards overlapping - complex - authority structures and divided loyalty configurations. We would then expect to discover the media-related elements of a “post-modern state” (Caporaso 1996, pp. 29-52) in a “post-national constellation” (Habermas 1998a, pp. 94-96).

Theories of new institutionalism have emphasized the ‘role of ideas’ in policy-making and politics (Bulmer 1996, pp. 217-240; Pollack 1996, pp. 429-458; Hall and Taylor 1996, pp. 936-957). Despite these theoretical inclinations, research agendas designed to explore interest, identity, or ideational formation have remained limited. Sinnott has shown that careful attention to European integration theory, particularly as it has developed since the 1980s, provides clues that the study of news media is relevant to understanding EU politics (Sinnott 1995, pp. 11-32). He has done this by pointing out the importance of political culture variables within EU development. Because of the legitimization function of media, news media are both a source and recipient of such variables and therefore involved in the formation of interests within a political system. Moreover, political culture – and its articulation – have gained resonance within the study of the European Union in large part due to the perceived end of the ‘permissive consensus’ (Lindberg and Scheingold 1994, pp. 297-299) about European integration. The presumption of ‘permissive consensus’ had always offered those responsible for making EU policy a diffuse (albeit passive) public support for the EU and European integration; its demise since the early 1990s has brought to an end a period of consensus about EU governance exclusively by elites (Hayward 1995). As Slater has pointed out, “a viable political community needs the allegiance of its mass public as well as that of elite’s” (Slater 1994, p. 155). Within the study of EU politics, public opinion has been brought ‘back in’ in recent years (Sinnott 1995, pp. 11-32), establishing the centrality of opinion in the integration process and indicating a relevant position to political culture variables in opinion-formation.

Of course, the case could be made that the need for ‘the public’ was not a factor in the EU from the outset (in part because of the EU’s status as an arena of foreign policy²), but rather became one only decades into the EU’s existence – as a result of events after 1985 and particularly after 1991. As Sinnott argued, elites, structures, and processes are still central explanatory elements in EU governance, but “[...] the emphasis on elites was too narrow [...] and needs to be incorporated in a broader perspective which gives adequate attention to public opinion and political culture” (Sinnott 1995, p. 25). Arguably, this broader perspective includes news media.

While the analysis of news media cannot explain elite and public opinion, in the sense of quantifying media’s impact on opinion (or vice-versa), it is still possible to assume that media both shape and reflect the understanding of politics in the public sphere. Thus, in order to explore the question of representation, responsiveness and legitimacy in EU politics, it is useful to explore the communication of those politics in the news media.

News media are not only a principle source of information about political decisions, they are also linked to elite and public opinion formation (Dahlgren 1993), both of which are crucial to the political legitimization process of any given political entity. Media both shape and manifest the understanding of politics in the public sphere. In order to explore the question of legitimacy in EU politics, it is useful to explore the communication of those politics in the news media, also because the public discussion of political deliberation and decision-making in the media is vital to modern democracies and “it can reasonable be assumed that the public discourse about supranational governance assumes a decisive role in the process of legitimization of European governance structures” (Jachtenfuchs 1994, p. 17).

In this regard, one increasingly finds academic contributions about the ‘need for public debate’ (Beetham and Lord 1998), the necessity for ‘publicity’ (Risse-Kappen 1996, p. 74) or the demand to close the ‘cognitive gap’ between the EU and its citizens (Sinnott 1997). Even if the analysis of news media does not explain elite and public opinion, it is plain to assume that media both shape and reflect the understanding of politics in the public sphere. Thus, in

² See Dalton/Duval 1986, p. 133. Dalton and Duval take this argument to the extreme, arguing that “the public events that compromise the foreign policy environment are relatively easily manipulated by political elites”, even if they qualify this to a short-term influence.

order to explore the question of legitimacy in EU politics, we should explore the communication of those politics in the news media.

News media traditionally play a role in 'framing the nation' through a combination of the mode of address to a defined group, the outlining of the news agenda relevant to the nation-state, and also providing a perspective on the outside world.

Given the lack of pan-European media beyond those that serve business and political elites (The European, European Voice...), there is no defined group of Europeans which is addressed in any collective fashion in relation to European socio-economic and political issues. While news media do not play a pro-active role in the promotion of European integration, it is possible to examine how the media contributes to the identification with Europe through their information, education and entertainment functions. The project quantified and evaluated the breadth and depth of news about Europe available to national publics. Monitoring of media coverage also reflected the national versus European impetus in debates about integration in Europe. In this regard, an important indication of the level of integration in Europe, and the Europeanisation of national media agendas, is the development of a sphere of debate for European issues. We thus analyzed how different national news agendas merge in relation to particular issues or events by observing the extent to which news stories are shared or dealt with in a similar way.

The methodology used in this research combined a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The media was monitored in four countries during the period from May 2000 to April 2002.

How the Mass Media Matter

The news process is not a neutral one. (Lippmann 1922; Lazarsfeld and Merton 1971) Rather, media have an important legitimization function within political systems, particularly within democracies, where the media's own legitimate status allow them to confer authority upon issues, institutions and individuals. Therefore, media coverage of the European Union has the ability to contribute to the image of the EU as a legitimate source of political power.

News media legitimate political processes by constructing the image of authority and accountability that structures of governance require to retain the support of their publics. In

the 1940s, Lazarsfeld and Merton described how status-conferral was a key “social function of the mass media”, writing: „The mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing their status.” (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1971, p. 561). Later, Gans concluded that, “...the news upholds the legitimacy of holders of formal authority as long as they abide by the relevant enduring values, both in public and private realms” (Gans 1980, pp. 60-61). As Ericson, Baranek and Chan have more recently pointed out: “...news is crucial to the constitution of authority in the knowledge structure of society, even if its veracity and contributions to understanding are in doubt. Resources have to be devoted to news work if one wants to be recognized as an authorized knower, if one’s organization wants to both promote and protect its image as accountable, if legitimization work is required to respond to and sustain the myths of one’s institutional environment.” (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989, p. 23).

The frequency, placement, type, and tone of coverage of particular political institutions or processes, indeed the very selection of stories and sources, contribute to their credibility and status. In short, news media coverage influences the mediation of policy processes and the legitimization of politics and their output. EU politics are no exception.

“Few citizens now have direct knowledge of political matters independent of media” (Franklin 1994, p. 11). News media are not only a principle source of information about government, but they are also linked to elite and public opinion formation (Dahlgren 1993), both of which are crucial to the political legitimization process. In addition, studies within the field of agenda setting have shown that public knowledge and beliefs are at least in part a function of news media coverage (Mc Combs and Shaw 1972, pp. 176-185), particularly when the subject of news is less well understood by its audience, such as is the case with EU politics.

The Post-Nice debate: Towards a Deliberative Democracy?

The driving force of European integration is the continuous search for problem-solving capacities in specific policy areas without explicitly considering the mode of appropriate government structures. This is why an important part of the legitimacy building of the EU roots in its ability to effectively solve policy problems (output) with an emphasis on minority preferences. In many cases this means finding solutions that satisfy minorities, but these

solutions have to be constructed in such a way that they are not opposed by a majority. Over the past years, increasing emphasis has been put on so called deliberative and discursive elements of democracy theory with a view to increasing citizens input as well as for improving performance in highly differentiated modern societies. With respect to the European Union, some scholars have stressed the importance of public debate, discussion, and deliberation in terms of resolving the legitimacy dilemmas of European governance (Scharpf 1998; Eriksen and Fossum 2000b). Within this new strand of debate, one can broadly distinguish between three approaches to political communication:

Top-down communication, which revolves around an analysis of how transparent, open, and effective EU institutions and member states communicate with European citizens (Lodge 1994; Gramberger 1997; Meyer 1999). Bottom-up communication which focuses citizens' and interest groups' ability to participate in the EU's policy cycle (Della Sala and Wiener 1997; Nentwich 1996). Discursive approaches emphasize the two-way flow of information between governance, intermediary structures, and citizens. One group of authors draws on discourse-ethical conceptions to explore the rules of the communicative process in order to promote communicative rather than strategic rationality (Risse-Kappen 1996; Joerges and Neyer 1997; Eriksen and Fossum 2000b). A second group has been concerned with analyzing the capacity of intermediary structures, especially the media, to induce and shape EU-related political debate (Gerhards 1993; Wiener 1998; Schlesinger 1999).

In comparison to formalized means of participation, the first apparent advantage of public discourse as a multiple-way process is the avoidance of institutionalizing veto power. Communicative designs provide none of the current or future participants in the political process with any additional rights to stall, procrastinate, or veto proposed decisions beyond the formal procedures currently foreseen by the treaties. In fact, theorists of deliberative democracy maintain that the promotion of arguing over bargaining encourages more effective decision-making (Risse-Kappen 1996, 2000; Eriksen 2000, pp. 59-61). Participants are more likely to reach optimal solutions, because they share not only information freely but also a common frame of reference, while lowest common denominator outcomes are more likely in negotiations in which strategic rationality and bargaining dominate (Risse-Kappen 2000). In addition, discursive approaches emphasize the gains in knowledge and policy know-how, if the arena of participants and the channels for feed-back are widened. This would help to recognize negative side-effects of decisions early on in the decision-making process,

preventing costly procrastination, adjustment, or termination of policies during or after the implementation phase.

At the same time, public discourse offer a means of overcoming the representativeness dilemma associated with formal electoral procedures. Indeed, voting is just one procedure of linking public preferences with governance, not its essence. As Dahl pointed out, ‘democracy cannot be justified merely as a system for translating the raw, uninformed will of a population majority into public policy’ (Dahl 1994, p. 30). He emphasizes that ‘each citizens ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating (within the time permitted by the need for a decision) the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizen’s interest’ (p. 112). From this perspective, formal procedures of aggregating and projecting preferences into the political systems are little more than empty shells if citizens are not able to form an enlightened opinion about political affairs. Turning the argument around, however, one may ask whether these deliberative elements alone can suffice? There are discernible differences between those who see the deliberative element as an essential part of a - transnational - democratic society and those who want to stress that it is merely a supplement; for example Saward: ‘Advocates often contrast deliberative and merely ‘aggregative’ traditional democratic theory (Miller 1993); in the former, citizen preferences are forged through a process of structured debate focused on the need to realize the common good, while the later, unrefined and perhaps uninformed preferences are merely counted up to produce public policy.’ (Saward 1998, p. 64) However, he underlines, ‘the ‘deliberationist’ concerns are in fact rather narrow. No matter how much deliberation takes place, heads have to be counted – ‘aggregative’ – at some point if a democratic decision is to be reached. No adequate model of democracy can fail to be aggregative. There is no such thing as deliberative model of democracy, despite efforts like Cohen’s to construct one. What we can see is an effort to increase public deliberation on policies within a larger ‘aggregative’ framework of constitutional democratic provisions’ (Saward 1998, p. 64).

