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POLITICISATION, DEMOCRATISATION AND EU IDENTITY

NATIONAL EU DISCOURSES IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

Claudia Wiesner



“The volume develops a sophisticated analysis of the partly contradictory processes of politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation in the EU. It provides a new research perspective to the discourses related to the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005, showing how national discourses shape European identity. It is a must read to anyone interested in EU politics and the democratisation of the EU.”

Niilo Kauppi, *University of Helsinki and CNRS*

“Wiesner’s historically informed and theoretically stimulating account of European identity construction has a good potential to advance to a new master framework for the study of European integration and its intrinsic relationship to state and democracy transformation in Europe and beyond. Drawing principally on case studies from France and Germany, the book argues for a multi-level analysis of European identity formation that unites studies on political mobilisation and politicisation of the EU in the member states with studies of democratisation and constitutionalisation of EU institutions and decision-making. Despite recent backsliding such as the case of Brexit or the salience of Euroscepticism, such a longitudinal analysis is helpful to outline the contours of a new type of political entity, where micro-dynamics of bottom-up mobilisation in support and opposition of European integration meet with macro-dynamics of democratic identity formation.”

Hans-Jörg Trezn, *Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*



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Politicisation, Democratisation and EU Identity

This book makes a theoretical, conceptual and empirical contribution to the study of EU politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation. In particular it examines the ways the five following questions are related to one another: What is it that unites the European Union as a polity? Why is it necessary to democratise the EU? Can EU politicisation help with democratising the EU? Why do EU citizens in referenda seemingly vote against the EU? And how can a European identity develop?

To tackle these questions, it discusses the results of a thorough comparative analysis of two prototypical cases – namely French and German national EU discourses and in particular the discourses on the Treaty on a Constitution for Europe (TCE) in 2005 – in relation to more current events such as Brexit and the French elections of 2022. The book thus develops key concepts and theoretical models and delivers profound findings on EU democratisation, identity, politicisation and contestation and their interrelations.

This book will be of key interest to scholars and students of European Union studies/politics, democratic theory, discourse analysis and more broadly to comparative politics.

Claudia Wiesner is Jean Monnet Chair and Professor of Political Science at Fulda University of Applied Sciences, as well as Adjunct Professor in Political Science at Jyväskylä University (Finland).

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Politicisation, Democratisation and EU Identity

National EU Discourses in
Germany and France

Claudia Wiesner



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To Dana and Lasse, once more



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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is the main outcome of my academic work in the fields of democracy, politicisation and identity in and of the European Union (EU). The question of how to conceptualise democracy in the EU, i.e., which concepts are to be used to theorise and empirically study it, has been a key research interest for me since I started my PhD on citizenship and democracy in the EU. This work on the concept and practice of an EU demos and EU citizenship (Wiesner 2007) was followed by theoretical, conceptual and empirical work on European identity that is largely reflected in this volume. The empirical part of the study is based on the work done for my Habilitation thesis (Wiesner 2014). In my Marie Curie fellowship research project “Conceptualizing representative Democracy in the EU polity by re-thinking classical key conceptual clusters for the EU multi-Level polity” (EUPOLCON) which I carried out at the University of Jyväskylä (2010–2014), I then studied the key conceptual clusters of representative democracy with regard to the European Union: *parliament-representation-legislature*, *citizens-subjects-people-sovereign-electorate-demos*, and *government-executive* (Wiesner 2019a). Kari Palonen, who incited me to apply for the Marie Curie fellowship and hosted it, has been a major source of intellectual exchange and inspiration in all this, and also in the following years. The most recent concept that I reflected on is politicisation. I started thinking about it in the context of the Finnish Distinguished Professorship Project “Transformations of Concepts and Institutions in the European Polity” (TRACE; 2015–2019) led by Niilo Kauppi that I was a member of. The perspective on politics as an action that has shaped my approach to politicisation has developed during this collaboration, especially in a joint monograph I wrote with Kari Palonen and Taru Haapala (Wiesner, Haapala, and Palonen 2017). Together with both Niilo Kauppi and Kari Palonen, I also did several collaborative publications on the topic of politicisation (Kauppi, Palonen, and Wiesner 2016; Kauppi and Wiesner 2018). In February 2018, during my acting professorship at the University of Hamburg, I organised an international workshop on “Rethinking the Concept of Politicisation” that was co-funded by the Centre for Sustainable Society Research (CSS) at Hamburg University and the TRACE Project. Results were published as “Critical Exchanges” in the *Journal Contemporary Political Theory* (Wiesner 2019b) and in the volume “Rethinking Politicisation in Politics, Sociology and International

Relations” (Wiesner 2021). This volume was finalised after I took on a position as a full professor of Political Science at Fulda University of Applied Sciences.

My conceptual work has also benefitted greatly from the discussions during various research stays as a Visiting Fellow: at the Minda de Gunzburg Centre for European Studies (CES) at Harvard University in spring 2019, at Deutsches Haus at New York University in spring 2020 and at the Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies at the EUI in Florence in spring 2022. I would like to thank the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation which funded my Visiting Fellowship at the Minda de Gunzburg Centre, Harvard University, in spring 2019 with a grant on “EU multi-level democracy in crisis mode”. Last but not least, discussions and presentations at a number of conferences and panels contributed to developing the concepts and ideas treated in this book, namely the CES conference in Madrid in 2019 and the ECPR General Conferences 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The events of the “OpenEUDebate” Jean Monnet Network (2018–2022) led by Elena García Guitián and Luis Bouza (Autonomous University Madrid) incited two more publications on politicisation (Wiesner 2022, 2023).

In preparing and finalising the manuscript, I received support from three reviewers, my editor and the team at Routledge, Andrew Taylor and Meghan Flood. Andy Tarrant translated the German language findings from my Habilitation thesis. Zhylien Kaja and Pauline Woods have been invaluable in overseeing the manuscript finalisation. Last but not least I dedicate the book to two persons who have been accompanying my conceptual work most of the time, fittingly describing my profession as “she puts lines into her own texts”: Dana and Lasse. Thanks again to all the people mentioned for inspiring discussions, help and comments!

Fulda and Frankfurt, May 2023

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Abbreviations

AfD	<i>Alternative für Deutschland</i>
AN	<i>Assemblée Nationale</i>
ATTAC	<i>Association pour une taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens</i>
BVG	<i>Bundesverfassungsgericht</i>
CDU	<i>Christlich-Demokratische Union</i>
CFDT	<i>Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail</i>
CFE-CGC	<i>Confédération Française de l'Encadrement - Confédération Générale des Cadres</i>
CFSP	<i>The Common Foreign and Security Policy</i>
CFTC	<i>Confédération Française des Travailleurs</i>
CGT	<i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i>
CSA	<i>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel</i>
CSU	<i>Christlich-Soziale Union</i>
DGB	<i>Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i>
DLR	<i>Débout la République (DLR)</i>
EC	<i>European Council and European Community</i>
ECB	<i>European Central Bank</i>
EEC	<i>European Economic Community</i>
EMU	<i>Economic and Monetary Union</i>
EP	<i>European Parliament</i>
ESCS	<i>the European Coal and Steel Community</i>
ESM	<i>European Stability Mechanism</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
FDP	<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i>
FN	<i>Front National</i>
FO	<i>Force Ouvrière</i>
FRS	<i>Forum des Républicains Sociaux</i>
FSU	<i>Fédération Syndicale Unitaire</i>
GDF	<i>Gaz de France</i>
LCR	<i>Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire</i>
LO	<i>Lutte Ouvrière</i>
MEDEF	<i>Mouvement des Entreprises de France</i>

MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MNR	<i>Mouvement National Républicain</i>
MPF	<i>Mouvement pour la France</i>
MRC	<i>Mouvement Républicain et Citoyen</i>
NDG	Non de Gauche
NHS	<i>National Health Service</i>
NPS	<i>Nouveau Parti Socialiste</i>
NUPES	<i>Nouvelle union populaire écologique et sociale</i>
PC/PCF	<i>Parti Communiste (Français)</i>
PDS	<i>Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus</i>
PES	Party of European Socialists
PRG	<i>Parti Radical de Gauche</i>
PS	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>
PT	<i>Parti des Travailleurs</i>
RIG	<i>Référendum d'Initiative Gouvernementale</i>
RPF (1)	<i>Rassemblement du Peuple Français</i>
RPF (2)	<i>Rassemblement pour la France</i>
RPR	<i>Rassemblement pour la République (1976–2002)</i>
SNES	<i>Syndicat National des Enseignements de 2d Degré</i>
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>
SUD	<i>Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques</i>
TCE	<i>Treaty on a Constitution for Europe</i>
UDF	<i>Union pour la Démocratie Française</i>
UKIP	<i>United Kingdom Independence Party</i>
UMP	<i>Union pour un Mouvement Populaire</i>
UNEF	<i>Union Nationale des Étudiants de France</i>
UNSA	<i>Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes</i>



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1 Politicisation, Democratisation, European Identity, and National EU Discourses

What is it that unites the European Union as a polity? Why is it necessary to democratise the EU? Can increasing EU politicisation help democratise the EU? Will it put EU integration in danger? Why do EU citizens in referenda sometimes seemingly vote against the EU? And how can a European identity develop? To tackle these and related questions, this book makes a theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contribution to the study of EU politicisation, democratisation, identity formation, and the ways these three are related to one another. More concretely, on the basis of a comparative analysis of the French and the German national EU discourses on the Treaty on a Constitution for Europe (TCE) in 2005, it delivers profound empirical results and develops concepts and theses on EU identity formation, democratisation, and politicisation. To do so, the study interrelates the formation of theories and concepts and the different steps of the empirical analysis.

European identity, this is the book's leading thesis, can be constructed via national EU discourses, among other ways. The guiding research question, *in what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as a means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?*, arises from a democratic theory-led approach to the role of collective democratic identity in the EU. The possibilities for and limits of democratising the EU are linked to the formation of a "European identity" insofar as democracy – regardless of whether one takes a republican, a communitarian, or a liberal model as a basis – must, from a normative point of view, consist not only of electoral and civil rights but also of democratic practice, which is based on a demos that identifies itself as such.

On this basis, the social construction of European identity and its intersection with the politicisation and democratisation of the EU is empirically studied via two decisive national EU discourses. The French discourse related to the referendum on the TCE in spring 2005 will be analysed in comparison to the German discourse on the ratification of the TCE in the same period. It is studied which meanings these two national EU discourses ascribed to the EU, the extent to which they can actually contribute to constructing European identity, and which role is played by national contexts (political systems, political parties, citizens' attitudes, national concepts of identity, previous discourses about Europe). The politicising effects of the two discourses and their intersection with the democratisation of the EU and the formation of a European identity will also be analysed in comparison. On this

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2 *Politicisation, Democratisation, European Identity*

basis, conclusions, models, and theses on EU identity formation, democratisation, and politicisation, as well as their interrelations, are developed and presented. The book thus covers a wide theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and empirical field ranging from normative political theory over concept formation, methodological reflection, and development to substantive empirical findings and back.

1.1 **Conceptualising Politicisation**

The concept of *politicisation* is increasingly used and discussed in current theoretical and empirical research on democracy more generally and the European Union more particularly. But it is often left unclear what exactly is meant and understood as politicisation, how politicisation is respectively theorised, conceptualised, and operationalised, and what are the chances and limitations linked to different respective definitions and understandings of politicisation (on the following, see in detail Wiesner 2019b, 2021a, 2021b). The state of the art of the academic debate also shows a separation into different subfields – and this means: into separate and often disconnected epistemic communities. Politicisation is discussed not only in EU Studies and International Relations but also in Political Theory, Comparative Politics, and Political Sociology. There is a need to connect these perspectives in the conceptualisation and analysis of politicisation (see the contributions in Wiesner 2021d).

Therefore, I will try to systematise the theoretical background and the operationalisation of politicisation by summing up key points that are related to understanding and using politicisation as a theoretical and empirical concept. The following four questions occur when conceptualising politicisation:

- 1 *Which definition of politics does the conceptualisation of politicisation relate to?* As a basic principle, politicisation refers to public debates, discourses, and contestations of issues that are considered to be of interest to a demos or the general public (Wiesner 2021b). In order to conceptualise politicisation, its relation to the concept of politics is crucial. Concretely, politics can respectively be understood as action, conflict, sphere, field, arena, and system. Even implicit usage of different definitions of politics leads to different understandings of politicisation (see in detail Wiesner 2021c). Hence a key difference between the various conceptualisations of politicisation concerns the question of whether in the respective understanding of politics, that is, the (implicit) theoretical basis, emphasis is put on (a) an activity oriented approach to politics, seeing it as action or conflict, or (b) seeing politics as a sphere, system, or field and hence giving it a spatial connotation. Accordingly, politicisation can be understood rather as action or conflict – or rather as the fact that an issue appears in the political sphere, system, or arena. These perspectives are albeit not to be understood in a simple either-or opposition (see the contributions in Wiesner 2021d). Politics as action and/or conflict can take place in the political system (i.e., within institutions and related to parties) and hence in a sphere or field of politics.

I thus understand politics as action that can take place both in the political system and outside of it, and I will use the following definition of politicisation

that is a joint punchline of the perspectives just named: *politicisation means to mark something (an issue) as collectively relevant and as an object of politics and hence as debatable or contested* (Wiesner 2021b, 268).

- 2 *The who, where, and what of politicisation*: who can politicise? What is the object of politicisation? What are the spaces, spheres, or arenas in which politicisation takes place? What are, accordingly, the relevant dimensions, actors, issues, objects, addressees, and areas of politicisation to be studied? The answers to the first question above – which understanding of politics is used in conceptualising politicisation – are directly related to the respective actorship, issues, and locations of politicisation. Many current contributions in politicisation research focus on actors and issues in the classical political system (parties and institutions) and the mass media, whereas it is proposed in this book that the focus of analysis needs to be drawn more widely, including civil society actors and contestations. As the empirical part of the book will underline, especially the French referendum discourse in 2005 showed clearly that politicising actions of protest movements, civil society actors, and individual citizens had a decisive impact on events and decisions in the core of the political system – namely, they initiated an opinion formation process that led to the rejection of the TCE.
- 3 *What is empirically studied when analysing politicisation?* The approaches and dimensions of the empirical study of politicisation, again, depend on the answer to the two questions above. An action-oriented perspective on politicisation claims for other methods and techniques than a more static systems perspective. But, even if the field of empirical studies on politicisation is broad, it is not yet systematically linked to the theoretical and conceptual questions just raised. Empirical research is under-theorised, not least because the debates in the different subfields are disconnected. For instance, while it is a standard in Political Theory to discuss the history of ideas and different concepts of politics, it is not in empirical research. This gap in theoretical and conceptual reflection has contributed to the empirical-analytical conceptions of politicisation using a restrained set of theories and concepts of politics and politicisation, and also a limited set of methods. Most of the empirical accounts on EU politicisation so far study politicisation in and of the classical political system, i.e., parties and institutions, with methods that constitute an established set in Comparative Politics and European Studies. They rely on quantitative analyses, processes being reflected via time series, and standard indicators being the salience of an issue, as well as increases of actor involvement and in party-political polarisation (see, e.g., Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016; for a discussion, see Kauppi and Wiesner 2018).

Other contributions in the politicisation literature go beyond an analytical focus on system-based quantitative indicators, including various forms of communication and political action (see, e.g., Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2015; Gheyle 2019; Hurrelmann, Gora, and Wagner 2015 and the contributions in Haapala and Oleart 2022; Wiesner 2021d). It is proposed here that such a broader set of methods and foci of analysis, including micropolitical, speech-act, and action-oriented perspectives, is useful in politicisation research. Such an approach is applied in the comparative discourse-analytical research design described below

4 *Politicisation, Democratisation, European Identity*

and in [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#). Both empirical cases studied indicate that micropolitical, speech-act, and action-oriented methodologies deliver fruitful results for understanding processes of politicisation and also non-politicisation.

- 4 *How is politicisation linked to other concepts?* In addition to the three questions just mentioned, it is useful to clarify the conceptual relation of politicisation to other concepts. With regard to the cases discussed in this book, three conceptual relationships that are generally discussed in the academic politicisation literature are highly relevant. The *relation between politicisation and democracy* is often thematised in dichotomies; populist or openly anti-democratic politicisation is frequently discussed as a danger or at least a challenge for democracy. However, it is important to underline that politicisation also can have democratising effects. As the empirical cases in this book show, there is no simple answer to the question of whether politicisation is beneficial or harmful for democracy. It can strengthen democracy if it is democratic politicisation, and it can be potentially harmful if it is anti-democratic politicisation (Wiesner 2021c, 25–29).

This perspective is also enlightening for the relation of the concept of politicisation to two other concepts. Politicisation in the academic debate is often conceptually linked to *populism* and *Euroscepticism*. But, as will also be discussed in [Chapter 9](#), the empirical findings in this book as well as other studies that explore this link conceptually and empirically (see, e.g., Anders 2021; Jörke 2021; Katsambekis 2022; Kauppi and Trenz 2021; Kim 2021; Panizza and Stavrakakis 2020; Stavrakakis et al. 2018 and the contributions in Haapala and Oleart 2022) underline that it is not politicisation as such that causes populism and Euroscepticism – but that both of these are an outcome of a type of politicisation processes that enhances criticism of representative democracy and/or the EU. This means that it is not politicisation per se that is directed against the EU or representative democracy, but that this is just one possible outcome of politicisation processes (see Wiesner 2021c, 25–37).

Three more questions concern the politicisation of the EU specifically:

- 5 *To what extent is the EU politicised?* The academic discussion of EU politicisation is rather recent since the EU, for a long time, has been considered as not much politicised. Public discourses on EU policies and EU contestation have been rare. There is, however, some agreement that the EU, since the 1990s, has become more politicised. The French EU referendum discourse in 2005 in this context is considered one major instance of politicisation (see, e.g., Statham and Trenz 2013) and, accordingly, it is one of the cases in this book.
- 6 *Is EU politicisation beneficial or detrimental to EU integration?* A crucial question in the academic debate on EU politicisation is whether it may be beneficial for the EU (see the discussion in Kauppi and Wiesner 2018; Wiesner 2022, forthcoming and the contributions in Haapala and Oleart 2022; Wiesner 2021d), or whether it will rather be dangerous or even detrimental to European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009) – or whether the truth lies somewhere in between (Anders 2021). This debate is often linked to the one around the next question.

7 *Is politicisation beneficial for EU democratisation?* This is another crucial question in the academic debate on EU politicisation (see the contributions in Haapala and Oleart 2022; Wiesner 2019a, 2021d and the discussion in Kauppi and Wiesner 2018; Wiesner 2022, forthcoming).

The book directly dives into the field opened by these three questions, giving concrete answers. As said above, the two discourses on the Constitutional Treaty were major processes of EU politicisation. They also indicate the tensions between EU politicisation and the continuation of EU integration, as the French discourse ended upon a “No” vote against the Constitutional Treaty. But, and this is less discussed in the academic debate so far, both the French and the German discourses were also major instances of open public deliberation about the EU which included a broad public and hence had a major democratising effect.

1.2 European Identity, EU Democratisation, and National EU Discourses

The concept of European identity has been intensively discussed in the Social Sciences for several years (see [Sections 2.1](#) and [2.2](#)). Is there a European identity, do we need European identity, can European identity emerge, and what might European identity look like? These are some of the frequently asked questions. What we, then, actually examine or discuss varies, depending on the sub-discipline or context: the contributions range from quantitative empirical results and categories to philosophical considerations and historical perspectives. The debate on European identity also reveals numerous problems and contradictions. Not only do the contributors utilise different definitions, understandings, or ideals of European identity as the foundation for their considerations, but some contributions even remain unclear about what identity means and entails. In this respect, we need to clarify the content of the concept of identity and the categories of analysis in order to conceptualise and operationalise European identity.

The main question of the present study arises from a democratic theory-led approach to the role of collective democratic identity in the EU, which has been discussed in the Social Sciences since the 1990s. The possibilities for and limits of democratising the EU are linked to the formation of a “European identity” insofar as democracy – regardless of whether one takes a republican, a communitarian, or a liberal model as a basis – must, from a normative point of view, consist not only of electoral and civil rights but also of democratic practice, as discussed in detail in [Section 2.1](#).

The basic theoretical assumption of the book is the following: further democratisation of the EU must be accompanied by the emergence of a *demos*, a democratic subject of the EU. Democratic institutions and procedures must be borne by a democratic subject that defines itself as such and that is democratically active.

Democratic identity thus means precisely this *self-definition of the democratic subject*, i.e., an awareness of and identification with the polity to which rights and democratic practice pertain.

In the Social Sciences, however, there are various approaches to this concept of democratic identity and its operationalisation. Three main schools of thought can be distinguished: (1) *theoretically or normatively* oriented approaches (see [Section 2.1](#)), (2) *individualistic* definitions (see [Section 2.2.3](#)) that, often building on David Easton's considerations (see, for instance, Easton 1953, 1965), focus on the *identification* of individuals with, as well as their *support* for, political systems, and (3) *macro-oriented approaches* that treat democratic identity as a *pattern of meaning* that exists independently of individual outlooks and that examine the real or potential *contents* of European identity (see [Section 2.2.4](#)).

The present study integrates all three perspectives while going beyond them in two crucial respects. First, it assumes that the micro and macro levels of democratic identity are interrelated. Democratic identity emerges from individual references, identifications, and attitudes that must be studied at the micro level, but it also consists of patterns of meaning that must be studied at the macro level. This approach requires that theoretical and methodological approaches suitable for studying identity as a pattern of meaning be integrated in the research design, while empirically including both micro and macro levels. Second, the normative-theoretical perspective on democratic identity described above is much broader than in most individualistic approaches. Democratic identity is seen not only as functionally necessary for system stability but also as self-identification of the demos and as a precondition for democratic activity.

These two functions of democratic identity are the focus of this study: the system-stabilising function, in which identification with the polity and its support, or belief in legitimacy, are also preconditions for the acceptance of redistributive decisions; and the democracy-activating function, in which identification with a polity and the identification of its members with one another are preconditions for political participation, deliberation, and protest – i.e., for all those things that make a democracy truly a democracy.

These considerations formulate an ambitious normative-theoretical goal, the achievement of which, however, will not be directly empirically analysed. Rather, it serves as a *counterfactual norm* in the heuristics of the study (see [Section 2.1](#)).

The study thus investigates a *form of collective democratic identity related to the EU* rather than a European identity proper. Nevertheless, the term European identity will be used in the following for three reasons: first, the terms Europe and EU are often used completely or partially synonymously in academic and non-academic debates alike, although they, by no means, refer to the same substantive things. The meanings associated with the concept of Europe, as well as references to the continent of Europe, have become interwoven with the EU as a result of the process of European integration (see Wiesner and Schmidt-Gleim 2014). Thus, second, meanings attributed to the EU cannot be clearly separated from those

attributed to Europe, and it often turns out – and this is also the case in the national discourses examined here – that Europe is spoken of when, strictly speaking, the EU is meant. Third, this overlapping of the meaning of different concepts also leads to the social scientific debate often revolving around the question of European identity, rather than of an identity of the EU – even when the latter is actually the issue at hand. Consequently, a clear conceptual separation between Europe and the EU cannot be meaningfully implemented when it comes to democratic identity. In full acknowledgement of the conceptual blurring described above, the study will use the established term “European identity”.

It is thus characteristic of the concepts Europe and EU that they can refer to diverse things. They function as black boxes that can be filled with a wide variety of attributed meanings. This can take place via discourses about Europe and the EU. The national level remains the most significant one on which such discourses take place. *National EU discourses* are thus essential means of attributing meaning to Europe and/or the EU.

1.3 The 2005 Discourses on the Ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in Germany and France

After the conceptual and theoretical discussions and the development of the research methodology and design, two crucial cases of EU politicisation and their linkages to EU democratisation and EU identity formation are analysed comparatively, namely, the discourses related to the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 in Germany and France, their contexts, outcomes, as well as their impact on EU democratisation and EU identity construction. The two national EU discourses are studied as processes that potentially construct European identity, i.e., as a *means of constructing European identity*.

The two national EU discourses in many respects have a prototypical character for processes of EU politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation. First, they show all characteristics that mark most processes of EU contestation and politicisation: heated debates, strong opinions, a split of the political centre, and the appearance of political challengers. Second, they were national discourses on a foundational EU document in two big EU founding member states and hence focused on questions such as what the EU stands for, what are its goals, and what are the policies, actions, and symbols linked with it – i.e., the meanings associated with European identity. Third, the two discourses were not only major instances of EU politicisation but also, especially in the French case, occasions of an intense public exchange on the European Union. This intense public interest and exchange, and also the activities of information and contestation linked especially to the French referendum campaign, represent a major moment of democratic activity. Fourth, the outcome of the French discourse, i.e., the “No” vote in the 2005 French referendum, marks a key event in the history of EU integration, just as much as Brexit. For all these reasons, the cases, the study, and the results have an exemplary character for the concepts of and academic debates on EU democratisation, EU politicisation, and their interrelation with national EU discourses.

1.3.1 Research Question and Research Design of the Empirical Study

The leading research question of the empirical study arises from the democratic theory-led approach to the role of collective democratic identity in the EU described above: *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as a means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?* It is concretised in a two-part research question: 1. *How do national EU discourses on the part of political, academic, and economic elites, mediated via national newspapers of record, construct the EU and Europe?* 2. *How are they, and thus also the formation of European identity, shaped by specific national contexts and references?*

European identity, this is the methodological thesis behind this choice, can be constructed via national EU discourses. Therefore, the analytical focus is set on empirically examining the meanings national EU discourses ascribe to the EU, the extent to which they can actually contribute to constructing European identity, their impact on the democratisation of the EU, and the role played by national contexts (political systems, political parties, citizens' attitudes, national identity narratives, and previous EU discourses).

The empirical study thus investigates *collective democratic identity related to the EU as it is constructed via national EU discourses*. Its central goal is to conduct a comparative discourse analysis of two national EU discourses and, in doing so, (1) to describe the “what”, “how”, and “why” of the discourses, (2) to understand it, and (3) to explain it in a plausible way. From this, (4) theses and models for processes and interrelations of national EU discourses to EU politicisation, democratisation, and the construction of European identity are developed. This contributes (5) to theory building about the role of EU politicisation, democratisation, the construction of European identity, and national EU discourses. The empirical study thus provides complex and plausible explanations for the findings, as elaborated by Jahoda et al. and Peirce (Jahoda et al. 2009; Peirce 1994).

1.3.2 Methodology

As was just explained, the leading methodological thesis of the empirical study is that national EU discourses are considered and examined as *a means of constructing European identity*. Investigating discourses means deciding on a discourse-analytical research design, but this does not imply a specific or even generalisable discourse analysis procedure. Rather, a wide variety of discourse-analytical approaches can be distinguished, all of which merely share certain epistemological and methodological premises (cf. Johnstone 2018, 1–15; Wood and Kroger 2000, 3, 95; see in detail [Chapter 3](#)).

For the empirical study, a comparative discourse-analytical research design was developed independently ([Chapter 3](#)). This design differs from most other discourse-analytical approaches in one core respect: it is based on the methodological premise that discourses should *not* be regarded as self-contained, with meaning construction taking place without notable external influences. Rather, it is assumed that discourses are not only potentially open to outside influences but also can be fundamentally influenced by prior discourses, socio-economic factors, and social

and political structures. Therefore, the contexts of national EU discourses are also considered and studied in five areas (see [Chapter 7](#)): (1) the political system, (2) political parties and European integration, (3) citizenries and their attitudes towards the EU, (4) the patterns of national identity, and (5) previous EU discourses.

1.3.3 Cases

The reasons for selecting the two discourses are, in short, the following (see in detail [Section 3.2.3](#)): the research design, which aimed at an in-depth investigation of discourses and their contexts, could only be realised with a small number of cases; therefore, a dual-case design was chosen. For the study design, it seemed particularly fruitful to select *long-term and large* EU member states for several reasons. The characteristics of the five domestic contextual factors could only be examined over time in the long-standing member states. Moreover, large EU member states have had a more formative effect on the development of the EU in structural and political-cultural terms than smaller member states. Therefore, *large founding states* of the EU were selected. The first case of particular theoretical relevance was the *French discourse on the 2005 EU referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty (TCE)*. As a second, contrasting case, *Germany and the discourse surrounding the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty (TCE) in 2005* was selected. Given the equal roles of the states in the EU (as large founding states) as well as the differences in domestic political contextual factors, it could be assumed that the differences in the development of national EU discourses were indeed mainly due to the different national contexts.

1.3.4 Research Material

As far as the *research material* is concerned, the study focuses on analysing *newspapers of record* for two main reasons. First, newspapers of record represent an intermediary level of meaning construction: they are not located at the level of political elites (as, for example, parliamentary minutes would be), but also not at the level of citizens or activists (as leaflets or Internet postings would be). However, they report on events at both levels. Second, preliminary studies showed that it was useful to examine a uniform type of material, i.e., not to mix print media and audiovisual media as well as Internet contributions or leaflets, since different types of material can hardly be subjected to common standards of evaluation. Particular emphasis was put on the sampling of theoretically relevant research material (see in detail [Section 3.2.3](#)). In order to represent the political spectrum as broadly as possible, altogether eight quality newspapers were analysed, four for Germany and four for France.