Irrespective of whether one subscribes to the school of the essentialists or the complementarists regarding the role of public discourse and deliberation, there can be little doubt that more intensive, inclusive and transnational discussions about issues of European policy among those affected by it are an opportunity to test whether these instruments generate more legitimacy in the EU. Whether these deliberations within the EU could or should be modeled on Habermasian discourse ethics is open to debate. For those who see

deliberative democracy as a means for smaller units (groups, segments of society) of the people to rule themselves, the EU presents a veritable problem since so many decisions are taken on a supranational level where participation on a regular basis for the common citizen is even more difficult than at the national level. On the other hand, if the emphasis is placed on group communication, deliberative approaches include valuable ideas on how to bridge the dilemma of representativeness and effectiveness of European governance.

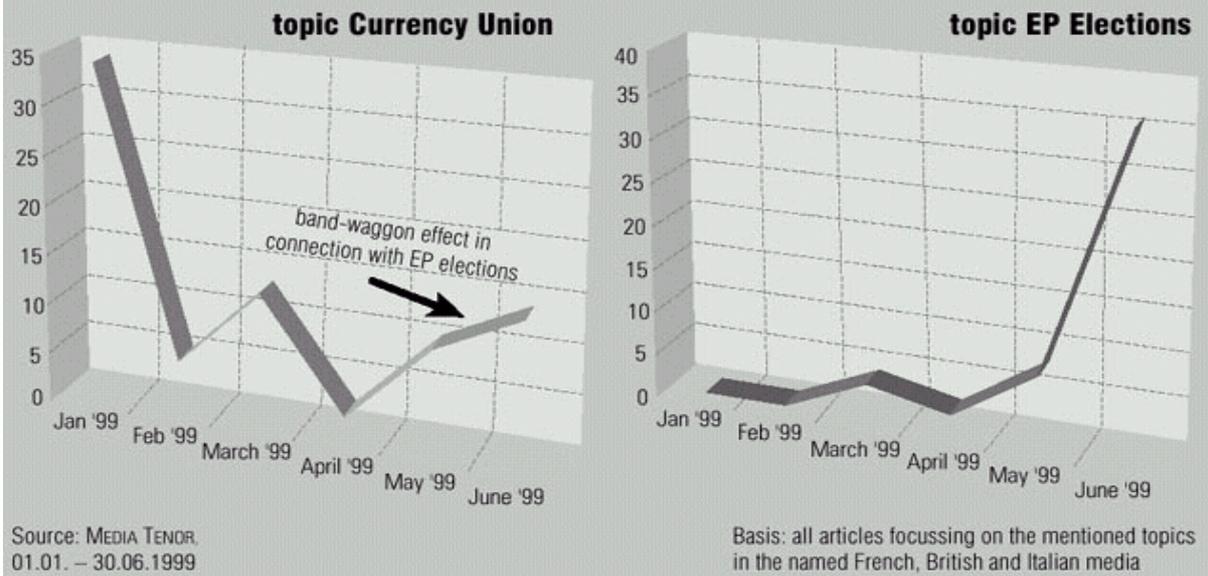
The Role of Public Discourses

The Media Tenor International Quarterly, in January 2001 analyzed the EU reporting since 1998 and showed some typical characteristics of media coverage on EU issues. According to the MT findings, the treaty of Nice “might not have been the widely expected success, but it once again confirmed the yet unbroken trend, combining further enlargement with still further political, social and economic integration.” Less than 5 percent of all news reports analyzed in the study focused on the EU, often featuring topics of no particular interest to the general public. The study pointed to four features in the reporting on the European Union:

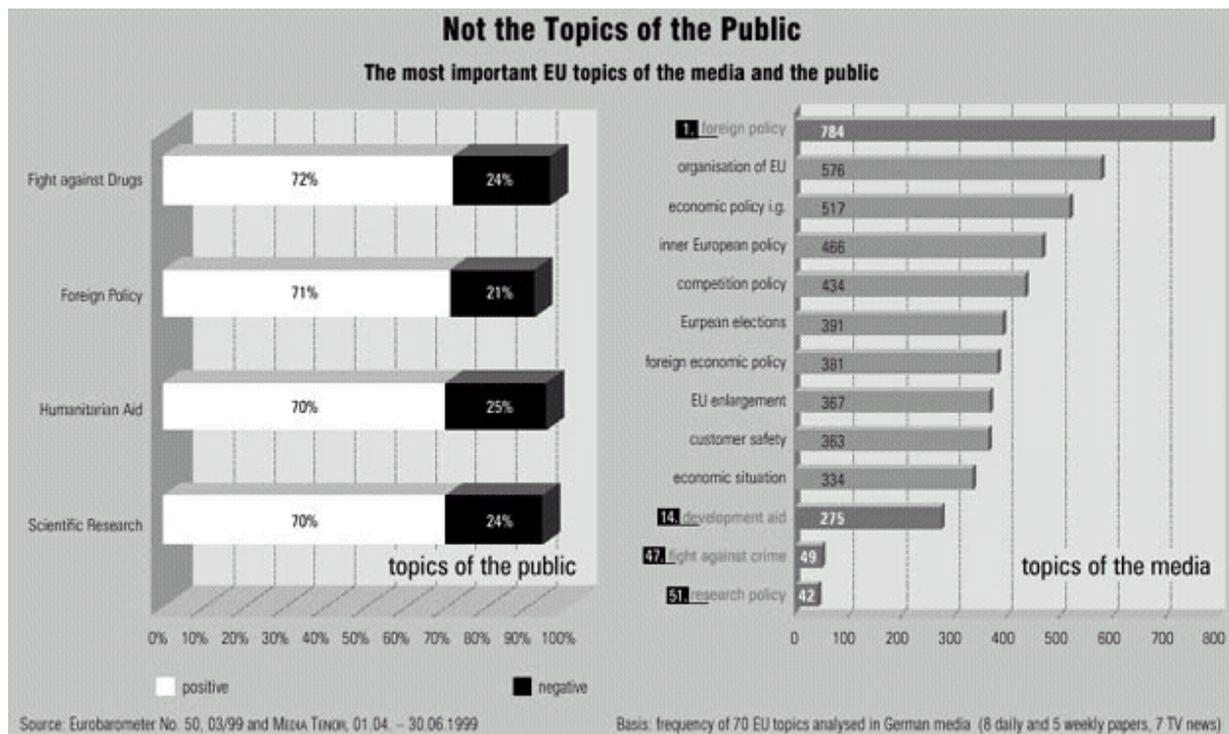
A general concentration on only one European topic a time. A result of this mono-thematic reporting is a so-called ‘band-wagon effect’: Once a topic has grasped the interest of journalists, other EU topics also receive greater attention by the media. An explanation for this might lay in the fact that contributions on the EU are not a continuous feature in most media (unlike domestic politics), so that individual events immediately redirect media interest towards the entire complex of European themes.

Band-Waggon Effect between EP Elections and Currency Union

Articles in LA STAMPA, LA LIBERATION and THE TIMES, January - June 1999

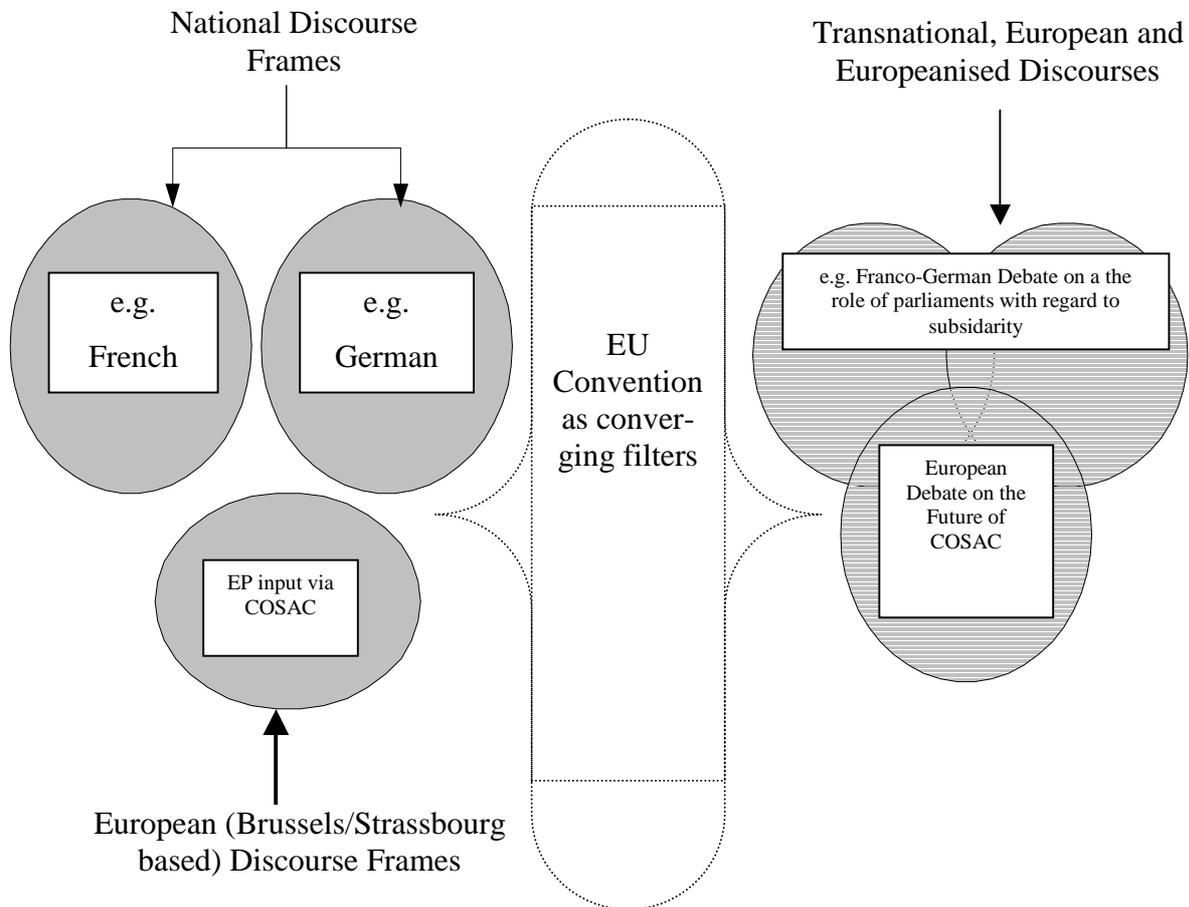


- A lack of continuity in the reporting about EU topics and personalities.
- National media report about the EU and its institutions like they would about any other international event. The EU is seen as another "foreign country" – the 16th member state. The tendency to report about the EU in terms of foreign policy is not only due to the media. Politicians of each member state and the EU itself greatly contribute to this situation. It appears to be a relative easy way to gain diplomatic glamour, international success and to document the fight for national interests. Seen from Brussels or Strasbourg, diplomatic status not only facilitates ones life, but also appears to enhance ones own importance above normal measures. Not least for these reasons it is the task of journalists to question the EU's projects most thoroughly.
- 'Scandal' is the decisive aspect for presenting an EU story. Media often neglect to focus on the impact of EU decisions on every day life.



Against these findings, the Future of Europe debate – as well as the Convention itself - might be seen as a response to address legitimacy concerns through the introduction of new opportunity structures and arenas to facilitate public debates about the EU. Hence the proponents of the Post-Nice-debate method highlight the potential for increasing the participation of civil society in the formulation of a fresh constitutional basis of the European Union. The question is to what extent the process is open and responsive to the participation of actors from different areas of civil society. Indeed, the key element of the Post-Nice-debate is the open and transparent mediatisation of its actors, deliberations and questions. The wide publicity of the process could potentially open up channels for the participation of national and sub-national actors, who either possess the resources or the clout to play a role in European policy-making networks. To the extent that the Post-Nice-debate will stimulate an intensification and convergence of public discourses, in particular across national publics, it could lead to a rise in input legitimacy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Possible Discourses on European Policy Making



The key question therefore is whether the Post-Nice process will lead to a synchronization and convergence of public discourses as a key element for a deeper discussion on prerequisites for developing the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the EU system (Scharpf 1997; Habermas 1998b; Lijpart 1999). Matrix 1 sketches possible outcomes with regards to the impact of the Post-Nice-process on public discourses. Do the debates and mediated events give enough incentives for creating or - via the media - reconstructing an European sphere of publics (Kevin and Schlesinger 2000) in which the processes and events on the EU level serve as common points of orientation both for the timing as for the substance of publicized discourses ('Grand debate Europe')? Or do we witness several national debates on different European themes such as the roles of parliaments or the logic behind a reformed hierarchy of norms without being explicitly linked on a cross-national basis by those involved ('Europeanized debates')? Or will we witness no ('Europe à huis clos') or isolated national debates without any direct feedbacks to EU events ('nationalized debates')?

Matrix: Scope of publicized debates

		At the European level	
		Strong	Weak
At the National level	Strong	A : <i>Grand debate 'Europe'</i>	B: Nationalized Debates
	Weak	C : Europeanized debates	<i>D : Europe à huis clos</i>

Content Analysis as a Research Method to explore Publicized Discourses

Content Analysis is a research technique for the systematic, quantitative and qualitative description of the manifest content of communication. In addition to the pure quantitative approach new media research methods offer a more qualitative approach with instruments for the analysis of positive and negative connotations in written texts. Content analysis is a tool for determining the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Research quantifies and analyzes the presence, meaning(s) and relationship(s) of such words and concepts, make inferences about the messages within the text(s), the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part.

The quantitative and qualitative content analysis of newspaper reports from the different European countries will not only be constructive to identify parallelisms or correlations of the European policy cycle of concern and the press reports on this policies but can also help to analyze the perception of European decisions in the different member states, which will have different expressions because of the suggested “non-neutrality” of news coverage. (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1971; Mc Combs and Shaw 1972, pp. 176-185) Therefore, media coverage of the European Union has the ability to contribute to the image of the EU as a legitimate political power and an effective political system.

The general research design (Holsti 1968, pp. 24-41) contains the following steps as points of departure for the analysis:

- Is there a parallelism or a direct correlation between the Post-Nice’s ‘real process’ on the

European level and the news coverage on the national levels in the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria and France?

- What are the main and specific differences in reporting? Do various criteria or national conditions influence a positive or negative national perception of European decisions, e.g. party-constellations, rate of inflation or level of unemployment...?

The content analysis of media requires a representative selection of news media, which reflects the European level and influences the public discourse. Therefore, the selection considers high circulation, national-wide appeal, and comparability across national lines as important elements (Hodess 1998, pp. 449-472): The content analysis incorporates news related to the European Union in selected newspapers since the Treaty of Nice in December 2000.

For the content analysis of the various newspapers' articles the comprehensive and selective identification of key terms or of combinations of key terms is indispensable. This kind of lexical coding is used to code, search and analyze documents which use as their source data the words contained in the press reports. This lexical method use computerized content analysis to generate indexes to identify segments. The identified key terms will be used for the analysis of the relevant categories (Groeben and Rustemeyer 1994, pp. 308-326, here p. 313) of the Convention process and the publicized discourses in the different countries. Additionally positive and negative connotation can be identified and described. For this analysis *NUD*IST 5* and *Text Quest* were used to construct and modify the tree-structured "Index System". With this option of being tree-structured, the index system will as a taxonomic organizer of the data indexing. The index trees can be rearranged as the understanding of the research project changes. Because of their tree-structuring, index categories can be used to handle structured questions, and cases, such as interviews and press reports.

A combination of key words could be like the following example of a tree-structured index System:

1st Level: **Political Context / Level** (European Union or Member States)

2nd Level : **Key figures** (Fischer, Jospin....)

3rd Level: **Issue** (Structure of the Union)

4th Level: **Connotation and Tone** (good, bad, ...)

Three interrelated questions are used to investigate the nature of news coverage.

- First, how have news media made visible the issue of the European Union and the Post-Nice/Convention process? Here, we concentrate on the frequency of EU news and the themes portrayed in EU coverage.
- Next, which political actors have been authorized in EU coverage? Media treatment of authority will be explored via the sources presented in EU news.
- Finally, to what extent have media commented, supported or opposed the issues at stake at a given time period? Taking into consideration both national and supra-national goals in the European sphere, where have news media place themselves on these issues? Here, media opinion on European policy making will be explored through editorials and other news commentary on EU affairs.

The content analysis of media requires a representative selection of news media, which reflects the European level and influences the public discourse. Therefore, the selection considers high circulation, national-wide appeal, intra-national representativeness with regards to political orientation and comparability across national lines as important elements (Hodess 1998: 449-472). Given this framework of inquiry, we intended to incorporate news related to the European Union in the following news media:

- France: Le Figaro, Le Monde, Liberation
- Germany: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung
- United Kingdom: The Observer, The Guardian (London), The Times (London)
- Austria: Die Presse, Der Standard

The study focused on key sequences of the Post-Nice-debate on the Future of Europe.

- The Fischer Humboldt Speech (May 2000)
- IGC Nice (12/00),
- European Council Laeken (12/01),
- Start of the Convention (3/02).

Computer-aided content analysis is particularly helpful when a large amount of textual data (covering an extended period of time) needs to be processed and the interest lies primarily in manifest rather latent content. For example, we could study the lead editorial of a particular newspaper (say, the Guardian), the party platforms before elections, or the annual "State of the Union" addresses by the US President for the topics they address and, thus, monitor changes over time.

The key terms, positive or negative connotation, etc. were selected by using CD-ROMS and internet-based databases of different newspapers, so that it became possible to catch the relevant articles and identify the inference of policy cycles and media reports in publicized opinion. We first searched for key words, phrases etc. in the selected press reports and automatically indexed the results by using a self-created index system for the data. Key terms were linked and their links explored with the data using a flexible optional tree structure for the indexing connections and non-hierarchical index structures. The text was searched with a pattern-based text search facility, so that text search could be done context-sensitively, to restrict it to documents or passages with any chosen characteristics.

Measures of association, including a concordance, which shows the relative position of words to each other in a document, cross-tabulations and correlations between individual words or word groups, sequential plots, which show the use of words and word groups over time completed the analysis.

Findings

Until the end of the Nice IGC, media coverage on the Post-Nice Process concentrated on the speeches given by Fischer, Blair and Chirac and focused on the general structure of the European Union.

For the period 5/2000-3/2001 we searched articles on the basis of the following items :

- “Avenir de l’Europe”,
- „Avenir [wildcard] Europe“
- “Future [of] Europe”,
- “Zukunft Europas”,
- “Post-Nizza”,
- “Post-Nice”.

For the period 1/2001-4/2002 we searched articles on the basis of the following items:

- “Nice/Nizza AND Post-Nice/-Nizza”,
- “Nice AND Convention/Konvent”,
- “Future of Europe/Zukunft Europas/Avenir de l’Europe AND Convention/Konvent”,
- “Convention/Konvent AND Europe/Europa/European Union/Europäische Union/Union européenne”.

To concretize our database further, we narrowed our analysis and searched for articles, which combined the words “Europa/Europe/European Union” with possible sources for news coverage (e.g.. “Europa AND Blair”, „Europe AND Schroeder“, „Europe AND Jospin“). The result was a sample of 1305 articles.

News Coverage: Quantitative distribution of all news items matching the general search criteria 5/2000-4/2002			
Newspaper	Number of articles		
FAZ	133	Germany	272
SZ	139		
Observer	79	United Kingdom	275
Guardian	90		
Times	106		
Le Monde	166	France	489
Liberation	160		
Figaro	163		
Standard	127	Austria	269
Presse	142		
Sum	1305		

For the in-depth qualitative analysis on connotations and values, we restricted this sample to articles with more than 100 words. The result was 568 reports, analysis, editorials etc. which could be analyzed further.