- 1 Germany: The daily newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (conservative), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (liberal), *taz* (left-liberal), and *Neues Deutschland* (far left)
- 2 France: *Le Figaro* (conservative), *Le Monde* (liberal), *libération* (left-liberal), and *L'Humanité* (far left)

In contrast, in previous comparative discourse-analytical studies of national EU discourses, often only a limited portion of the corresponding discourse was considered, e.g., only one daily newspaper was analysed.

The corpus of source material for the French case was collected for the survey period (1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005) from the *BPE Europresse* database accessible at the *Institut des Études Politiques* in Paris. The German corpus was collected via the databases of the Marburg University Library. As a result, the comparative research design is based on a sample of a total of 8145 articles in four national newspapers of record for each country, which are largely representative of the political spectrum in each. It was formed and evaluated solely according to the criterion of theoretical relevance: after a complete survey of the theoretically relevant period of 1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005, all articles were included in the evaluation, with particularly theoretically relevant articles (theoretical sampling) then being evaluated more precisely for each case. A total of 2247 articles were coded.

1.4 State of the Research

The book touches on various research areas and sub-disciplines of the Social Sciences. It is (1) a contribution to the academic debates on *EU politicisation*, *EU democratisation*, and *EU identity formation*. Regarding the theoretical and methodological foundations of the empirical study, they concern (2) *the debate on the democratisation of the EU* and (3) the theory and methodological literature in the broad field of *Discourse Analysis* as well as in the fields of *Qualitative Research* and *Comparative Politics*. In order to develop the heuristics of the study, contributions (4) from comparative, quantitative and qualitative, *Political Culture Research* were of interest; for the contexts of the discourses, it was pertinent to consider (5) *the German and French political systems*. Finally, similar questions and results could be found when considering (6) *Comparative Political Communication Research* and in particular the discourse-analytical studies in this field. The following provides a brief overview of the state of the research in each area.

As discussed above, the concept of *politicisation* is increasingly used in research on democracy and on the European Union – numerous contributions have been discussing the politicisation of “Europe” (Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016; Statham and Trenz 2013) or “European integration” (Hoeglinger 2016; Wilde 2011; Wilde and Zürn 2012). As said above, one crucial question is whether EU politicisation might be dangerous or even detrimental to European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009), or whether it may contribute to EU democratisation and hence be beneficial (see the contributions in Wiesner 2019a, 2021d and the discussion in Kauppi and Wiesner 2018; Haapala and Oleart 2022).

The debate on democratisation of the EU and the democratic quality of the EU has been a sub-debate within European Studies and in its intersection with political theory for more than two decades (see, for instance, Beetham and Lord 1998; Bellamy and Castiglione 2003; Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Fossum 2017; Hix 2008; Majone 1998; Mény 2003; Moravcsik 2002; Neuhold 2022; Nicolaïdis and Youngs

2014). The study results contribute to these debates regarding the construction of a demos for the EU and the EU's democratisation.

Discourse Analysis is a broad and disparate field. Contributions explicating the epistemological background and methods of the different discourse analytical approaches were relevant for the theory, epistemological approach, and method of the present study (see, for instance, Boreus and Bergstrom 2017; Johnstone 2018; Titscher 2000; van Dijk 2001; Wodak 2001). How to study European integration with discourse-analytical approaches is discussed explicitly in several works (Howarth and Torfing 2005; Lynggaard 2019).

All in all, there are few contributions that make suggestions on how to operationalise the epistemological and methodological premises of a discourse analysis. Building on the standards of qualitative research as well as Comparative Politics and Policy Analysis, this study independently developed a comparative, discourse-analytical research design. Thus, the study contributes to methodological development in Comparative Politics and Social Science Discourse Analysis.

Qualitative and quantitative *Comparative Political Culture and Attitudes Research* has produced numerous publications, especially in the field of European identity formation and analysis. The results can be divided quite clearly into works geared towards either micro or macro levels. Both approaches were useful in developing the heuristics of the study (see [Section 2.2](#)). Selected results were also relevant for the context analysis. For example, a large number of articles analysing the outcome of the 2005 French EU referendum appeared in France (see, for example, the articles in Laurent and Sauger 2005; Mergier, Cambadélis, and Tiberj 2005). However, these are mostly either quantitative empirical (Boy and Chiche 2005; Cautrès 2005; Tiberj 2005) or more essayistic in nature (see, for instance, Argenson 2007; Bertoncini and Chopin 2005; Dacheux 2005; Rochefort 2005). The study makes a qualitative contribution here.

The political systems and the European politics of Germany and France are studied in several works that provide overviews (see, e.g., Mény 2006; Müller-Brandeck-Boquet 2010; M. G. Schmidt 2010; Stanat 2006; Sturm and Pehle 2005). They focus on overviews and hence address questions that are very different from those of the present study. Analyses of German and French European policy and their justificatory strategies (see, for example, Karama 2001; Moreau Defarges 1985, 1996, 2002), on the other hand, are closer to the object of study. However, these mostly provide historical overviews of the development of overarching national EU narratives and do not consider individual discourses in detail. Results from this area thus primarily flowed into the context analyses. This study contributes to this research area insofar as it analyses and systematises the relationships between contextual factors and discourses and develops explanatory models and theses.

A number of contributions from the field of *Comparative Political Communication Research* provide international media analyses. In sum, these works are different from the present study in a number of ways. The explanandum is either the emergence of a European public sphere, which they then measure and substantiate, or politicisation. They neither cover the range of the political spectrum in the

press sources studied nor are they based on a comprehensive normative-theoretical framework and research question. The studies are also purely or primarily quantitative, providing not discourse but network, content, or frame analyses. Thus, these works differ in terms of heuristics and research questions from the present study. They use different methods and a different research design and consider different samples and different explananda. They do not observe the interactions *within* discourses or the previously mentioned form characteristics but rather focus on the coding of certain typical interpretative frames, motifs, or statements and analyse them in a primarily quantitative way.

Most of the respective studies are quantitative content analyses that seek to explore the development of a public sphere in the EU (for example, Berkel 2006; van de Steeg 2004); an overview of these content-analytical (and mostly quantitative) works on the European public sphere can be found in Vettters (Vettters 2008, 132–136). Statham and Trenz (2013) analyse press debates on the Constitutional Treaty in France, Germany, and Britain with quantitative content analysis. Their explanandum is politicisation and analysis is not based on a normative-theoretical framework. A study of the discourse contexts is not included, and the press selection does not cover the full political spectrum. Esser (on constitutional debates from the early 2000s, Esser 2005) and Adam (with a selection of press reports from a period of three years, Adam 2007) compare German and French debates on Europe. Vettters (on the constitutional convention, Vettters 2008) also includes Great Britain. A comparative view of the German and the French debates in 2005 can be found in Dietzsch (Dietzsch 2009). Bärenreuter et al. even comparatively examined referendum debates in seven states: Austria, France, Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Sweden, and Great Britain (Bärenreuter et al. 2006). Several frame analyses take a comparative look at German and French debates about Turkey's accession to the EU (Madeker 2008; Wimmel 2006). Seeger examined the 2005 French referendum debate comparatively, also considering those in Spain, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, and Luxembourg (Seeger 2008).

Finally, *Comparative Discourse Analyses* (or works that are discourse-analytical in procedure and methodological design, even if not always explicitly so) on European politics and national EU discourses exist in relatively large numbers. These studies have different explananda and material, and mostly they do not rely on a normative-theoretical framework. A study from this field is similar to the present study in terms of the topic of the Constitutional Treaty, but not in terms of the research question and research design. Kutter (2020) engages in a comparative discourse analysis on the question of how legitimacy is constructed in the EU. She focuses on the press debates on the Constitutional Treaty in Poland and France. The study therefore has some similarities, but differs, first, in the cases studied (Germany not being included) and, second, is not based on a normative-theoretical framework. Third, a study of the discourse contexts is not included, and fourth, the press selection does not cover the full political spectrum. Various other books and articles comparatively explore partial aspects of discourses and/or referenda on the EU, using parliamentary debates, press articles, party documents, or interviews with politicians. They also have different explananda, cases, and material

than the present study, and mostly they do not use a normative-theoretical framework. Krzyżanowski (2010) and Krzyżanowski and Oberhuber (2007) study discourses around the constitutional convention and identity formation. The fields of referenda and Europe in the media are covered by a number of more recent contributions that discuss generalised EU protests and contestation (Caiani and Guerra 2017) referenda in general (Rose 2020; Smith 2021), that focus especially on the French EU referendum in 2005 (Grossman 2008), or on Brexit (Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019; Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2021). Galpin studies the linkages of media discourses on EU crises and European identity formation (Galpin 2017).

A large number of studies focus on ideas, discourses, and meanings in EU politics and EU integration. Sauder conducts a comparative analysis of “paradigms of security and sovereignty” in France and Germany from 1990 to 1993 (Sauder 1995); Larsen examines national EU discourses, state/nation, and security on the basis of parliamentary debates, politicians’ speeches, and party programmes in France and Britain (Larsen 1997); and Jung undertakes an analysis of polity ideas on the EU in France at three stages: foundation (1950–1957), consolidation (1969–1974), and Maastricht (1989–1994; Jung 1999). Seidendorf examines newspaper articles from Germany and France at the beginning of European integration (1952) and at the beginning of the constitutional debate (2000; Seidendorf 2007). Hörber comparatively examines the founding ideas of European integration in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom on the basis of parliamentary debates (Hörber 2006). Jachtenfuchs also compares EU-related constitutional ideas in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (Jachtenfuchs 2002). Marcussen et al. compare the historical development of national concepts of Europe in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (Marcussen et al. 2001); Weiss compares speeches by French and German politicians on European integration (Weiss 2003); and Seidendorf also undertakes an analysis of speeches on Europe by Mitterrand and Chirac (Seidendorf 2008). Stahl comparatively examines national security discourses in Germany and France (Stahl 2007); Zollner analyses the historical development of the French EU narrative and especially the parliamentary debates around the Amsterdam Treaty (Zollner 1999); and Banchoff compares historical discourses on Europe in France and Germany at the time of the ratification of the ECSC treaties and the Maastricht Treaty (Banchoff 1999). Finally, Bruell and Mokre undertake a discourse-analytical, mainly quantitative analysis of Austrian newspaper articles on the EP elections in 2004 (Bruell and Mokre 2007); Lieb analyses press dossiers on the French referendum debate in 2005, though without aspiring to conduct a discourse analysis (Lieb 2008); and Miard-Delacroix examines articles in German newspapers in which leading German politicians develop models of Europe (Miard-Delacroix 2008). Wodak and Puntsher-Riekmann conducted interviews with MEPs and EU officials from COREPER and the Commission with the aim of analysing the relationship they constructed between European and national identities (Puntsher-Riekmann and Wodak 2003). Schmidt examines national EU discourses and their relationship to legitimation strategies for the EU and changes in the national political and institutional systems of France, Britain, Germany, and Italy (V. A. Schmidt 2006), and Diez Medrano, finally, looks at attributions of

meaning to the EU in Germany, Spain, and Britain by citizens and functional elites (Diez Medrano 2003).

1.4.1 Added Value

Against this backdrop, the study thus makes the following contributions to theory and methods and to the state of the research:

Academic debates on EU politicisation, EU democratisation, and EU identity formation: The book embeds the findings of a thorough and comparative study of two crucial cases in the broader academic debates on EU democratisation and politicisation. It develops profound answers to key questions in these debates and develops explanatory theses and models.

Normative-theoretical foundations and theory integration: The study concept is based on a strong democratic model of democratic identity and *integrates normative theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative approaches and theories*. The fundamental differences from other studies are that democratic identity is viewed not only as a functional prerequisite for system stability but also as a prerequisite for active democracy (counterfactual norm) and that collective identity is examined not only as the sum of individual identifications but also as what they refer to, that is, as patterns of meaning.

Epistemological approach: According to this approach, the research design *integrates macro and micro perspectives*. In addition, explanatory models are developed abductively from the description and analysis of facts and by drawing on prior theoretical and empirical knowledge.

Comparative Politics: The focus of the study on the comparison of discourses, i.e., *culturally conditioned and anchored processes*, expands the field of Comparative Political Science. Through its discourse-analytical design, the study also expands the established canon of methods in Comparative Politics.

Discourse analysis: The present study transcends the standards of previous discourse analyses in several respects. First, the *context of the discourses is specifically operationalised and analysed*. Second, in contrast to existing discourse-analytical conceptions, the *relationship between the macro level* of political institutions and discourses *and the micro level* of individual communicative behaviour, individual attitudes towards the EU, and individual voting behaviour is considered.

Methods development: An *operationalisable, comparative discourse-analytical research design* was independently developed.

Research design in empirical investigation of European identity and national EU discourses: This study is the first comparative discourse-analytical investigation of the 2005 discourses on the EU Constitutional Treaty in Germany and France which takes into account several quality newspapers that represent the political spectrum from the left to the right. Therefore, although the entire discourse was not examined, the breadth of the discourse was represented, especially as, unlike previous studies, the context of the discourses was systematically included.

The findings are embedded in a discussion of the research and findings in the fields of *EU democratisation and EU politicisation* and a discussion of key developments in both fields, such as rising populism and democratic deconsolidation, and key events since 2005, notably Brexit and the French elections in 2022.

1.5 Structure of the Book

The structure of the book can be divided into the following steps and chapters.

The introduction ([Chapter 1](#)) maps the research fields of EU politicisation, democratisation, identity formation, and national EU discourses. It gives an overview of the relevant debates, discusses crucial conceptual and analytical challenges, introduces a working definition of the concept of politicisation, and explains research question, cases, research design, and added value of the study.

In [Chapter 2](#), this is followed by a discussion of the normative-theoretical conditions for and the necessity of EU democratisation. On this basis, the contested concept of “European identity” is theorised, conceptualised, and operationalised. The relevant theories and approaches of EU democratisation and European identity are discussed and integrated, the research question sharpened, and the heuristics of the empirical study is developed in the following steps:

Foundational normative theory considerations: The role of democratic identity in the democratisation of the EU is discussed and summarised ([Section 2.1](#)).

Comparison and integration of theories: A logical comparison of theories is undertaken for the relevant approaches and insights from four areas: (1) democratic theory and (2) construction of collective identities, (3) micro-oriented or quantitative empirical approaches, and (4) macro-oriented, mostly qualitative approaches to the study of European identity. Based on this comparison, the normative-theoretical, macro- and micro-oriented approaches were integrated ([Section 2.2](#)) and the research question was fixed ([Section 2.3](#))

In [Chapter 3](#), based on a logical comparison and integration of discourse-analytical approaches, theories, and methodologies, the comparative, discourse-analytical research design is developed, including case and material selection.