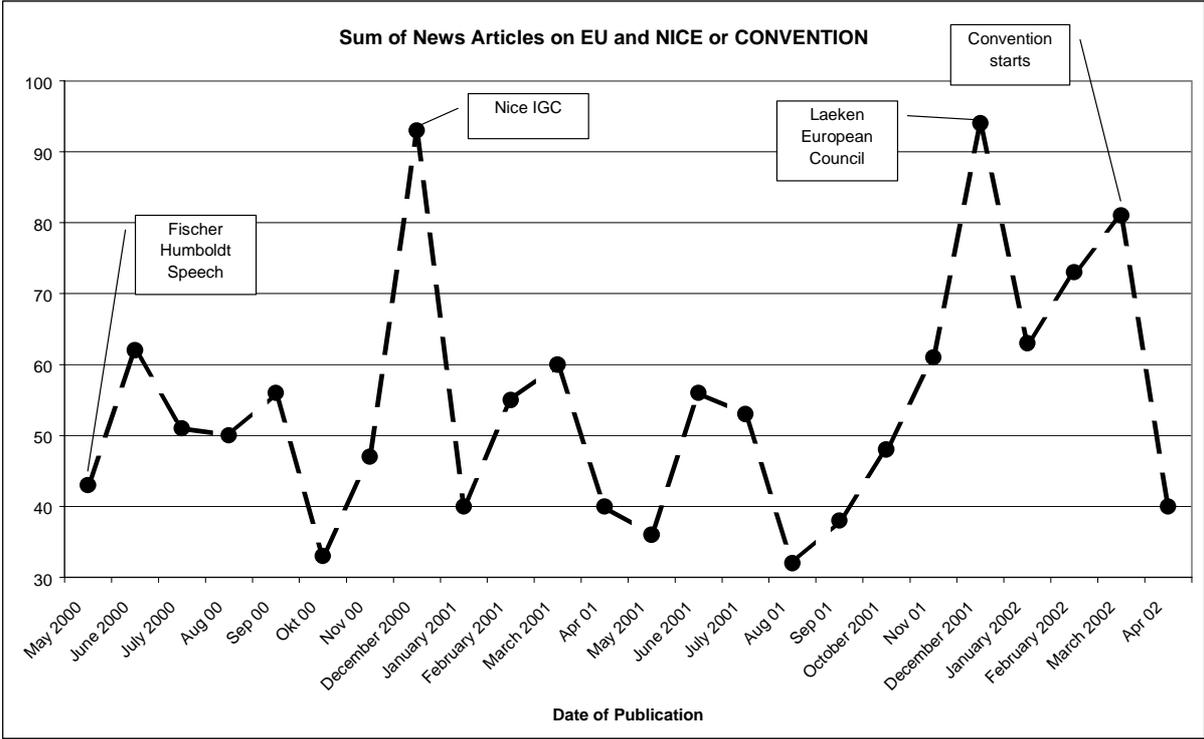
News Coverage: Quantitative distribution of news items with more than 100 words 5/2000-4/2002			
Newspaper	Number of articles		
FAZ	70	Germany	156
SZ	86		
Observer	5	United Kingdom	69
Guardian	32		
Times	32		
Le Monde	69	France	139
Liberation	24		
Figaro	46		
Standard	97	Austria	204
Presse	107		
Sum	568		

As to the quantitative analysis, we first focused on contexts and events, themes and evaluations.

Events: The Timing of News

When do the media report on the Future of Europe debate. As the following graph clearly shows, media coverage focused on key events such as the speech given by the German

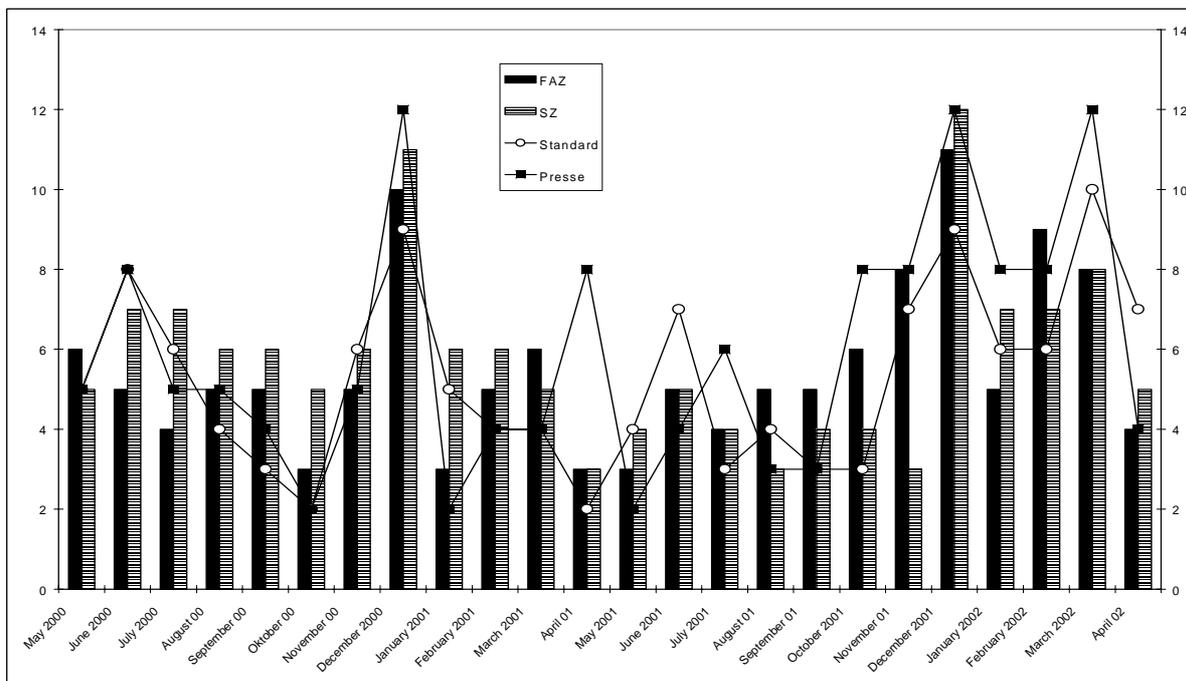
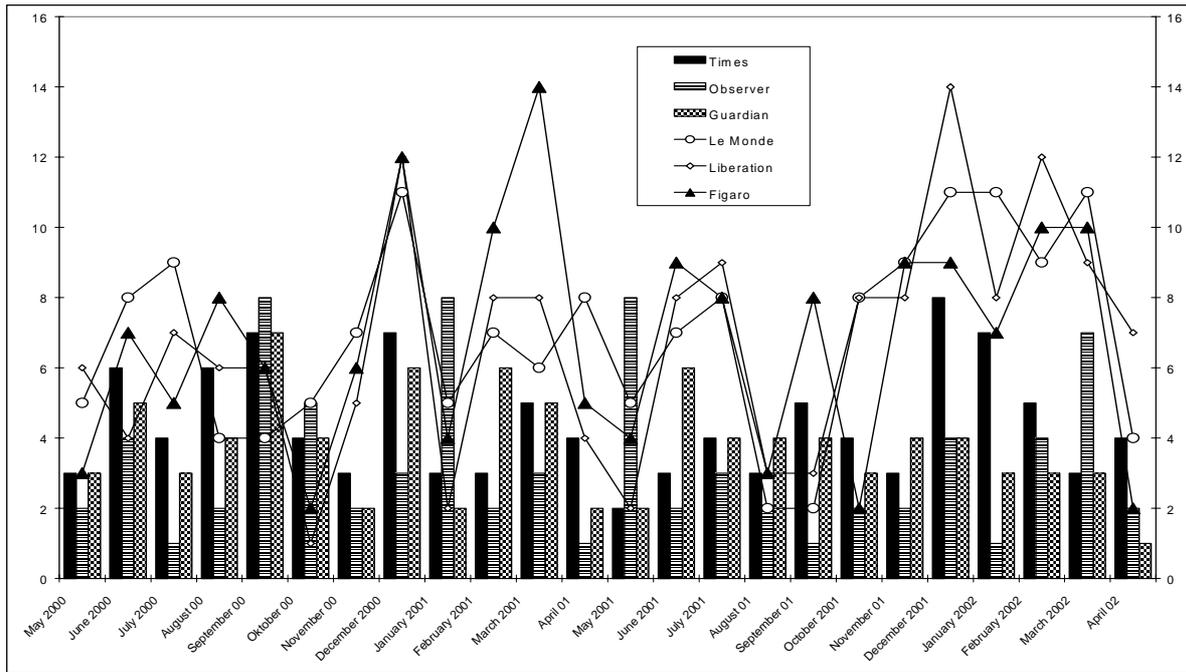
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, the Nice IGC, the Laeken Summit or the official start of the Convention. The relative originality of Fischer’s input to the Future of Europe debate is documented by the fact, that the media draw specific attention on his contribution even one month after the speech. More important, but less personalized, is the upswing from August 2001 to December 2001/January 2002. Here media attention was higher and more lasting on the Laeken Summit and the framing of the Convention’s mandate than during the periods before and after the Nice IGC.



If we focus on the different media sources, two conclusions can be drawn: First, the UK based Newspapers are less interested in the Future of Europe debate than the continental papers. Secondly, the French based papers are those which attach the highest importance to key events such as Laeken or the Nice IGC. The reasons might be found in the nature of the Future-of-Europe debate and the logic behind its organization. Hence, Tony Blair, his government as well as the vast majority of the UK parliament were rather contented with the outcome of the Nice IGC. For the UK, the rules agreed in Nice *did* establish the ultimate basis for EU enlargement and not for any further negotiation on the institutional and procedural prerequisites for an enlarged Union. The post-Fischer speech-momentum, which generated a series of speeches by the EU’s heads of state and government on the Union’s future design, did not attract the UK parliament. Accordingly, UK media did only focus on the Warsaw speech by Tony Blair, but not on the overall aftermath of the Fischer speech. For France, in

contrast, both the Fischer speech as well as the negotiations to and the outcome of the Nice treaty – largely perceived with a negative bias – were mainly understood as an incentive to debate on a new kind of European Union, new grounds for legitimacy-building, a new institutional design, new institutions and procedures etc. Note in this regard that parts of the French parliamentary and party debates before, during and after the Amsterdam and the Nice IGC were disconnected from the overall and broadly shared understanding about the nature and tasks of the these Conferences. To caricaturize: French actors – sometimes using the ‘Figaro’ as a platform and forum of the French Neo-Gaullists – proposed a permanent “Conseil européen au sommet”, a “Congrès” or a “Chambre de Subsidiarité”, while the IGC’s and the related national counterparts and -arenas discussed the incremental reform of the Council, the European Parliament or the Commission. In other words, French political actors – at least those in parliament and government - were always keen to offensively question the overall design and nature of the EU, while their colleagues in the other member states did – indirectly, without explicitly reflecting their path-dependent approaches to IGC’s – follow and accept that the IGC’s were not set to reconstruct a totally new blueprint for the Union but to repair and to revise the Union’s legal bases in a much more pragmatic way. Given that the ‘post-Fischer’ debate on the Future of Europe did induce several initiatives – speeches, parliamentary debates, bi- and trilateral contributions by governments – with regard to a general questioning of the European Union (e.g. setting a Constitution instead of building on the existing treaties, creating a new kind of two-chamber system instead of reforming the Council and the European Parliament with regard to their already existing ‘faces’ of a bicameral system, creating a European President instead of pragmatic reforms with regard to the internal and external representation and visibility of the Union...), French actors saw an opportunity to reproduce a perceived – and wished – EU-wide feeling for the total reconstruction of the EU’s legal bases and the related finalité politique. Accordingly, the French media, which traditionally allow and even encourage the reprint of entire speeches and original texts much more than the British newspapers, focused not only on new French initiatives with regard to the Post-Nice-process, but also on similar resources from other countries.

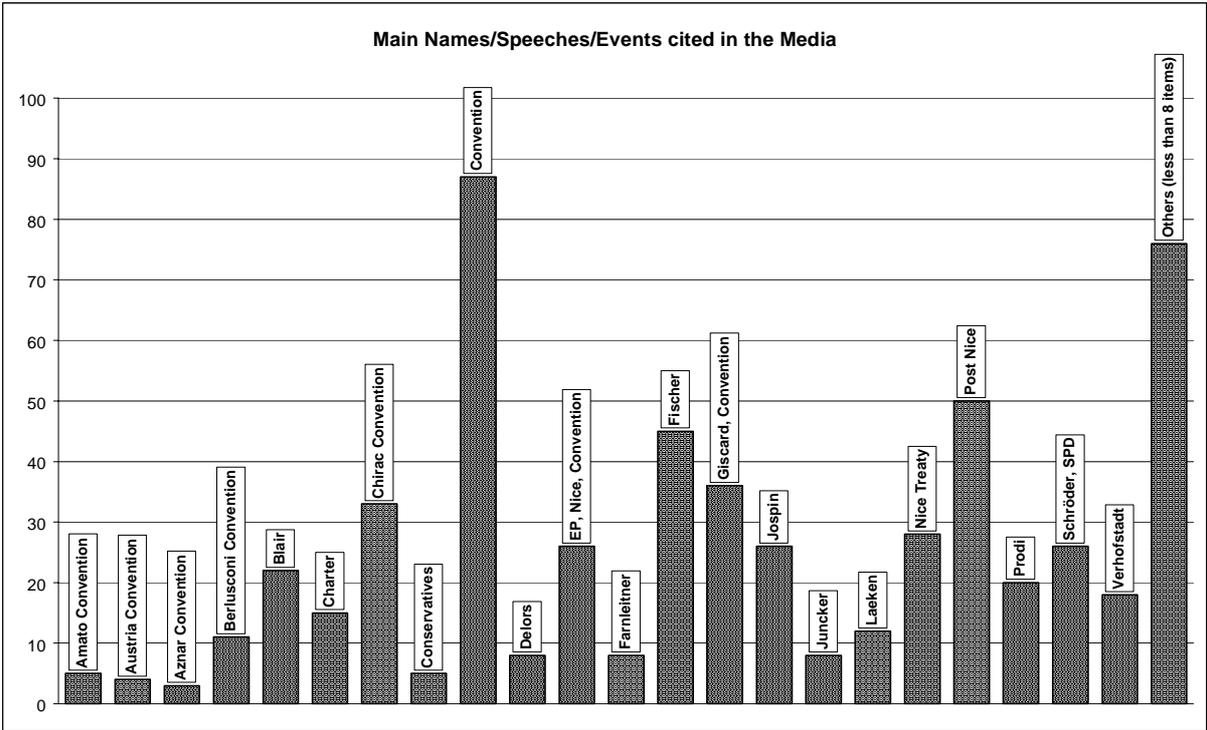
News Coverage on the Post-Nice debate in by resources



Themes: What issues are reported?

How do news media make visible the issue of the European Union and Post-Nice debate? What are the main characteristics of this news coverage? The encoded articles concentrated on a rather limited number of 'real' input, i.e. contributions offered by prime ministers, parliamentarians and presidents with regard to the debate on the future of Europe. 76 articles did not mention a specific source and related subject, but focused on the more general debate

about the EU’s reform process. The remaining articles concentrated on the speeches and contributions given by Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac, Joschka Fischer, Lionel Jospin and the draft European program of the German SPD, the Convention’s actors such as Giscard d’Estaing etc. 45 news items considered the Humboldt speech by Joschka Fischer, 26 articles the speech by Lionel Jospin, another 33 wrote on the Bundestag speech given by Jacques Chirac and his interventions during the Convention’s starting phases, 36 articles featured the role of Giscard within the Convention, and a 87 articles focused on the Convention process as such.



As to the time-related impact of these speeches to the debate on the future of the EU, we would need to work on a much wider sample of news coverage. The speeches by Blair, Fischer and Chirac were given in the early summer of 2000, and the items produced by Jospin and the SPD were issued in spring 2001. If we base our analysis on the present data set, we cannot identify any cross-national impact of the speeches in news coverage. There is one exemption: The Humboldt-speech by Fischer seems to become an accepted matrix for articles published in late 2000 and 2001. The speech thus became a common reference node for articles that focused on other speeches or documents (Table 1).

Table 1: News Coverage (5/2000-8/2001) on: General Theme/Cross Combinations

General Theme in combination with	Blair	Chirac	Fischer	Jospin	Schröder/SPD	Post-Nice	Prodi	Others
Blair	7	2	6		3			
Chirac	1	14	11	4	4		2	
Fischer	5	6	23	2	2			2
Jospin		6	6	14				
Schröder/SPD	2	4	2		8			1
Post-Nice		2	4			14		
Prodi		1	2	2			3	
Giscard	5	6	5	4				
Others								10
Total	20	41	59	26	17	14	5	13

The information provided in Table 1 needs to be read as follows (example for column 4 “Fischer”): Out of a total of 59 articles that focused on the Fischer speech as their general theme, six referred to Tony Blair’s Warsaw speech, eleven to Chirac’s Bundestag speech, six to the contributions by Lionel Jospin, only two to the Schröder/SPD initiative on the Future of Europe, four on the general topic of the post Nice debate, another two to Romano Prodi, and five articles to Giscard’s contributions.

National and European Orientations

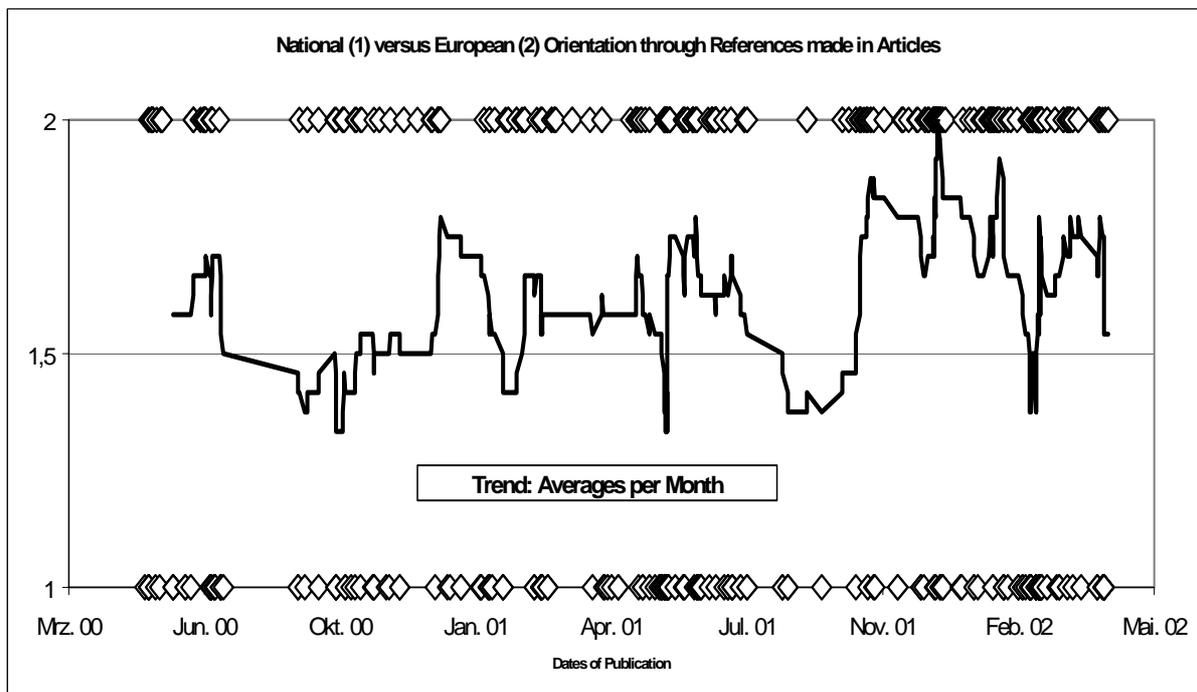
One of our research questions in relation to the issue of legitimacy through cross-national communication was to what extent the news coverage in different national media is synchronized. Do the media reconstruct only national debates or do they attempt to construct European linkages between different news items? To put the question in more concrete terms: Did the Fischer speech initiate news stories about the speech’s fallout in the country of the respective newspapers or did the media try to open the reader’s eyes for reactions outside their national arena? Of course, the qualification of a news article as a piece of work with a more national or a more European orientation is not subject to objective criteria. I have qualified an article as national, if it only focused on national debates, national contributions to the post-Nice debate, or on national reactions to a commented event, speech, message etc. if the latter rooted in the newspaper’s home country. By contrast, an article was qualified as a contribution with a European orientation, if it commented on a debate, event or speech outside the newspaper’s country, or if it reported on or reproduced views beyond the newspaper’s country.