[Chapter 4](#) contains the results of the analysis of the French discourse, and [Chapter 5](#) accordingly contains the results of the analysis of the German discourse. For analysis of the discourses, the material was collected, condensed, and examined in several steps.

[Chapter 6](#) undertakes a comparative discussion of research results regarding the two discourses in consideration of the research questions. A first set of theories and models is presented.

This is followed by a comparison of the discourse contexts in [Chapter 7](#), as well as by a presentation of further theories and models that were developed.

[Chapter 8](#) contains a concluding discussion of the findings on EU identity construction and EU democratisation.

Chapter 9 contains a reflection on the findings and their lessons for the academic debates on EU politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation. It is based on a discussion of key events and developments since 2005, such as Brexit and the French elections in 2022, and a critical discussion of the concepts of populism and Euroscepticism. This is followed by a taxonomy of four possible interrelations of EU politicisation and democratisation. The book concludes with a plea for the critically informed EU citizen.

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2 Democratisation of the EU, European Identity, and National EU Discourses

The heuristics of the study will in the following be developed in several steps. It is summarised in an overview at the end of the methods chapter (see [Section 3.2.6](#)). First, I discuss and summarise the normative-theoretical criteria for democratic identity ([Section 2.1](#)), then I comparatively discuss theories on the empirical study of collective and European identity ([Section 2.2](#)). Building on this, I refine the research question and the structure of the study ([Section 2.3](#)).

2.1 Democratisation and Democratic Identity in the EU

As described above, normative-theoretical considerations inform the relationship between the democratisation of the EU and democratic identity formation. Therefore, social and political scientific debates on European identity have discussed it in connection with the further democratisation of the EU since the 1990s. The normative-theoretically grounded relationship between democratisation and identity formation is closely related to the input dimension of representative democracy, which can be understood as one of three essential, ideal-typical dimensions of legitimate democracies. Abraham Lincoln's classic formulation from the Gettysburg Address expresses this by defining democracy as the "government *of, by and for* the people". Lincoln thus refers to three dimensions of democracy, which can be found expressed similarly in a wide variety of conceptual reflections on the EU (cf. Cerutti 2009; Eriksen and Fossum 2004; Greven 1998; Habermas 2001; Mény 2003; Scharpf 2009).

The first, government of the people, expresses the input dimension of democratic life: citizens enact democratic life. They are both sovereign and electorate, and they undertake political activities, i.e., participate in debates, protests, or the founding of civil society organisations. The second component of the Lincoln formula refers to the fact that democracy literally means government by the people. In representative democracies, this concerns the rights to vote and to be elected, as well as the organisation of the representative democratic system and relations between citizens and the governed, i.e., representation by the governed, responsibility to the governed, and the institutional organisation that makes all this possible. The third component of the Lincoln formula emphasises that governing must take place for the people. It concerns the output of the system and

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the relationship of the governed back to the government, i.e., the questions of whether citizens are satisfied with the decisions made for them by their representatives and whether the latter can be held accountable for their decisions.

The Lincoln formula thus points to three elements of legitimate, representative democracies: the *input dimension*, the *representative or institutional dimension*, and the *output dimension*.

The input dimension now contributes to the decisive, normatively laden role of democratic identity mentioned in the introduction, which also has consequences for the EU:

From a normative point of view, democracy, regardless of whether it is based on a republican, a communitarian, or a liberal model, must consist not only of electoral and civil rights but also of democratic practice. For a representative democratic polity, this means that its democratic institutions and procedures must be supported by a democratic subject, a *demos*, which to a certain minimum extent should also define itself as such. Democratic identity then implies this self-definition of the *demos*, i.e., (1) an awareness of and identification with the polity to which rights and democratic practice refer and (2) a mutual identification and recognition of the *demos*' members.

Democratic identity thus concerns processes of identification that go in two directions: first, horizontally, between citizens who recognise each other as members of a *demos*; and second, vertically, from citizens to the system level and government, identifying with them and accepting their policy outputs.

However, there are different interpretations of what the functions of such a democratic identity are and what aspects it has to contain.

Firstly, it has a functional aspect. Since the work of David Easton (Easton 1953, 1965a, 1965b, 1975), it has become a commonplace of political cultural research that political systems depend to a certain extent on their citizens identifying with and supporting them in order to remain stable.

Democratic identity in this sense is, firstly, a *necessary condition for stable democratic systems*, because the positive identification of members with their democratic community goes hand in hand with its fundamental acceptance.

Secondly, and going somewhat further, resilient democratic identities make possible the *acceptance of majority decisions and redistributive policies*.

In order for minorities to allow themselves to be outvoted and/or for government decisions with redistributive effects to be accepted, a resilient sense of community must exist among citizens, one which allows them to accept and support such decisions. The fundamental support for the system described above is necessary for this (Easton 1975; Habermas 2004, 70; Scharpf 1998, 85–87). The distinction between the first and the second function of democratic identity largely corresponds to the fundamental distinction between diffuse and specific support developed by Easton (Easton 1975).

Thirdly, democratic identity plays a central role in the *development of democratic practice*.

In this way, citizens of a polity will most likely only become politically active if they at least have an *awareness* of belonging to that polity – and vice versa, they will not do so if they are disinterested in their polity. *Democratic identity is thus necessary for citizens to become active within democratic institutions and act upon their rights*, to participate, mobilise, or protest. The formation of democratic identity is *both a consequence of democratic practice and its precondition* (cf. Greven 1998, 253–254; Habermas 2004, 77–80).

These considerations lead to the following normative-theoretical assumption of this study:

All three functions – stabilising the system, making redistributive decisions acceptable, and enabling democratic practice – are essential for democratic identity.

This normative-theoretical argument goes much further than functionalist definitions that primarily address stability and acceptance of the institutional components of representative democracy or identification and support. In contrast, this study is additionally based on the assumption that an active democratic system must be based on democratic practice. Barber has strikingly characterised this distinction as one of weak (merely formal and institution-based) and strong (practised, supported, and shaped by civil society and civic activities) democracy (Barber 1994).

2.1.1 *The EU as a Polity in Need of Democratisation?*

How should we assess the EU with reference to these normative-theoretical assumptions? An answer to this question depends, first of all, on the kind of entity we

define the EU as. There is broad agreement in the Political Science debate that the EU is a kind of *political* entity, i.e., a polity (see, for example, Eriksen and Fossum 2004; Goodhart 2007; Hix and Høyland 2022; Scharpf 2009; Tömmel 2014). This observation leads to a first conclusion that is central to the question of the EU's identity: the EU is defined politically – and not religiously, culturally, or ethnically. If one asks about its identity, one is asking about a form of politically, not culturally, religiously, or even ethnically defined identity. However, the question remains as to whether and to what extent these different forms of identity can be clearly separated from each other (see below, as well as [Section 2.2.1](#) and [Chapter 8](#)).

If we now judge the polity that is the EU against the three dimensions of legitimate representative democracy referred to in the Lincoln formula, i.e., the input, output, and representation/institutional dimensions, it reveals a number of weaknesses and imbalances. For example, we can unquestionably describe the EU as the most extensively developed system of supranational democracy in existence. Its democratic deficits have also been steadily reduced over the past 20 years. Nevertheless, significant problems remain. Even if the output dimension is considered satisfactory, the input dimension shows clear weaknesses compared to it, and the representative/institutional dimension is also underdeveloped. Moreover, the three dimensions are out of balance in the EU.

Most of the arguments raised within the debate on the EU's democratic deficit and the democratic quality of the EU concern its institutional system and the consequences of the European integration process (for overviews see Føllesdal and Hix 2006 as well as Hix 2008). Although the treaty reforms of the past 20 years, including those of the Lisbon Treaty, have significantly weakened these criticisms, especially by contributing to a better separation of powers and a higher input legitimacy for the EU, they have not yet completely eliminated them (on the following, see in detail Wiesner 2019, 174–175). Moreover, a judgement of the EU's democratic deficits should take into account not only the EU but also its interrelations with the current 27 member states. In both respects, several flaws need to be mentioned on the institutional side.

First, EU Policies are not only regulative but also have redistributive effects (Beetham and Lord 1998, 17–19; Føllesdal and Hix 2006, 551). Accordingly, the EU does severely interfere with the everyday life of its citizens, and this fact raises the necessity for a solid democratic legitimation of the EU and its policies. But, second, in the EU, legitimation chains are still long and sometimes intransparent, and accountability is not easily claimed. Council members, for instance, are legitimised via the indirect path of national elections and national parliaments. Third, national representative democracies continually lost competencies to the EU level (Beetham and Lord 1998, 17–19; Habermas 1999a, 186–187). As opposed to this, fourth, EU institutions gained competencies over the last decades without adding a representative-democratic legislative component that equals the ones in the nation states. Simultaneously, the representative democracies and their legislatures in the member states lost competencies, executive and judicial powers increased as a whole in the EU multilevel system, and legislative powers decreased (Føllesdal and Hix 2006, 534–537; Mény 2003). Moreover,

powers also shifted to the judiciary realm. In sum, European integration thus has led to a net loss of input legitimacy in the multilevel system (Beetham and Lord 1998, 17–19; Habermas 1999a, 186–187). This means that, fifth, decision-making powers are constantly withdrawn from the realm of representative democracy and political participation (Habermas 2001). Instead of a politicisation of EU-politics, we notice a depoliticisation (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Diez Medrano 2009; Mény 2003).

2.1.2 *A Broader Picture on the EU's Democratic Deficit*

A broader picture on the EU's democratic deficits originates when taking into account the flaws of the EU's political system in total. The dimensions of agenda control (Dahl 2000, 38) as well as horizontal and vertical accountability, responsiveness, and equality (Diamond and Morlino 2004, 21) give reason to question the quality of democracy in the EU. All in all, the EU appears as a kind of defective democracy (Merkel 2004). But where do the deficiencies stem from, and how could they be cured?

In short, the problems are decisively linked to the complexity of the EU's system (on the following, see in detail Wiesner 2019, 281–301). They relate to an accumulation of seven problem fields, namely, (1) an over-bureaucratisation, (2) expert dominance and (3) an over-constitutionalisation that reduce horizontal and vertical accountability and lead to limiting the space for political and public deliberation on politics and policies, (4) differentiated integration which increases all these problems in specific areas such as governance of financial aid, (5) the effects of negative integration that cut down national democratic standards without creating them anew on the EU level, (6) the lack of an idea and a practice of the EU common good, and (7) a weakly developed demos.

- 1 Over-bureaucratisation: Consensus-building and bureaucracy dominate in decision-making processes in the EU system (see in detail Tömmel 2014, 171), at the expense of democratic deliberation and publicity. In other words, consensus-building processes such as trilogues and comitology that largely take place behind closed doors and in expert circles depoliticise the EU and withdraw decision-making from the realm of public and/or parliamentary deliberation.
- 2 There are also a number of expert bodies with executive competencies that have been created over the years, and they are also largely withdrawn and decoupled from the realm of public representative decision-making. The EU's agencies, as well as private consultancy firms that do work for the Commission, are examples here, but also the troika and the IMF involvement (Wiesner 2021).
- 3 Over-constitutionalisation: This problem is further emphasised by the treaties in themselves limiting the possible realm for democratic deliberation and decision-making, as they limit the policy areas that are subject to it well beyond the extent that is usual in national representative democracies (see in detail Grimm 2017).
- 4 Differentiated integration: In addition, the diverse governance modes in the EU and different modes of decision-making in the different fields intensify intransparency and accountability. If it is unclear who actually has taken a decision and

who is included and the way the decision-making process went, even to experts, democratic accountability and transparency are clearly hampered (see in detail Wiesner 2019, 281–301).

Taken together, expert dominance, bureaucracy, and over-constitutionalisation limit the possibilities for public deliberation and politicised decision-making. They reduce transparency and accountability in both horizontal and vertical directions. These problems are intensified by negative integration that harms national democratic and social standards.

- 5 Negative integration: In the EU, negative integration, i.e., the reduction of social standards and social protection, dominates over positive integration, i.e., raising new standards (Scharpf 2009). This not only has cut down national democratic and social standards and achievements. Moreover, the outcomes of negative integration also are less and less in fit with the citizen's policy preferences. Decreasing support rates during the financial crisis are just one indicator here, the increase in support for EU-critical parties throughout all EU member states is another (see [Chapter 9](#)). Apparently, citizens more and more disagree with their elites' way to rule the EU, especially during the crisis (Offe 2015).
- 6 The EU's common good: The EU's supranational bodies EP and Commission are oriented towards the EU's common good, while the intergovernmental bodies Council and European Council are oriented towards the national particular interests (see in detail Tömmel 2014, 324–330). Moreover, while national governments work in a short-term logic as they want to be re-elected, EU institutions are much more independent from electoral choices (see in detail Hix and Høyland 2011, 314). This situation creates a tension and a tendency in the EU's system that in a very general way hinders an overall orientation to an EU common good. Such an orientation, however, should be a basic principle of all institutions of a polity.
- 7 The split between the EU citizens being citizens in a legal sense, but only a limited sovereign and a limited demos, further accentuates these problems.

2.1.3 The Question of the EU Demos

Criticism of the EU's democratic deficit has been commonplace for years, as have demands for a remedy. The first strand of the debate produced proposals to improve the EU's institutional system (see, e.g., Hix 2008). These proposals cannot and should not be reproduced here in more detail as they do not concern the question of European identity at its core. The second strand of the debate discusses the role of the input component of democratic legitimacy and its relation to democratic identity – i.e., the question of European identity – from an individualistic perspective. It is discussed in detail in 2.2.3. The third strand of the debate concerns the questions of EU demos and identity formation. It is the main take of this book.

The question after an EU demos appeared first in the German academic debate since the 1990s, i.e., the German strand of the democratic deficit debate. The related argument is based on the role that democratic identity plays in the formation

of democratic practice. Various contributions emphasise that democratisation of the EU related to institutions alone (e.g., the extension of the competencies of the European Parliament) is not sufficient, since democracy also requires a demos. Therefore, the EU also requires active citizenship, a public sphere, civil society, and a European identity which forms the demos of the EU (Habermas 1999a; Kielmannsegg 1996, 2003; Scharpf 1998).

In the discussion of the processes assumed relevant in the formation of an EU demos, however, two basic positions stand in opposition, especially in the German-language debate. On the one hand, representatives of the so-called *no-demos thesis* (Weiler 1995, 4) argue that the EU has no demos because it lacks the demos elements of a public sphere, civil society, and especially European identity. They assume that these cannot emerge, even prospectively. Thus, they argue, the EU lacks the basis for input legitimation and should not be democratised further (according to Kielmannsegg 1996, 2003; Scharpf 1998).

However, this argumentation postulates a temporal sequence of demos formation and democratisation that is to be regarded as normatively binding (i.e., “first comes demos formation, then democratisation”) – this postulation should, however, be rejected both from the point of view of normative-democratic theory and on the grounds that it is empirically untenable.

Although the proponents of the *no-demos thesis* rightly emphasise the importance of a demos and, in particular, of European identity, they wrongly postulate that these must emerge *before* the EU can be further democratised. In doing so, they make a *pre-political* European identity a *precondition* for the further democratisation of the EU. This conclusion leads to a circular relationship that necessarily opposes any further democratisation of the EU (no demos – no democratisation – no democratic activity – no formation of a demos – no democratisation...). In addition, it does not necessarily follow from the relationship between identity and legitimacy in democratic theory. It merely claims that democracy requires a demos, but makes no specifications about when such a demos must emerge.

Even in the context of nation-building, there were neither pre-political democratic identities nor a chronological order in the sense of “first demos, then democracy”. Processes of demos formation were considerably more complex (cf. Anderson 2006; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 2008; see in detail [Section 2.2.1](#)) than the no-demos thesis postulates. However, the results of research on nation-building also show that in each case it was not democratic practice alone that gave rise to democratic identities and a demos, but also targeted political activity, as well as the actions of elites and governments: political identities were, often purposefully, socially constructed.

Demos formation is also closely related to democratic practice. Thus, the representatives of the second principle position in the German debate (for example, Habermas 1999a, 190–191; Lepsius 1999) emphasise that European identity, a public sphere, and civil society can and will most likely intensify or develop precisely through democratisation and the resulting democratic practice at the EU level. The present study, as argued above, shares this position. It is a crucial point of departure for the research design and heuristics.

2.1.4 Democracy and Difference

For the theoretical conception of European identity, a second normative starting consideration is important: from a normative perspective, the relationship between collective and individual identities plays a key role in democracies. This is owed to the fact that the relations of individuals to each other in society not only contribute to the emergence of collectively shared attitudes but, conversely, also always influence individual identities, as individuals gain recognition only in the context of social interaction (Taylor 1997a, 24). The challenge for democratic theory is that a wide variety of tensions can exist between individual and group identities. If these are not resolved, they can lead to individual identities and rights being violated by democratic practice and the legal systems that should fundamentally protect them. A catalogue of rights that is blind to differences assumes the utopian claim of an abstract, unitary individual.

This means that individuals differ from one another, and, therefore, legal systems and democratic practice must account for these differences in order to achieve just outcomes.

This democratic-theoretical requirement refers not only to legal catalogues but also to democratic collective identities. Their contents must not violate individual identities, at least according to theoretical normative claims. To avoid democratic identities and established rights conflicting with individual and group-related identities and claims, democracy and differences in terms of culture, gender, or descent, for example, must be united with an orientation of the individual towards the political community of citizens at the level of the nation state. There are a variety of classical contributions on this point (see, for example, Benhabib 1996; Fraser 1996; Habermas 1999b; Kymlicka 1995; Mouffe 1992; Taylor 1997b; Young 1990). They underline a variety of possible tensions that can result when practically implementing the normative requirement to recognise the difference. This allows us to make a central conclusion for the question of European identity:

In terms of its diversity of languages, identities, value orientations, and ethnic and cultural groups, the EU multiplies the differences and divergences already existing within the 27 member states. If a European identity is to balance this diversity of identities and values, it must form a basis that allows a minimum of unity with the greatest possible acceptance of difference.

A democratic European identity must therefore be primarily political-democratic for two reasons. First, it concerns the democratisation and the

political-democratic legitimacy of the EU as a polity. Second, ethnic, cultural, and even religious differences can be integrated most readily, or perhaps only, if the basis underlying this integration is political and not ethnic, cultural, or religious.

European identity must accordingly refer primarily to political-democratic values (and not to religion or culture): it must primarily be a *political-democratic identity*.

Habermas' concept of constitutional patriotism offers a possible conception here (see [Chapter 8](#)), although we must question whether and to what extent a political-democratic identity can be quite so neatly separated from cultural, religious, or ethnic aspects.

Moreover, European identity must be based on the *acceptance of differences* in order to be stable. In concrete terms, this means that differences in ethnic, cultural, or group-related identifications must become part of the identity; however, they must not be so far-reaching that no common core remains.

European identity must be a *difference-affirming identity* in order to be tenable.

This means that European identity can reconcile different ethnic, cultural, and religious references if they can have a productive relationship to an overarching, political-democratic identification or, at the very least, if they do not contradict it while mutually reinforcing or at least tolerating one another. This also applies to national identities.

National identities are necessarily component identities within a multi-level system of European identity.

European identity must also be a *difference-affirming multi-level identity*.

2.1.5 Foundational Theses

The considerations up to this point lead to the following normative-theoretically grounded starting position on the EU, its democratisation, and its democratic identity, which form the foundation for the further argument.

Table 2.1 Normative-theoretical starting positions

-
- 1 Democracy is based on three dimensions: an *input* dimension, an *institutional* dimension, and an *output* dimension.
 - 2 Democracy thus requires an input component: citizens are the sovereign and engage in democratic practice. Both require a democratic identity.
 - 3 The EU is a political unit, a polity – and not defined ethnically, culturally, or religiously. Its identity must be *politically defined and democratic*.
 - 4 The EU is no longer at the beginning of its democratic development. It is rather, despite its continuing democratic-theoretical deficits and problems, the currently most developed and most strongly integrated existing example of a *democratically organised supra- and transnational polity*.
 - 5 *Further democratisation of the EU is necessary* because it intervenes in the everyday lives of its citizens to a marked extent.
 - 6 European integration is currently leading to a *net loss in democratic legitimation* in two respects: the executive is gaining strength relative to the legislative branch, and the institutional and output dimensions are being strengthened relative to the input dimension. This too suggests the need for further democratisation of the EU.
 - 7 In view of the high degree of integration of the EU and the continuing loss of competencies on the part of the member states, a recourse to or strengthening of the democracies of the member states is insufficient. Rather, *democratisation of the EU polity* is necessary.
 - 8 Democratisation of the EU polity must also refer back to an *increase in the input legitimation of the EU*.
 - 9 A democratisation of the EU and the formation of a significant input dimension necessitate a *strengthening of European identity* in the sense that the democratic institutions and procedures of the EU must be supported by a democratic subject, a demos, which to a certain minimum defines itself as such (citizen-citizen relationship) and which identifies with the EU as a polity (citizen-polity relationship).
 - 10 Such a democratic identity is not only a *precondition for the stability of the EU as a political system* but also as a *requirement for the emergence of democratic practice*.
 - 11 European identity must be *difference-affirming*. This does *not* mean that ethnic or cultural identities are immaterial to European identity. Rather, the central argument is that a tenable European identity can integrate these differences on a shared political-democratic basis.
 - 12 European identity must be a *multi-level identity*.
-

Source: Own Representation, author's emphasis

Importantly,

These starting positions play the role of a *counterfactual norm* for further investigation and argumentation. They define an ideal, a model for a tenable European identity, but will not be directly examined. Rather, I will examine real processes that could potentially contribute to the construction of European identity. A central question in that context is the extent to which these processes (can) contribute to reality approaching the model.

Due to this approach, discrepancies between the model and the results of the study are to be expected. However, these are intentional, as the study examines the extent to which the real construction processes of national EU discourses can bring reality closer to the ideal. Thus, tensions, contradictions, and conflicts – even opposing tendencies – with the model are to be expected in reality.

2.2 What Is European Identity?

The concept of European identity has been intensively discussed in the Social Sciences for several years. Is there a European identity, do we need European identity, can European identity emerge, and what might European identity look like? These are some of the frequently asked questions. What we then actually examine or discuss varies, however, depending on the sub-discipline or context: the contributions range from quantitative-empirical results and categories to philosophical considerations and historical perspectives. The debate on European identity also reveals numerous problems and contradictions. Not only do the contributors utilise different definitions, understandings, or ideals of European identity as the foundation for their considerations, but some contributions even remain unclear about what identity means and entails. In this respect, we need to clarify the content of the concept of identity and the categories of analysis in order to conceptualise and operationalise European identity.

Thus far, I have discussed European identity in normative-theoretical terms. The following section will concretise the theoretical approaches and categories appropriate for analysing European identity and its construction empirically. This serves to develop a working definition of European identity that compares and integrates existing theoretical approaches. On this basis, I then develop and justify the research question of the project.

Given the coexistence of different methodological perspectives and approaches in the field, I will conduct a logical comparison of theories and an integration of theories (cf. P. Schmidt and J. Herrmann 2010) of collective and European identity, which serves to explicate the explanans, explananda, and further dimensions of the respective approaches and to present the differences. The aim of the comparison is to specify and synthesise and, as far as possible, to integrate the theories discussed into the research concept of European identity.¹

2.2.1 What Is Collective Identity and How Does It Form?

The question of an analytical conception of collective identity must be preceded by the fundamental observation that collective identities are latent constructs. They are therefore

not directly measurable or visible. We must operationalise determining factors or dimensions to be able to study them. The following explanations serve this purpose. They also induce a reflection on the epistemology and methodology of studying collective identities by discussing methodological individualism versus methodological holism.

2.2.1.1 What Is Collective Identity?

Collective identity must first be distinguished from individual identity, which will not be considered in detail here (see, classically, Mead 2005). The term refers to human or social collectives. Both latent and explicit conceptual confusions often arise here, since collective identity has a catch-all function: identities are easily sought and attributed in (too) many places without necessary definitional clarifications preceding them (on this see Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Niethammer 2000, 9–12).

So, what is meant when speaking of the identity of a societal collective? In his foundational reflections on this question, Habermas first stated that a society does not have an identity in the trivial sense, as an object does (Habermas 1976, 92). Thus, collective identities are by no means directly comparable to the identities of individuals (or even of objects). Approaches that speak of the identity of a state or the EU, however, do exactly this and are thus problematic from a definitional point of view. They regard states or the EU as similar to individuals or objects; i.e., they speak of their identity as a description of certain properties or characteristics. Such a description, however, shortens and simplifies not only the analytical content of the concept of identity but also that of the concepts of state or EU.

But how, then, can collective identity be defined? Firstly, a collective is a collection of people, and identity, as Niethammer states, conceptually refers to equality. The identity of human collectives thus consists in the fact that these collectives appear as equal at least in a certain respect (Niethammer 2000, 9–12). Secondly, collectives produce these identities themselves (Habermas 1976, 92).

Human collectives that are characterised by at least one commonality produce their identity, i.e., this commonality, themselves. This means they socially construct it.

The concept of collective identity must be further distinguished from that of social identity, which also refers to collective phenomena. The latter, however, only describes the individual components of identification with a collective – as defined by Tajfel:

Social Identity is that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (social groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to it.

(Tajfel 1978, 63)

In other words, the methodological question that is decisive here for conceptualising collective identity is whether only individuals and their relations are

at stake (methodological individualism) or whether collective identity is also marked by macro-phenomena such as norms, institutions, and orders that can also influence individuals (methodological holism). At this point at the latest, the epistemological and methodological standpoints of radical individualism and (moderate) holism diverge. In a discussion with Esser (Esser 2005), Albert distinguishes the methodological approaches of radical and moderate methodological individualism, as well as radical and moderate methodological holism (Albert 2005, 388–392, 2007, 17–20). Moderate holism, building on Max Weber, can be distinguished from methodological individualism above all by its assumption of strong emergence and the possibility of downward causation, i.e., the influence of the macro- on the micro-level. In moderate individualism, apart from micro-micro influence, only micro-macro causal influence (upward causation) is possible. In radical individualism, only a micro-micro causal influence (same-level causation) is deemed possible. In radical and moderate holism, on the other hand, causal macro-micro as well as micro-macro connections are possible. According to Albert, assuming an epistemological and methodological moderate holist position thus has two consequences. Firstly, it leads to the assumption that macro-phenomena exist and can be analysed in their own right. Secondly, it can be assumed that strongly emergent macro-phenomena such as norms, institutions, and legitimate orders can exert causal effects on actors (Albert 2005, 410).

Radical individualism does not allow for either. It argues that collective identity exists only through the shared attitudes, value orientations, or modes of perception of individuals. Esser even defines collective identity as a subcategory of social identity, in the sense of “socially widespread, shared, controlled and binding mental models of an actor’s relationship to other actors” (Esser 2001, 341) that refers to collectives.

The identification of individuals with a collective is undeniably an elementary part of collective identity. However, it has a second aspect that can only be defined using a moderate methodological holism. Only then can we also discern the actual contents of this identification, in addition to the fact of the identification itself. These contents are the meanings, attributions, and feelings that are associated with the collective. People do not readily identify with any given political or administrative unit – in order for them to do so, it must be laden with certain meanings (Anderson 2006, 53).

These conceptual contents of identification, which are attributed to a nation or a state, for example, can be defined as patterns of meaning, or, as Popper puts it, as “products of the human mind” (Popper 1978, 144). In his three-world theory, Popper distinguishes between three different “worlds”: first, the material world; second, the spiritual or mental world; and third, the world of the products of the human mind:

By world three I mean the world of the products of the human mind, such as languages; tales and stories and religious myths; scientific conjectures or theories, and mathematical constructions; songs and symphonies; paintings and sculptures. But also aeroplanes and airports and other feats of engineering.

(Popper 1978, 144)

Popper further argues that most of these products of the human mind can also be located in the material and/or mental worlds. However, he considers them to be real independently of this, and real in the sense of the reality of an object. They could exert a causal influence on the material world just like the latter. Popper provides another categorical distinction essential when considering the role of the contents of collective identities. He argues that thought processes and the contents of thought, or the results and insights resulting from them, should be viewed as distinct (Popper 1978, 145–148).

The conceptual contents of collective identities will be interpreted in the following, building on these considerations, as *products of the human mind* that exist independently of the thought/identification processes of individuals and as able to influence the material world.

In applying this orientation, the analysis follows the premises of *moderate methodological holism* as described by Gert Albert (Albert 2005, 2007).

The considerations thus far point further to the following elements of a working definition of collective identity:

Collective identities are shaped by (1) *collective identity patterns*, or collectively shared orientations of individual identifications or attitudes, and (2) their *contents*, namely, certain *patterns of meaning* as macro-phenomena superordinate to individual identifications.

Collective identities are *socially constructed* and changed and in the process are usually loaded with a wide variety of meanings. They are (1) conditioned by individual identifications and (2) influenced as patterns of meaning at the macro-level.

In order to analyse the emergence of European identity as a collective identity, we must consider the micro-level of *individual identifications and attitudes* as well as the *social construction* of patterns of meaning at the macro-level.

2.2.1.2 How Does Collective Identity Emerge?

Collective identities are not pre-historical, closed, or static – constructivist studies of nationalism have established this (see extensive studies on the topic by Anderson 2006; Gellner 1983; Giesen 1993; Hobsbawm 2008; Thadden 1991). This is also especially true for national identities. Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson, in their trailblazing works, describe nations as specifically modern phenomena. They are products of industrialised modernity as well as answers to its *necessities*. Nations are specific forms of constructed collective identities.