Overall, the news items under scrutiny developed both a national and a European perspective with regard to their content on the post-Nice process and the start of the Convention. On average 35,4 % of our sample reproduced a more national, and 65,6 % a more European focus. The British “Guardian” and the “Times” rank among those newspapers with an open “national-concerns” focus. This finding does not only match for articles on speeches given by UK authors, but also for those items that relate to authors from other countries. The reason is rather simple: Given that the British newspapers largely follow the general reservations of British political actors vis-à-vis the ‘printemps constitutionnel’ on the continent, journalists and editors are not interested in mirroring the very fact of a European debate on the EU’s post-Nice future. By contrast, the Austrian “Presse” and the German “Süddeutsche Zeitung” produce a more European perspective, while the French “Le Monde” covers both national and European views. Hence, the Austrian ‘Presse’ can be characterized as the most ‘non-national’ information source in our sample.

Table 2: News Coverage (5/2000-4/2002) on: National versus European Orientation of Articles (in per cent)

Newspaper	National Orientation	European Orientation
German Newspapers	17,9	82,1
French Newspapers	44,8	55,2
Austrian Newspapers	30,8	69,2
UK Newspapers	70,9	29,1

If we look at the evolution of orientations over time, we clearly identify a trend towards the creation of more European perspectives.



National orientations dominated the periods of July 2000 to November 2000, May 2001 and the summer break of 2001. On the other hand, the periods of May 2000 to July 2000 – the direct aftermath of the Humboldt-speech by Joschka Fischer - , December 2000 to January 2001 – the period of the Nice IGC - , and the upswing towards the Laeken European Council induced more ‘European oriented’ than ‘National oriented’ news.

The question remains, why Austrian and German papers are more oriented towards ‘European’ i.e. non-German or non-Austrian news than the French media. I would suggest that the orientations largely depend on the overall orientation of newspapers in the three countries and on the sources of their reports and commenting articles. Hence, the French media – both television and the press – traditionally focus first and foremost on news that originate in their country. Europe and the EU are identified as Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, the post-Nice related news coverage in France largely depends on events, which can be related to a national context. In this regard, the Fischer, Schröder, Verhofstadt or Prodi speeches become present and commented, if the journalist is able to visualize a direct link to an event or an issue in France or an event that is mainly due to a French initiative. The result is then to report – sometimes extensively - on a German or a Belgian contribution to the Future of Europe debate in a specific – France related – context: E.g.: The Schröder/SPD-initiative for a Two-Chamber system are present and mediated in the newspapers under review. But unlike in Germany or in Austria – remember that this kind of generalization is to

be understood as a tendency – the report gets connected to a French event – the Jospin speech, the French Senate’s proposal to create a Congress etc. Of course, German newspapers – the FAZ more than the SZ – contextualise their reports on non-German issues as well. But there is a less observable tendency to wait for a national event in order to report on a non-German case. The reason might be found in the overall orientation of the media and, in comparison with France, to the smaller amount of German or – in the Austrian case – of Austrian events or contributions to the Future of Europe debate. Hence, one has to acknowledge that the French debate on the Future of Europe witnesses more original output than the German or the Austrian ones. Consequently, German and Austrian news do refer more to debates outside their countries, within the European Parliament etc.

Values, Connotations and Evaluations

Our data set concentrated on the following parameters for analyzing the issue of values given in news coverage:

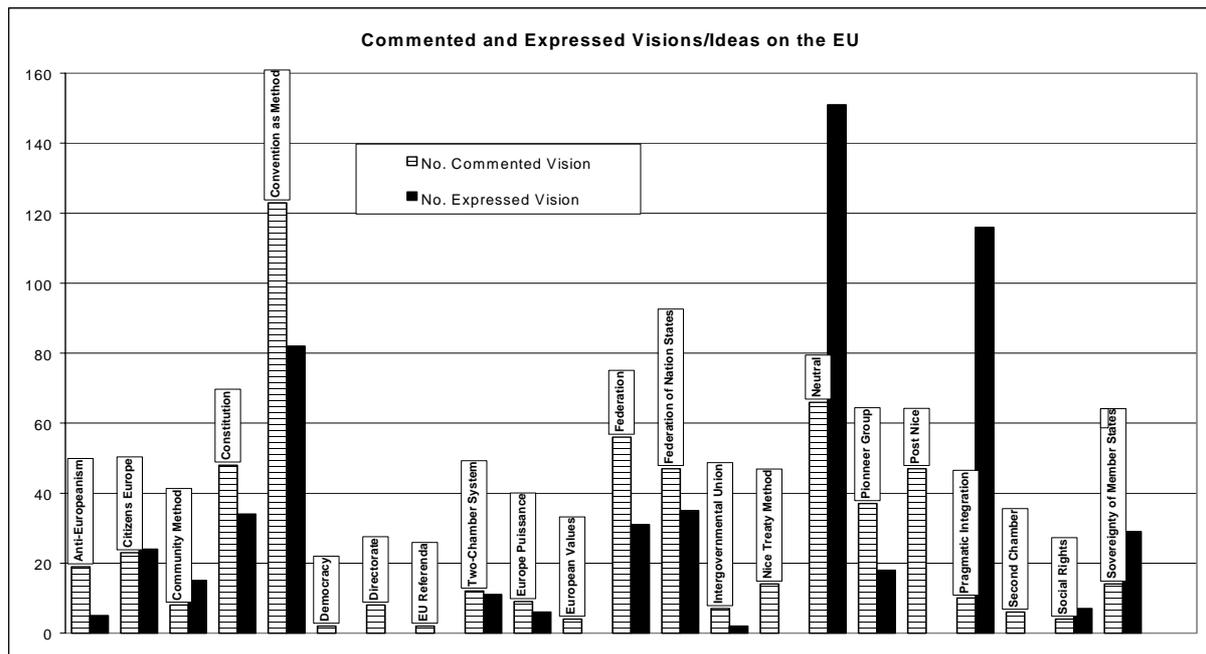
- the ‘general theme’ of the news items. Here we concentrated on two themes : the coverage of names and authors, and the debate on the post-Nice development,
- the perceived ‘vision’ or ‘model’ of the EU within what we call the commented view,
- the expressed ‘vision’ or ‘model’ of the EU within what we call the expressed view,
- the concentration of the news items on a more national or a more European dimension of the issues dealt within the articles, and
- evaluations, positive or negative connotations, and values.

Overall, the vast majority of the articles reported and commented five themes:

- the Constitution of the European Union,
- the Federation,
- the Federation of National States,
- Jacques Chirac’s Pioneer Group,
- and the Convention as a Method for steering the EU’s para-constitutional law and for democratizing the European Union’s process.

However, the directly expressed i.e. reproduced ideas by the authors of the articles did not always directly match their commented views, i.e. their own ideas with regard to the different

subjects under review: In this regard, about 40 articles, which reported on the Convention’s Method – by reproducing ‘external’ positive views on the Convention’s method - did come to another conclusion: Either the authors argued in favor of a more pragmatic view on the EU’s integration process or with regard to the stability of Member State’s interests and concerns (“Sovereignty of Member States”). Comparable differences could be identified with regard to the issue of the EU’s “federal” perspective and the “Pioneer Group”. On the other hand, journalists reported or reproduced less the idea of a “Citizens Europe” or the “Sovereignty of Member States” than they argued in favor of these ideas.



As regards the question of values transmitted through a given news item, we were interested in answers given to the following questions:

- Does the article opt for a more positive or a more negative tone on the question of a future European Constitution (Constitution)?
- Does the article opt for a more positive or a more negative tone with regard to the creation of some kind of a European two-chamber system (Tone on EP/Council Bicameralism)?
- Does the article opt for a more positive or a more negative tone with regard to the strengthening of national parliaments within the EU’s institutional structure (Tone on NP’s)?
- Does the article opt for a more positive or a more negative tone with regard to the introduction of a clear cut list of competencies (Tone on Competencies)?

We encoded the articles according to these questions as follows:

Negative tones (Negative)	-1
No tones (None)	0
Neutral tones (Neutral)	1
Positive tones (Positive)	2

Of course, the qualification of an article as ‘negative’, ‘neutral’ or ‘positive’ is subjective. We all have our own cognitive set of understandings with regard to Europe, European integration, or the EU. However, we should also bear in mind that studying Europe means getting a more precise, less affective view on the subject matter. To reduce the subjective nature of our analysis, each news item had been read by a team of three readers, which had to indicate whether the article tends to be rather negative, positive or neutral on the four subjects. Of course, the readers are biased by their proper understanding of the EU debate on the EU Constitution, or with regard to the creation of a two-chamber system of the European Parliament and the Council. On the other hand, however, the four subjects can be analyzed according to the four value categories in rather clear way. For scholars of European integration, it should be possible to identify whether an article tends to opt in favor or against the strengthening of national parliaments, or the introduction of a list of competencies etc. The three readers read and evaluated the articles independently and there was any disagreement on the individual analyses.