The processes of construction of these collective identities display the following fundamental characteristics: collective identities are, firstly, neither naturally existing nor prior to history, but rather are fundamentally constructed in social processes, with relevant discourses playing a significant role (see below). In this way, collective identities are, secondly, not fixed but rather able to be changed and influenced. There are no self-contained identities, but only those that are subject to historical change. Thirdly, democracies are not based on a homogeneous people or a homogeneous nation, but rather, there are many differences among highly diverse groups of people and individuals. These must be taken into account from a normative point of view, as described above. Fourthly, identities are separable from geographical spaces, even if regional ties and national characteristics are at work within them. Fifth, there are no simple identities. Rather, they are always complex and signify affiliations at all levels of human existence.

Constructivist research on nationalism has also described the crucial factors that, together, have shaped the successful construction of nation state collective identities. These include (cf. for the following Anderson 2006; Gellner 1983; Giesen 1993; Hobsbawm 2008) the following:

- 1 State and bureaucracy
- 2 Market and capitalism
- 3 Social and cultural modernity
- 4 Education
- 5 Elites as supporting groups
- 6 The resonance of their ideas with an audience and the support of the masses
- 7 Saturation via media and written language
- 8 A linkage to certain practices and symbols (festivals, rites, flags, etc.)

2.2.1.3 *How Was National Identity Constructed?*

How did the construction of previous, i.e., mostly national, collective identities proceed? And what can be deduced from that process for the heuristics of the present study and the construction of European identity?

An elementary aspect of this question is that European and national identities should not be compared directly. Rather, the experiences with the formation of national identity point to fundamental connections, processes, and factors that have determined the construction of modern collective identities in practice. These can therefore also become a part of the heuristics of plotting the construction of European identity.

- 1 The construction of collective identity consists in *constructing meaning* – mostly for a territory and people’s identification with it (Anderson 2006, 47–50).² The construction of national collective identities was based, among other things, on successfully establishing references to fundamental social and religious codes (such as the distinction between man and woman) as the “[...] central axes of the respective world view [...]” (Giesen 1991, 15, 48–50).

- 2 In the processes of constructing national identities, actors purported that they were based on objective conditions such as a common language, but in fact they were and are not. *Nations cannot be clearly defined* linguistically, ethnically, or culturally. Rather, counterexamples can be found for every attempt to do so (Hobsbawm 2008, 5–7). Gellner therefore offers the following definition:

Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognise each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities.
(Gellner 1983, 7)

Anderson contended that nations must be interpreted as *imagined political communities*: “[...] it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 2006, 6). The construction of a collective identity thus implies the construction of an imagined community.

- 3 Hobsbawm, Gellner, and Anderson further emphasise that the process of constructing national collective identities was based more on *inventions* and arbitrarily selected historical reminiscences than on actual facts.³ This selection of certain historical codes was thus usually accompanied by the omission of others. The process of constructing national collective identities was characterised by *inventions, conscious inclusions, and omissions*.

How did these constructions of collective national identity become broadly effective, or more precisely, how could they come to permeate a society?

- 4 Certain *political and bureaucratic elites* played central roles in this process. Giesen names above all the bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and literati in the case of the Western European nation states. He explicitly distinguishes between political and intellectual elites as supporting groups for the formation of collective identity. Through the bourgeois public sphere and the dissemination of printed texts, the idea of the nation was able to spread via forms of communication that reached all of society (Giesen 1991, 14–17, 68). Anderson names as further supporting groups the political and bureaucratic elites of the emerging states, who were active in the administration and travelled throughout the emerging territory (Anderson 2006, 53–55; cf. in this regard, for the example of post-revolutionary France, Ozouf 1976, 361). Stein Rokkan, whose works are more in the tradition of modernisation theory, names seven groups of people: (a) *nation-builders*, who can largely control the state apparatus, (b) nation state oriented church leadership groups, (c) church leadership groups that were subordinate to the Pope and thus more supranational in orientation, (d) non-conformist, dissident religious activists, (e) established and cooperating large landowners, (f) cooperating urban entrepreneurs, and (g) regional protest movements that resist the control of the centre (Rokkan 1979, 239).
- 5 Collective identities are established in *processes of social, and also societal, construction*. Hobsbawm distinguishes three phases: in the first phase, only cultural, literary, and folkloristic proto-nationalisms existed; in the second phase, the nationalist avant-garde of the standard bearer groups began to spread their

ideas; and in the third phase, these gained the support of the broad mass of the population. For this penetration to work, it was essential that it was also bottom-up. People had to connect their hopes, fears, desires, and interests with the emerging nation (Hobsbawm 2008, 10–12). Gellner further points out that the success of this penetration was centrally based on state institutions such as schools and bureaucracies; in this process, an official version of nationalism merely assimilated the old traditions (Gellner 1983, 57).

- 6 There are certain *media and preconditions* of the penetration, such as the formation of high cultures and written standardised languages and of a (recipient) public.
- 7 Certain *practices and symbols* play a key role. Monuments, flags, buildings, festivals, rites, commemorative holidays, processions, military parades, etc. institutionalise collective identities by making them tangible in people's everyday lives.
- 8 Nations are usually also ascribed an *emotional significance*. They are associated with kinship, bonding, and homeland (Anderson 2006, 53).

Here, a fundamental problem posed by the question of the construction of imagined communities becomes apparent. Anderson and Gellner convincingly describe central factors in the construction of collective identities. They also show how traditions and religious motifs were incorporated, but they do not show why masses of people developed emotional ties to their nations. Ultimately, neither can *explain* why people identify emotionally with a nation. With regard to the EU, it remains an open question how much emotional attribution is needed or to be expected (see [Chapter 8](#)).

These eight factors have shaped successful processes of national identity construction. We can therefore assume that they may also be effective in the construction of European identity:

- 1 Overall, the process of constructing collective identities must be understood as the *construction of meaning*.
- 2 There are *no predefined criteria* for the meanings to be used in the construction processes.
- 3 They will usually *refer to certain historical or factual circumstances and more or less consciously omit others*.
- 4 Certain *supporting groups* have a central role, including intellectuals as well as political and bureaucratic elites, in the construction of collective identities
- 5 Their ideas assert themselves in *processes of societal penetration* that are strongly controlled from the top-down, but which require a bottom-up correspondence – the meaningful contents of collective identities must not only be compatible with established social codes, but also correspond to the interests, desires, and fears of the population in order for them to prevail.
- 6 Preconditions for this penetration are *media* such as written languages, communications, and a public sphere.
- 7 *Practices and symbols* can effectively support penetration.
- 8 National collective identities are loaded not only with certain meanings as their content but also with *emotions*.

2.2.1.4 Identity and Demarcation: The Role of Stereotypes

The construction of collective identities is always connected with *demarcations*, both with regard to their individual components and their role as patterns of meaning: when a “self” is defined, this also determines, at least implicitly, what the “other” is. In most cases, the other is explicitly designated and used to reinforce the description of the self. Previous findings on the construction of collective identity patterns therefore point to the central role of *stereotypes*. Stereotypes, which are often directly equated with prejudices, are *attributions about certain characteristics of a social category*, usually a certain group of people. The term stereotype, formulated in a value-neutral way, simply means that a social category is cognitively associated with certain characteristics. Stereotypes were first mentioned in Walter Lippmann’s 1922 book “The Public Opinion” (Lippmann 1949), where he speaks about the assumptions people have about the world and about the “pictures in our head” (Lippmann 1949, 94, 104). In the meantime, a stereotype is understood across disciplines as *a set of attributions of meaning to a social category, a group, or a political unit*, which goes hand in hand with *demarcations between the self and the other* (Brown 1996, 82; H.-H. Hahn and E. Hahn 2002, 20–21).

Stereotypes are thus not identical with prejudices, but they can be used to justify them (cf. Brown 1996, 82–84; H.-H. Hahn and E. Hahn 2002; H.-H. Hahn 2007), as stereotypes may also be linked to value judgments and hence, a devaluation of others, or of the Other, can be based on the stereotypes. Stereotypes hence are emotionally loaded generalisations. This functions largely independent of personal experience and empirically proven findings. It is therefore difficult to invalidate stereotypes with rational appeals, even though many stereotypes contain little or no truth. Because of these characteristics, stereotypes are very stable; they often reappear or are successfully revived even after decades or centuries (H.-H. Hahn and E. Hahn 2002, 22–24, 40).

Stereotypes are points of crystallisation in the construction of collective identities that have proven themselves as successful and effective over years, decades, or even centuries.

In processes of collective identity construction, stereotypes serve to reduce complexity by distinguishing “Us” and “Them” and hence simplifying and channelling the process of constructing commonalities. Secondly, they can be used to confirm the social position of individuals and collectives. They serve to designate both members and non-members of a collective (H.-H. Hahn and E. Hahn 2002).

2.2.2 Theorising and Operationalising European Identity

In empirical research, to analyse a concept usually requires to define and operationalise this concept first. However, I have established above that the academic debate on European identity is not based on a shared definition of collective identity. This

is not surprising insofar as the contributions come from diverse (sub-)disciplines and demonstrate different approaches to the concept of identity, theories of identity, and on how to operationalise it. The debate on European identity also shows numerous theoretical and conceptual ambiguities and contradictions. Thus, different levels and dimensions of European identity – the contents of identity as a pattern of meaning, identification by individuals, and processes of construction – are often used ambiguously or are insufficiently clarified, attributed, or theoretically justified. In the debate, there is however broad agreement on one point: most contributors point to the disagreement about the concept and the problem of conceptual vagueness.

The following will therefore first systematise the debate on European identity. Only a few overviews or attempts at classification exist in the literature thus far, and the existing ones each refer to certain perspectives. Checkel and Katzenstein consider the historical development (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009), Duchesne the more quantitative-empirical contributions (Duchesne 2008), and Liebert the German debate (Liebert 2009).

In this respect, it is first important to classify the contributions. Research on European identity has contributed to the conceptualisation and theorisation of the field and has provided quantitative and qualitative empirical results, with many contributions dealing with both aspects. The conceptual and theoretical contributions, in turn, can be quite clearly distinguished into two strands. The individualistic perspective mostly starts from Easton's conceptions of identification and support (for this approach, see Bellucci et al. 2012; Bergbauer 2018; Bruter 2019, 2005; M. Castano 2004; Cerutti, Vivien A. Schmidt, and Lucarelli 2012; Duchesne 2008; Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009a; R. K. Herrmann and Brewer 2004; Kaina 2009; Kaina, Karolewski, and Kuhn 2015; Mühler and Opp 2006; Westle 2003a, 2003b). From a macro-perspective, European identity has predominantly been considered with regard to its contents and as a pattern of meaning. Some contributions in this direction have an explicitly normative orientation and discuss normative criteria and ideals of European identity (see Cerutti, Vivien A. Schmidt, and Lucarelli 2012; Cerutti 2009, 2005; Delanty 1999; Habermas 1999a, 2001, 2004; Meyer 2009; Nida-Rümelin 2007). Other contributions look more at the conceptual level (Bauböck, Mokre, and Weiss 2003; Bruter 2019; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Galpin 2017; Giesen 2008; Kaina, Karolewski, and Kuhn 2015; Pollack 2008; Risse 2000, 2003), and still others consider the historicity of European identity and/or its possible contents (Giesen 2008; Giesen and Rauer 2003; Strath 2002).

Oftentimes, but not always, the epistemological orientation of the contributions is also accompanied by a different perspective on the role of identity in democratic theory. For example, micro-level approaches usually take the functionalist perspective and argue that a political system needs political identity in the sense of *identification and support* in order to remain stable and as a condition for the acceptance of redistributive decisions. A broader definition of democratic identity as a self-definition of a demos and a condition for democratic practice, on the other hand, is rather rare in contributions from the individualist perspective. An exception here is Westle, who explicitly emphasises the role of citizens as sovereigns

(Westle 2003a). In the contributions on the macro-perspective, on the other hand, this is nearly the default definition used.

2.2.2.1 *Synthesis and Integration of Theoretical Approaches*

The preceding explanations have made it clear that micro- and macro-oriented approaches to European identity each consider *different dimensions of the explanandum*. The present study’s conception of European identity therefore integrates these two perspectives, in addition to the theoretical-normative one. Table 2.2 summarises the theoretical approaches integrated within the analytical concept, their epistemological orientation (if explicable), their explananda, and their explanatory potential.

In the conceptual discussion on European identity, there are some contributions that at least integrate these perspectives (implicitly or explicitly) and therefore contribute essential aspects to the heuristic. This concerns, firstly, the role of *multiple individual identities*: individuals always have several affiliations, so the individual component of *European identity can only be thought of as a multi-level identity* (for instance, Bruter 2005; Delanty 1999; R. K. Herrmann and Brewer 2004, 8–10; Kaina 2009, 58–60; Risse 2010; Westle 2003a, 2003b).

Westle and Risse lay out models for the relationship of the different identity levels: Westle distinguishes a *zero-sum model*, in which reinforcing one identity comes at the expense of another identity, from a *concordance model* of identities, in which different identity levels complement each other, and a context model, in which orientations alternate in a situationally and contextually determined way (Westle 2003a, 454–457, 474–475; see also below). In addition to the zero-sum model, Risse distinguishes, first, a *layer model* in which the different identity levels are layered on

Table 2.2 Theories integrated in the analytical model on the construction of European identity

	<i>(Normative) democratic theory</i>	<i>Micro-oriented/ quantitatively oriented theories</i>	<i>Macro-oriented/ qualitative theories</i>
Epistemological perspective		Individualistic	Holistic
Explanandum	Democratic-theoretical function of collective identity	Construction of European identity as a pattern of individual attitudes	Construction of European identity as a pattern of meaning
Contribution to the integrated analytical model	Theoretical-normative criteria for assessing European identity and its processes of construction	Theories and empirical findings on individual elements of European identity	Theories and empirical findings on the construction of European identity as a pattern of meaning

Source: Own Representation.

top of each other. Which of the layers is activated then depends on the context in which the individual is acting (*layer cake model* or *model of nested identities*, see also Duchesne 2008; Kaina 2009, 64–67). Secondly, Risse proposes a model in which the different aspects of multiple identities are intermingled or cannot be clearly separated from each other (*marble cake model*). Here, too, affiliations are activated according to contexts, but they are connected – for example, Greek identity with European identity (Risse 2000). There are also two additional models. The model of *cross-cutting identities* points out that not all members of one identity group are also members of another (a female European is a woman, as is a female Asian, so they share gender but not regional affiliation). The model of *separate identities* assumes that these overlapping identities do not pose problems because an individual can identify with different groups independently of one another (see Kaina 2009, 72).

Further conceptual reflections on European identity come from Duchesne (Duchesne 2008). She combines an individualistic perspective with a constructivist approach and emphasises several crucial aspects concerning the micro- and macro-levels. First, EU citizens are not an arbitrary social group: they make up a political entity with a democratic purpose. Secondly, European identity formation is an ongoing process, and accordingly the analytical perspective must also be directed towards a process and not be seeking a completed result. Thirdly, and this point is also emphasised by Westle (Westle 2003b, 120), European identity is emerging in post-industrial societies that are nevertheless strongly anchored in their national identities. Thus a concept of European identity must include these national references.

The multi-level character of European identity reinforces the need to combine micro-, macro-, and meso-perspectives in the analysis (cf. Karolewski and Kaina 2006, 305). Bruter notes that micro- and macro-perspectives point to different ways of constructing collective identity – the micro-perspective points to the *bottom-up* direction from the citizens to the EU, while the macro-perspective points to the *top-down* direction from the macro-criteria of European identity to the citizens (Bruter 2005).

Any analysis of European identity must therefore consider a *multi-level system of identities*; i.e., the analysis of European identity construction must consider different levels. It is important to also question the relationship of these identity levels to one another – especially the national and European ones.

In line with the different research perspectives on European identity, the empirical *results* can also be divided into two large groups: *quantitative-empirical*, which considers the individual level, and *qualitative-empirical*, which refers to the macro-level and the role of elites.

2.2.3 *The Individual Dimension of European Identity*

Quantitative-empirical research findings primarily consider the development of individual attitudes towards the EU, the factors that condition them, and the

relationship between identifications in the case of multiple identities, i.e., at the *level of citizens*. The findings provide revealing clues as to how the construction of European identity might proceed. However, there is one major limitation worth noting here. The operationalisations and indicators of the respective surveys were usually developed for national identity and not with a view to the specifics of the EU. In this respect, the extent to which they actually measure European identity adequately is questionable; a clarification and operationalisation of the theoretical foundations for doing so are lacking (cf. Bergbauer 2018; Bruter 2005, XII; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009, 10; Duchesne 2008; Kaina 2009).

In the following, quantitative findings on the formation and contents of European identity will be summarised for the period preceding the discourses studied, i.e., the time prior to 2005.

- 1 *EU identification, image, trust, and support*: According to quantitative-empirical results, first of all, about half of EU citizens had a non-specific form of positive identification with the EU before 2005, the year of the TCE discourses. According to the Eurobarometer data collected on the point, in spring 2005, 66% of Europeans felt attached to “Europe” (not the EU, Eurobarometer 2005a, 111). Attachment to Europe was the strongest in Hungary (92%), Romania (86%), Poland (83%), and Luxembourg (82%) and the lowest in Cyprus (32%; Eurobarometer 2005a, 112).

Moreover, numbers differed regarding the different items of trust, support, and image of the EU and its institutions. 47% of respondents reported having a positive image of the EU. However, this image of the EU varied across member states; i.e., according to the national contexts, more than two thirds of the Irish (68%) and Italians (63%) said that they had a positive image of the European Union, but less than a third of the Finns (30%) and Britons (28%; Eurobarometer 2005a, 101, 102).

Trust in the EU institutions had been already declining until spring 2005, being at an average of 46% for the Commission and 52% for the European Parliament (Eurobarometer 2005a, 115, 116). Again, country differences are clearly visible, with 67% of the Belgians expressing trust in both the Commission and EP. Once more, the Britons were at the end with a level of trust of 35% in the EP and 31% in the Commission (Eurobarometer 2005a, 101, 117).

These differences have a tradition: the population of some member states, such as Great Britain, has always been more critical of the EU than that of others, such as Germany.

The available data thus support the thesis that national contexts play a vital role in the emergence of identification with the EU and thus in the formation of European identity.

Furthermore, support for European integration had been declining continuously until 2005 (Bergbauer 2018; Kaina 2009, 15–18). Thus, from the functionalist perspective on collective identity, some authors raise the question of whether the level of acceptance and support of the EU population is sufficient to

maintain the stability of the EU system (Bergbauer 2018; Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009a; Kaina 2009). The six founding states of the EU have a special role in this. There, support for EU membership has declined particularly significantly until 2005. The duration of EU membership was thus not accompanied by higher support for the EU, rather the opposite (Kaina 2009, 21–22, 94).

This suggests it would be useful to seek possible causes for this particularly sharp decline in identification within the founding member states.

As will be discussed in more detail in [Chapter 9](#), this decline of trust in and support of the EU (but also in their national parliaments and governments) was accentuated by the financial crisis. Even if trust in the EU institutions has recovered since 2015, these numbers give a reason for concern.

- 2 *Factors that influence identification with the EU*: Secondly, identification with the EU was not constant but was influenced positively and negatively by certain conditions. For example, *everyday experiences with the EU* played an important role, such as living in the German-French border region which had a positive effect on feelings of belonging to the EU (Schmidberger 1998). Higher *unemployment and economic problems* had a negative effect on identification with the EU (Immerfall and Sobisch 1997). Overall, individuals identified more strongly with the EU if they assessed it more positively. Levels of attachment to the EU were higher in states in which the citizens had a more positive assessment of the EU overall (Pichler 2005; Kaina 2009, 112–116). As will be discussed in [Chapters 4](#) and [9](#), the economic situation also influenced the French referendum discourse and the Brexit discourse.

This suggests that everyday experiences and socio-economic contexts should be included in the analysis of European identity.

- 3 *Variations by group membership*: Thirdly, certain groups of people are traditionally more EU-friendly than others. In particular, a person's level of education is crucial here, as is their level of wealth. The higher either or both are, the more likely the person is to support the EU (for an overview, see Soerensen 2007). This basic premise has been empirically substantiated repeatedly, for example, by the two Eurobarometer surveys following the Irish Lisbon referenda in 2008 and 2009 (Eurobarometer 2008, 2009). It has also been shown that people are more likely to identify with the EU if they expect to *gain* from it (Pichler 2005), which in turn tends to apply above all to the better educated and wealthier. Thus, significant differences can be observed between the rather pro-EU attitudes of better educated and wealthier people towards the EU and those of less educated and poorer people who tend to be more EU-critical (Maier and Risse 2003, 5–6). As will be discussed

in Chapter 9, better educated and wealthier people rather voted in favour of “Yes” in the French Referendum and in favour of “Remain” in the Brexit vote.

The effects of social stratification must therefore be taken into account in the analysis of European identity.

- 4 *Unclear relationship between national and European identity*: Fourthly, the relationship between identification with the EU and national identification remained empirically unclear. A range of authors have considered it, but they came to different or even contradictory results. Some found positive interrelations between national and European identity. In a panel study conducted in West Germany, Opp also found a positive relationship between national and European identity (Opp 2005). Castano, who analysed Belgium and Italy, found a positive correlation between national and European identity and between regional identity and national identity, similar to Opp and Westle (E. Castano 2000). Jiménez et al. also found a positive correlation between national and European identity (Jiménez et al. 2004). Other authors found national and European identities to be conflicting. Arts and Halman came to the conclusion that European integration was perceived as a threat to national identity (Arts and Halman 2006). McLaren found that there is a fear of losing national identity, but that this has no effect on identification with the EU (McLaren 2004).

To explain these contradictory results, Westle’s findings are instructive. She found identification of EU citizens as Europeans to be low when placed in competition with belonging to a nation state, but that the different levels of identity are compatible when they complement each other. On the basis of her analysis, she suggests the already mentioned context model of identities. The relationships between national and European identification depend on the context in which the individuals set them. If a contrast is constructed there, the competition model takes effect. If, on the other hand, a positive relationship is established, the concordance model takes effect. And if no relationship is established, both function independently of each other (Westle 2003a, 474–477). Westle concluded that a “competition model” of identification is not sustainable in the EU but a “concordance model” in which the different levels of identification cross-fertilise and complement each other (Westle 2003a).

The presumed relationship between European and national identification can, thus, finally be summarised with the *thesis that the two levels of identity are most likely to complement each other positively when the contexts address it in this way.*

Findings support the claim that European identity needs to be difference-affirming in that it enables a concordance of national and European identities.

As will be discussed in the course of the study, there is no such simple relation between the contexts and individual identifications.

- 5 *An EU information deficit*: Fifthly, there was an information deficit among the EU population with regard to the EU. This was shown, for example, by a series of Eurobarometer surveys from the end of 2003 onwards. These recorded major trends in opinion on the EU Constitutional Treaty, analysed the four referenda retrospectively, and inquired into the EU population's level of information on the TCE and on the EU in general. Both approval and rejection of the TCE, it turned out, were based on rather abstract reasons; the level of information of the respondents about the EU in general and the TCE in particular was, however, very low (Eurobarometer 2004, 11–12). In the Netherlands, the insufficient level of information was even given as the main reason for rejecting the TCE (32%; Eurobarometer 2005b, 15).

These Eurobarometer results are in fit with other findings that point to respondents having only very vague ideas about the EU. Identification with the EU was often comparatively abstract and free of substantive content (Datler, Wallace, and Spanning 2005); other studies found widespread ignorance of citizens about the EU, which often goes hand in hand with a disinterest in the EU (Kaina 2009, 76, 88–89). This means that researchers still know little about what exactly people actually mean when they say that they feel European (Bruter 2005, XII).

These results indicate that the substantive content that citizens associate with the EU is non-specific and/or can vary greatly. In this respect, the EU also functions as a *black box* onto which a wide variety of content can be projected.

- 6 *Differing national patterns of perception of the EU*: Sixthly, the citizens of different member states associated the EU with very different characteristics and political content (Kaina 2009, 106). It is striking that in the founding states, negative characteristics were most frequently associated with the EU, such as unemployment, waste of money, loss of cultural identity, or an increase in crime. This supports the thesis that the characteristics that citizens associate with the EU are influenced by certain contextual factors such as the different durations of EU membership of the member states (Kaina 2009, 101–102).

It thus seems particularly relevant to examine these different contexts and the constructions of patterns of meaning within the national contexts.

- 7 *Differences in orientations towards values*: Seventhly, there were significant differences between the populations of “old” and “new” member states with regard

to their attitudes towards basic democratic orientations. Gerhards compared the attitudes of citizens of the EU member states, the accession countries of 2004 and 2007, as well as potential accession countries on the basis of data from the European Value Survey of 1999/2000. He found that the value orientations of the majority of the population in the EU differed from those of the accession countries of 2007, Bulgaria and Romania. In contrast, in the “core Europe” of the first member states, the results were largely homogeneous (Gerhards 2004). Similarly, Fuchs found the citizens of the Western European states to already share common value orientations while there were differences with the Central and Eastern European states (Fuchs 2001). Beyond these studies, this area is not widely researched.

2.2.4 *European Identity as a Pattern of Meaning*

Macro-oriented approaches have tended to consider the *EU political and bureaucratic elites* more than the EU citizenry – not least because these elites have been the decisive actors in constructing European identity. Research findings for the period until 2005 can be summarised as follows:

- 1 *The central role of elites*: First, political *elites* played a central role in the discursive construction of European identity (cf. Banchoff 1999; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Diez Medrano 2009; Kaelble 2009; Seidendorf 2007, 2008; Vivien A. Schmidt 1997; Vivien A. Schmidt 2004, 2006; Weiss 2003). In these processes, politicians and functionaries were involved both at the EU level (i.e., in the Commission and the EP) and at the national level. The identity constructions in the two settings, however, were not identical and could even be quite contradictory. The EU Commission in its documents emphasised founding myths and commonalities in the culture and history of the EU, contrasted the EU with the USA and Japan, and employed symbols such as flags or Europe Day. Policies such as cultural and scientific exchange programmes and measures supporting regional identities and regional infrastructure were also intended to contribute to identity building. The Commission thus tried to fill the concept of the EU with positive content, founded in history, but also oriented towards the future, oriented towards an explicit model of European identity: “unity in diversity” (Pantel 1999, 52–54). In contrast, the construction attempts on the part of national elites reflected two things. They were often much more ambivalent, containing not only the unanimously positive but also the critical. They also differed depending on the state of origin of those involved (see, for instance, Banchoff 1999; Hörber 2006; Marcussen et al. 2001; Stahl 2007a, 2007b; Vivien A. Schmidt 1997, 2004, 2006; Waever 2005). For example, high-ranking politicians from Germany and France in their speeches all attempted to attribute a meaning to the EU and to make proposals on how to organise and further develop it, referring to EU integration as a historical necessity and to the European “founding fathers”, national characteristics were also visible in the speeches. The image of Europe as a process or project dominated in speeches by Jacques

Chirac and Lionel Jospin. Joschka Fischer and Gerhard Schröder's speeches, on the other hand, mainly focused on the concept of integration, referring specifically to the institutional organisation, the eastward enlargement of the EU, and the idea of constitutional patriotism (Weiss 2003, 183–187).

Thus, a research strategy that focuses on the *role of political elites* seems to make sense; however, it must take into account *their status* and the *national contexts*.

- 2 *Nation state and European identity constructions referenced each other in elite EU constructions*: These references, and this confirms the quantitative findings, could be charged both positively and negatively (see, for instance, Marcussen et al. 2001; Vivien A. Schmidt 1997, 2004, 2006; Weiss 2003).

It is therefore necessary to examine whether national and European identity constructions are related to each other positively, negatively, or neutrally.

- 3 *Similarities to processes of nation state identity construction*: Thirdly, elite practices of identity construction at the European level showed a number of similarities to national identity constructions, namely, in the *manner of construction*, the *demarcation* from the outside and the role of an Other, and the recourse to *founding myths*. Like national identities, supranational identities were both *discursively produced* and *defined by institutional practices and socio-economic structures* (Lepsius 1999, 202–206; Puntischer-Riekmann and Wodak 2003, 284–286). And, as in the construction of national identities, discursive demarcation to the outside played a decisive role in the EU. European identities, like national ones, utilised an interplay between inclusion and exclusion. Hence the use of stereotypes played a decisive role when EU political and bureaucratic elites in their discourses demarcated the EU from the outside, e.g., from the USA and Japan (Pantel 1999; Puntischer-Riekmann and Wodak 2003, 284–286).

The recourse to a founding myth regularly played an important role in the construction of European identity, even if it, for instance in the sense of the EU as a “guarantor of peace”, was not directly related to a common history but is, rather, oriented towards the future (Pantel 1999; Puntischer-Riekmann and Wodak 2003, 284–286; Weiss 2003).

Thus it is vital to consider the roles of *institutional practices*, of *demarcations*, and of *founding myths* in constructions of European identity.