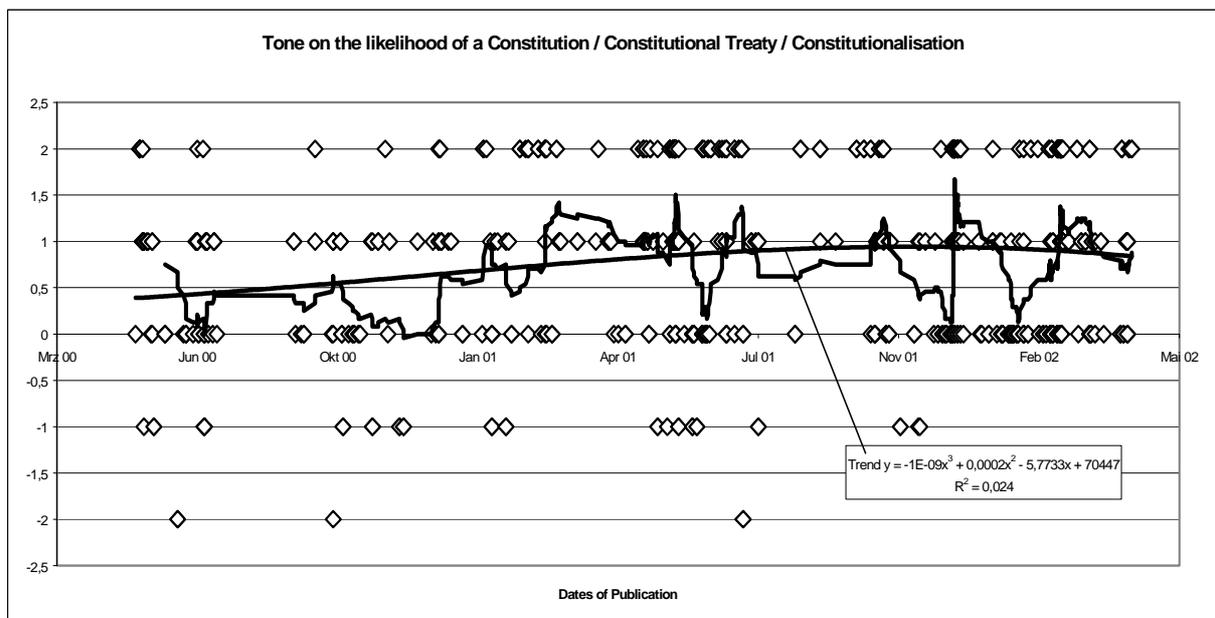
The indicators were added to give an overall Value-Index, which reflects the relative proximity of each coded media item to the ideas expressed by the different ‘issue-producers’ (speakers etc.). Relatively high numbers indicate the proximity to views expressed in the Jospin-speech and the SPD-Schröder-paper (opting for some kind of an EU Constitution, which establishes a Two-Chamber System, tends to oppose the idea of a Chamber of national parliaments and is less favorable to the idea of a list of competencies); relatively low numbers indicate a proximity to views expressed in the speeches given by Blair and Chirac (opting against the EU Constitution and the creation of a Two-Chamber System, but tends to create more formal powers for national parliaments and for a clear cut list of competencies). The index was calculated as follows:

Value Index pos. $\Sigma =$

$$\text{Value (a}^{\text{Constitution}}) + \text{Value (b}^{\text{Bicameralism}}) - (\text{Value c}^{\text{NP}}) - (\text{Value d}^{\text{Competencies}}).$$

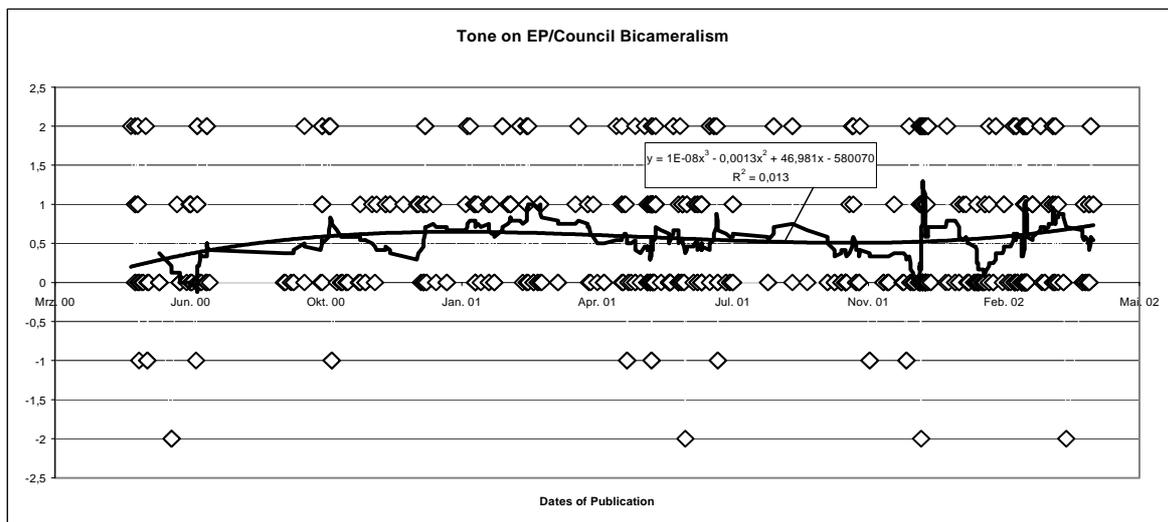
Of course, the Value Index implies a subjective assumption, which does not necessarily correspond to the actual – 2003 – evaluations of the ‘theme-producers’ regarding the different themes. Hence, during the Convention, Tony Blair agreed on the principle of a European Constitution but remained rather negative with regard to the issue of the EP/Council-Bicameralism. Instead, he still believes that democracy should be strengthened by providing national parliaments a more formal role within the EU’s institutional system. However, the Value Index should not to be understood as a tool which encompasses (a.) all cases of evaluations and basic understandings and (b.) the overall period until May 2003. Instead, the Index is to be understood as an indication of media interpretations during a defined time frame.

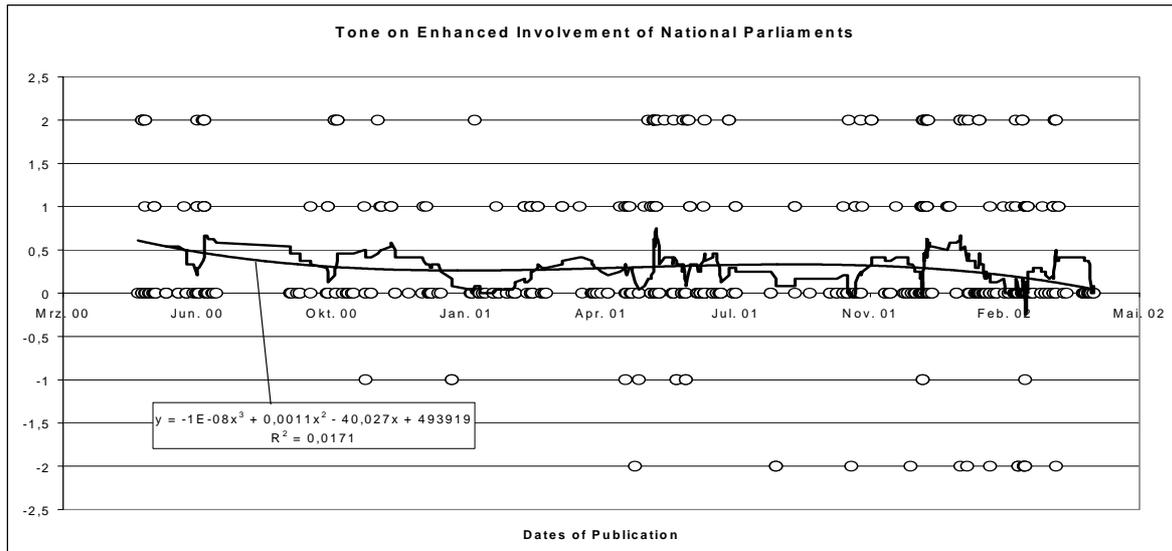
As regards the evaluations and positive connotations in view of the likelihood to create a European Constitution, some 15% of the news coverage published in the context of the Fischer speech and the SPD/Schröder paper was rather positive. The relative tone on the likeliness of a EU Constitution increased from December 2001 to March 2001. It then fell back to +/- 0,5 for the period from June 2001 to October 2001, increased sharply during the month of the Laeken summit and towards the setting up of the Convention. However, the overall majority of news items remained rather neutral.



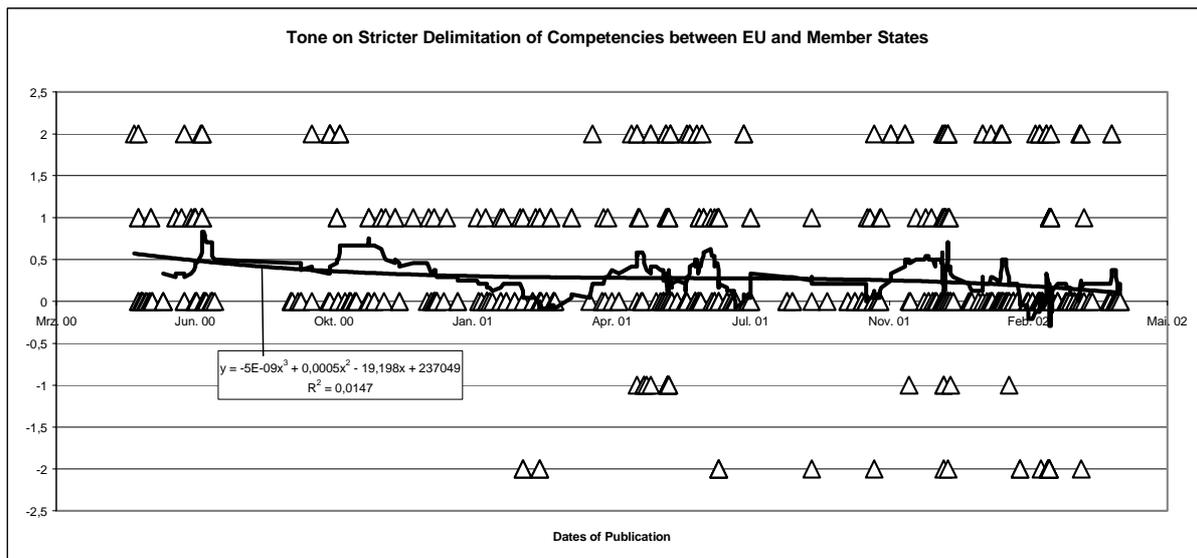
Similarly, the majority of news items reflected rather positive tones on the question whether Europe needs a bicameral – two chamber – system. Concomitantly, the majority of news

items was rather neutral or negative on the strengthening of the role of national parliaments. It therefore seems that the vast majority of news reports remain on the side of the journal's and the 'real world's own paths of the last 20 years. Hence, the incremental development of the EP/Council relationship into some kind of a bicameral system is not a new information for journalists. Since the Single European Act (1986/87), journalists as well as other interested observers of the EU's para-constitutional process witness a slow but constant evolution of the European Parliament into the Council's competencies as a legislative authority. Accordingly, it would be much more surprising if a majority of news items would suggest the abolition of a trend that is present in – and may therefore be reconstructed by looking at - the archives of each newspaper. As to the issue of national parliaments, only the UK media and the French Figaro issued news items that openly favored the creation of a Congress of national parliaments, a Chamber of Subsidiarity (composed by MP's to execute some kind of a watchdog exercise vis-à-vis the Commission) etc. Clearly, these newspapers indirectly reflect the overall views of their sources. And given that both the Guardian and the Figaro have to be qualified as newspapers that also serve as an open platform for the governments (the Guardian is identified as 'near to Labour' while the Figaro openly profits from its relatively good relationship with the Neo-Gaullists in France), the journalist of these papers do also try to spread the views of 'their' political families.

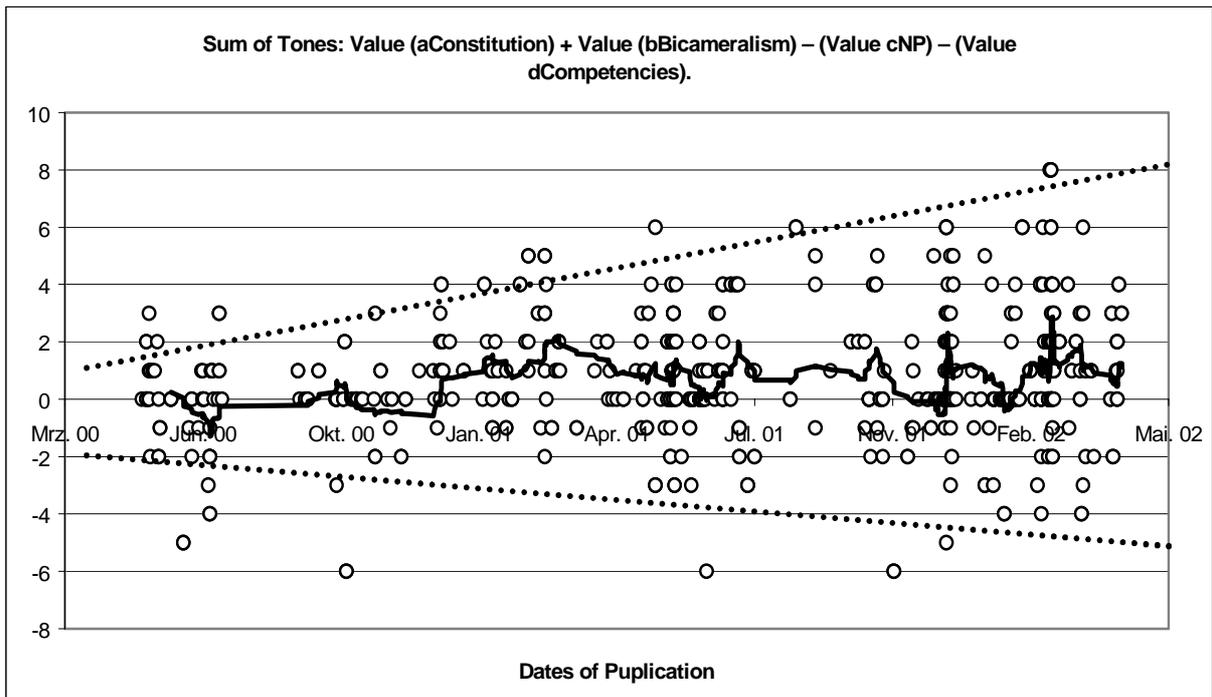




Interestingly, the question on the future repartition of competencies did not attract the news. This is all the more important for the German debate about this issue, since it did even not initiate a wider germanophone coverage in the media.



If we combine these results towards an overall Value-index, we can identify a trend towards an extension of the range of constitutional/institutional ideas over time. Whereas the Value index remained between -2 and $+4$ during the first phase of the speeches given by Fischer, Blair and Chirac in 2000, it raised towards a range between -3 and $+6$ during the second phase of spring 2001 and towards a spread between -4 and $+8$ towards for the period of the Laeken European Council towards the start of the Convention.



Which Europe is relevant?

How can we explain this extension towards a certain 'flexibility' with regard to the expression of values, related ideas and models?

1. The reporting authors orient the crucial points of the post-Nice debate according to their perceived readership at more prominent politicians, without ignoring however new aspects in the debate. Actually not only the spread of mediated views on the EU's future, but the range of the 'real' European Union 2004-ideas increased over time.
2. The proposals of Jospin, Schröder, the SPD and Giscard caused obviously more differentiated evaluations as the contributions to the Future of Europe debate by Fischer, Chirac and Blair. This is due to the more concrete and more differentiated reform suggestions of the 2001 speeches. Even if the Berlin/2000-ideas of Joschka Fischer were more that easy to understand and to put into a clear architecture for the EU's institutions, his speech was mainly perceived as a proposal for a European Federation. The context of the speech was the negotiation of the Nice Treaty with several agendas on rather complex and technical issues (weighting of votes in the Council, scope of application of QMV etc.). Given this framework, the Fischer speech could give the impression that there is something more easy to understand – the plea for a Constitution, a Federation etc. For journalists, the Fischer speech thus created a new momentum within the too complex debate about the Nice negotiations. Hence, it induced reports and evaluations along an ideal pro/anti-federation scale. On the other hand, the later – 2001 - speeches of Jospin and the suggestions of the SPD party executive committee attracted the journalists to report on and to formulate evaluations regarding the institutional structure of the EU (two-chamber system with the Commission as some kind of a government versus the advancement of the European Union on the basis of its present inter-institutional structure). Given the overall time-frame of the Post-Nice debate, the potential for interpretations of these speeches was more widespread than during the May/June-2000 phase. Hence, while some German, Austrian, and to some limited extend French journalists made references to the initial – framing – speeches by Fischer, Blair and Chirac, some of their colleagues directly focused on only one or two of the substantive issues of the new speeches and ignored the 'early simplicity' provided by the 2000 speeches. Consequently, the 'map' of

reported – reconstructed – ideas on the Future of the EU got marked by more and more roads, alleys, smaller lanes.

3. The rapid increase of the ‘raw material’ for the newspapers, i.e. the acceleration and substantial differentiation of ideas with regard to the future design of the EU, induced not only an increasing range of reports and related evaluations, but also an obviously growing skepticism of the authors concerning these different EU concepts. Thus the comparison between the reported concepts and the expressed views on these ideas indicates a growing concern of journalists with regard to the simple ‘translation’ of the views formulated by the post-Nice-authors. This becomes obvious with regard to contributions, which deal with the concept of the federation of nation states (French debate contributions, partly also SPD/Schröder), as well as with regard to contributions, which concentrate on the concept of an intensified co-operation among some Member States (creation of a ‘Gravitationszentrum’/Pioneer Group). Both ideas have attracted the actors and academic observers of the Post-Nice debate to a considerable extent: Both ideas can be read as a proposal for an “agreement not to disagree” with regard to institutional reform. The idea behind is a Compromise by addition, some kind of juxtaposition of elements from each of these two traditional extreme versions on the EU’s future – one federal, the other intergovernmental. Hence, the views defended by members of government and parliament in relation to the idea of a federation of nation states do not simply correspond to the “federal model” on the one side or to the “intergovernmental model” on the opposite side. Admittedly, this kind of ideal Compromise by addition proposes elements which do serve as a basis for the ‘real’ proceedings in the Convention. However, these elements do not facilitate an interpretation entailing a precise overall vision on the future relations between the EU’s institutions. Consequently, and given that journalists are generally interested – and asked – to reduce complexity, one can understand that they react rather critically vis-à-vis incoming news which does not fit into the already established mind-maps on the EU’s reform debate.

Overall, the post-Nice-debate is documented in and relevant for the examined media. Even the relatively small sample of articles with more than 100 words points on a large interest of the media to pursue and report on the current debate. Since the personalization of the news items is relatively high – the majority of texts is based on speeches given by a politician on the future of Europe - the news are suitable for reader-friendly comments and polarization. Debate

contributions issued by institutions - resolutions of the EP, consultation results of national parliament etc. – are hardly taken up. To a large extent the media concentrate on relevant concepts regarding ‘more or less Europe’, ‘more or less European Statehood’. These informations and comments can be transferred in a rather simplistic way to the anticipated thinking of the readers. The relative simplicity of the topic decreases nevertheless over time, as the sources of news coverage produce more and more concrete details for the development of the European Union. Moreover, the sample indicates that above all British media appear as some kind of a ‘translation device’ of British Government conceptions on the future of the EU. In contrast, the German and Austrian media seem to establish an aversion in relation to a purely national oriented reporting, and the French press switches between national and European aspects to the topic.

The most important conclusion of our empirical analysis can be drawn with regard to the issue of the EU’s communication deficit. We could identify a Europeanized media system.

Matrix: Scope of publicized debates

At the European level			
At the National level		Strong	Weak
	Strong	<i>A : Grand debate ‘Europe’</i>	B: Nationalized Debates
	Weak	C: Europeanized debates	<i>D: Europe à huis clos</i>

The key question was whether the Post-Nice process leads to a synchronization and convergence of public discourses as a key element for developing the legitimacy and of the EU system through an open, transnational communication process (Habermas 1998b). The Post-Nice debates provide incentives for reconstructing an European sphere of publics (Kevin and Schlesinger 2000) in which the ‘real’ discursive processes and events on the EU level serve as common points of orientation for the timing of publicized discourses. We witness national debates on European themes such as future institutional architecture of the Union or the logic behind a bicephal structure of the EU’s governing bodies. The media texts are not explicitly linked on a cross-national basis by the newspapers editors or authors. However, the mediated Post-Nice debate is

not isolated into four substantially different national debates. The evidence on the timing of themes clearly suggests a specific kind of convergence of issues, while the media do not tend to explicitly establish a reciprocity of their communication – there is no direct linkage between the mediated discourse with regard to a specific Post-Nice event in country A and the related discourse in country B. The sources or reasons for writing an articles are converging, but journalists do not refer to the fact of that convergence.