- 4 *National European elite conceptions*: Fourthly, the different national EU discourses, which the ruling national elites represented and perpetuated over the years, gave rise to different national elite conceptions of Europe. They differed in origins, motives, and orientation because they had to be compatible with the interests of the respective national elites and the respective national identity narratives (on national EU conceptions, see also Baasner 2008; Banchoff 1999; Diez 1995, 1999; Diez Medrano 2003; Hörber 2006; Jachtenfuchs 2002; Jung 1999; Larsen 1997; Marcussen et al. 2001; Sauder 1995; Vivien A. Schmidt 1997, 2004, 2006; Seidendorf 2007; Stahl 2007b; Waever 2005). Depending on the national context, elite conceptions of Europe constructed rather harmonious, rather ambivalent, or rather contradictory relations between European and national identity. Germany and France are examples of very different national elite conceptions of Europe as well as different strategies of discursive change.

In France, a Gaullist conception of Europe long dominated in which France's sovereignty, uniqueness, and grandeur were in the foreground and France was set rather in contrast to the rest of Europe. From the 1980s onwards, beginning with Mitterrand's presidency, the socialists coined the idea that "France's future lies in Europe". A specific conception of Europe developed that emphasised the French *mission civilisatrice* towards the EU. However, the EU remained an instrument of French sovereignty (cf. Banchoff 1999; Hörber 2006; Marcussen et al. 2001; Jachtenfuchs 2002; Jung 1999; Sauder 1995; Vivien A. Schmidt 2006).

The German elite's conception of Europe is founded on a positive orientation towards European integration as an opportunity for rapid normalisation of the German status quo and for rapid economic growth. The Christian Democratic parties therefore emphasised European unification immediately after the war as an alternative to the nationalism and National Socialism of the past, but also to Communism. Christianity, Democracy, and the Social Market Economy became core components of the German European narrative. From the 1960s onwards, an elite consensus developed in Germany across the political spectrum: only further integration within the EU could firmly anchor Germany in the West and secure peace (cf. Banchoff 1999; Hörber 2006; Jachtenfuchs 2002; Jung 1999; Marcussen et al. 2001; Sauder 1995; Vivien A. Schmidt 2006).

On this basis it can be stated that

Discourses critical of the EU or motifs used by national elites often address specifically national ambivalences, criticism, or demarcation from the EU.

In pro-EU elite discourses, identification with the EU tends to be related to demarcations of the EU from the outside and to one or more founding myths.

Finally, national elite EU discourses or conceptions can be relatively stable or more changeable.

As will be discussed in [Chapter 7](#), the fact that an EU elite conception is positive does not entail that the population simply follows in their attitudes. However, a number of authors claim that national elite EU discourses could generate a belief in EU legitimacy or influence identification and support (cf. Banchoff 1999; Gaffney 1999; Schild 2002; Vivien A. Schmidt 1997, 2004, 2006). Gaffney points out that national elite EU discourses are much more effective in this respect than those of the EU elites, since they, different from the EU elites, refer to an established system of national symbols and myths, which the EU does not have (Gaffney 1999).

- 5 *Minor role of EU citizens*: The strong role of political elites in the discursive construction of European identity had a downside: citizens were hardly involved in these construction processes. Discourses on European identity construction rarely took place with citizens' participation (cf. Diez Medrano 2009). How national elite discourses were received has also raised scant attention by researchers. Juan Diez Medrano's findings here show that citizens received the national elite discourses relatively clearly and referred to them in their own interpretations of Europe. However, this could take the form both of identification with the EU and of a distancing or demarcation from it (Diez Medrano 2003).

National elite EU discourses can potentially influence identifications with the EU and belief in its legitimacy. They are thus of central importance to the formation of European identity.

It would therefore be a worthwhile endeavour to also focus more on the role of citizens in the construction of European identity.

- 6 *Opposing and controversial constructions*: Not only were different contents associated with the EU in national elite discourses, but there were also opposing attempts at construction, both EU-wide (for example, the positions on secularism or abortion among French and Polish political elites traditionally differed diametrically, regardless of who is currently in power in each country) and nationally (the discourse on Europe of government and opposition in Poland differ fundamentally since one or two decades). Citizens' growing dissatisfaction with the EU was also being taken up politically and discursively; there has been an increase in *EU-critical* politicians and positions, many of them being associated with populist parties and actors in almost all EU member states (Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009b; Harmsen and Spiering 2004; Sczerbiak and Taggart 2008; Vries 2018; see [Chapter 9](#)).

Thus, national conceptions of Europe that are constructed and taken up in elite discourses are neither immutable nor are they always dominant in the long term. Rather, they are always contested, even at the elite level. However, the degree of conflict varies.

Taken together, these results clearly show that the content of European identity or, to put it more concretely, what the EU stands for, and what is connected and attributed to it are not only not yet settled, but rather actively contested.

This confirms the thesis that the EU functions as a *black box*, onto which a great variety of content can be projected.

2.2.5 Working Definitions of European Identity and Its Analysis

The results so far can be summarised in the following working definitions and basic research assumptions about European identity, its study, its formation, and the factors that condition it.

The *normative-theoretical role of democratic identity* concerns the two levels described in [Section 2.1](#) (normative-theoretical and the heuristic of empirical analysis). The following *working definition serves as a counterfactual norm within this study*:

- 1 From the perspective of democratic theory, European identity is to be understood as a *self-definition of the EU demos*, i.e., an awareness of and identification with the EU level to which rights and democratic practice refer, as well as a mutual identification and recognition among the demos' members.
- 2 Such a democratic identity is a prerequisite for the stability of the EU as a political system and a condition for the emergence of democratic practice. The normative requirements of European identity are that the EU population develops a minimum degree (though it remains to be clarified how much this "minimum degree" is) of positive identification with each other and with the polity, as well as a minimum degree of attribution of political-democratic meanings to the EU, at least by a majority of the population.
- 3 These political-democratic meanings must make it possible to balance conflicting identities and values as well as different levels of identities. Thus, a difference-affirming, multi-level identity must emerge that is based on a limited set of political-democratic meanings.

The following *working definition on the construction processes and analysis of European identity* emerges for the *heuristics* of the empirical study. It is the result of the integration of the theories and findings of the conceptual and empirical analyses described above:

- 1 European identity is shaped by two dimensions: (a) It is conditioned by individual identifications and (b) it is also a pattern of meaning, i.e., a macro-phenomenon superordinate to individual identifications.
- 2 It is thus socially constructed and loaded with different meanings in the process.
- 3 European identity should be analysed by considering (a) its micro-component (individual identifications and attitudes) and (b) its macro-component (its substantive meaning(s) and its role as a pattern of meaning) and the social construction of each.

2.2.6 The Construction of European Identity – Results of the Theory Integration

As a result of the integration of theories conducted above, it is first necessary to specify the factors which can be assumed to condition or influence the construction of European identity and which are thus central elements of the heuristics of the empirical part of this study:

- 1 European identity emerges in processes of social construction.
- 2 Its emergence is stimulated by EU-related democratic practice.
- 3 The construction of European identity is to be understood in part as a construction of attributions of meaning.
- 4 National and European identity constructions relate to each other in this process.
- 5 Certain historical or factual circumstances are included, while others are more or less deliberately omitted.
- 6 Stereotypes in the form of attributions to the self and the other are used, such as the discursive demarcation from (still disputed) outside as well as future-oriented founding myths.
- 7 Standard bearer groups play central roles, namely, as EU elites who generate EU-wide identity ideas in the Commission or in the EP and, to an extent, also disseminate them in a targeted manner, and as national elites who are essential for the formation of national conceptions of the EU.
- 8 Their ideas can prevail in processes of social penetration.
- 9 These will often be strongly top-down, but must have a bottom-up correspondence in order to transmit successfully.
- 10 The meaning of collective identities must be compatible with established societal codes.
- 11 They must also correspond to the interests, desires, and fears of the population so that they can prevail.
- 12 Requirements for penetration are media such as written languages, communications, and the public sphere.
- 13 Practices and symbols can effectively support penetration.

Quantitative-empirical and discourse-analytical findings on the emergence of European identity have further shown that national contexts play a central role in this process:

- 1 There are different national degrees of identification (with a particularly sharp drop in approval in the six founding states).
- 2 Value orientations within the EU differ according to nationality.
- 3 Content associated with the EU differs according to national affiliation at both the citizen and the elite level.
- 4 The only thing that runs counter to these national influences is social stratification: the educated and wealthy identify more strongly with the EU than less educated and poorer people.
- 5 The emergence of European identity is thus tied to national identity patterns.
- 6 European identity is thus only sustainable as a multi-level system of different identity levels. Conversely, if there are conflicts here, they probably negatively influence the formation of European identity.
- 7 The emergence and persistence of European identity is thus also conditioned by a positive relationship between national and European identities.
- 8 A concordance model of identity levels, in which these harmoniously refer to each other, only seems to be sustainable if the respective, mostly national, contexts support it.

National EU discourses are therefore of central importance to the formation of European identity as a multi-level identity. They need to be distinguished from (a) national EU conceptions and (b) national EU narratives:

- 1 *A national EU discourse* is a discourse limited in time, within and through which different national EU conceptions are discussed and influenced.
- 2 The participants in the national EU discourses strive to assert their respective positive, ambivalent, or negative concepts of Europe.
- 3 A – temporarily – dominant national EU conception may thus emerge, but this is by no means always the case.
- 4 A national EU conception is understood as an at least temporary and, in the use of certain groups or actors, stable set of interrelated attributions of meaning to the EU and one's own state.
- 5 The national EU conceptions of Europe have each been adapted to national identity constructions and the interests of national elites and therefore differ in origins, motifs, and orientation. They usually also contain nationally specific ambivalences or criticisms, and they are never uncontroversial or even monolithic.

- 6 Thus, there are both more broadly anchored and accordingly more stable EU conceptions, as well as more changeable or contested ones. There can also be opposing or competing EU conceptions within a state, although the degrees of conflict vary.
- 7 A dominant national EU conception that is stable in essential aspects in the longer term should be understood as a *national EU narrative* that ascribes certain characteristics and value orientations to the EU and links these – positively or as a negative contrast – with a corresponding ascription to the speaker’s state. The question is, however, to what extent and where such stable and dominant national narratives of Europe actually exist. If there are several different conceptions of Europe within one national setting, none of which is able to assert itself, it is not possible to speak of the existence of a national EU narrative.
- 8 The EU narrative is thus the most stable of the three heuristic categories: EU discourse, EU conception, and EU narrative.

2.3 Research Questions

To sum up, the construction of European identity must include the construction of certain meanings because European identity must function as a pattern of meaning in order to be able to fulfil its functions as predicated by democratic theory. However, these meanings are currently open and even contested, and to a great extent determined by national EU discourses and national contexts.

The central methodological thesis of the present study is thus that national EU discourses are to be understood as processes of attributing meaning to the EU and thus function as *means for the construction of European identity*.

As such, they also influence the possibilities of strong democratisation and the democratic legitimisation of the EU.

These considerations lead to the following overarching question: *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?*

The overarching question leads to two specific research questions:

- 1 *How do the national EU discourses by political, academic, and economic elites, mediated via national quality newspapers, construct the EU and Europe?*
- 2 *How are national EU discourses – and thus also the formation of European identity – shaped by specific national contexts and references?*

Research question 1 requires a discourse-analytical approach and is divided into the following sub-questions, which will be clarified below and in [Chapter 3](#):

(1a) How do the discourses proceed and why? (1b) What are the central actors, rules, reference levels, topics, motifs, arguments, and references in the national EU discourses?

Research question 2 is divided into the following sub-questions, which are also explained in detail below and in [Chapter 3](#): *What role do each of the following play in the development of national EU discourses: (2a) the national political system, (2b) the national political parties, (2c) citizens as recipients of the discourses, their attitudes towards the topic, as well as the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the discourses, (2d) central motifs of national identity narratives, (2e) central aspects and motifs of previous European policy discourses?*

I derive seven detailed research questions at the end of [Chapter 3](#) based on these two overarching research questions and the theory integration. These will be addressed and answered in the course of the study.

2.3.1 Objectives and Design of the Study

A final concretisation of the object of the study is now necessary. The study of meaning-constructing national EU discourses tells us something about which contents are associated with the EU in the discourse and thus the meanings discursively linked with European identity. It also shows which of these meanings have been able to prevail in the discourse. The present study can thus prove *how* the meanings of European identity were constructed, *what* they are, and *why* they were able to come out on top. In doing so, the study of national EU discourses primarily considers the level of patterns of meaning or the macro-level of European identity construction. The empirical results prove whether and to what extent national media discourses construct references to the self-definition of a demos and difference-affirming multi-level identities. As said above, at the micro-level, elite discourses can contribute to or lead to the emergence of a self-definition of the demos and a difference-affirming multi-level identity among citizens. The context analysis therefore explicitly includes the micro-level (see [Chapter 7](#)). However, the study does not explain, let alone test, any causal effects in that respect (but see Wiesner 2015 for hypotheses on these relations).

The present study is primarily designed as a discourse analysis, and thus qualitative. In addition, it integrates quantitative components such as results of opinion polls. It has a predominantly exploratory and theory-building character. As a qualitative study, it is particularly conditional on methodological standards, steps, and categories being made explicit just as the research question, theoretical approach, and epistemological and methodological premises are (on the following see in detail Wiesner 2022; Wiesner, Haapala, and Palonen 2017). Such a need for concretisation already arose for the heuristics due to the numerous theoretical and methodological ambiguities and different models of European identity. This part has been discussed and structured above and will be resumed in [Section 3.2.6](#). But it is also necessary to clarify the methods used and their operationalisation. Both the fields of discourse analysis and qualitative methods allow for a wider range of variations in terms of theories, research designs, standards, steps, and categories than quantitative approaches. Thus, the task of concretisation is comprehensive,

especially because discourse analytical works often fail to make theories, research designs, standards, steps, and categories very explicit, unlike in other qualitative works. Therefore, I independently designed a comparative discourse-analytical design that will be described in the following chapter.

Notes

- 1 I do not, however, conduct an empirical comparison of theories (Opp 1978; P. Schmidt and J. Herrmann 2010) with the aim of determining which theories are particularly explanatory – this would also make little sense in view of the different epistemological presuppositions and explananda of the theories discussed.
- 2 Anderson describes this in striking terms for the formerly Spanish colonies of South American. These had emerged as administrative units and developed national movements in the early 19th century which then redefined the territorial boundaries of the administrative units as nations (Anderson 2006, 47–50).
- 3 Gellner therefore also points to the central role played by decisions of the will: Nations have come into being through the establishment of a relationship between human will, a polity, and a culture (Gellner 1983, 55–58).

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3 Methodology and Research Design

The central methodological premise of the study has already been stated:

The two discourses surrounding the ratification procedures of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 in Germany and France ascribe meaning to the EU and are regarded as potential means for the construction of European identity. As such, they also influence the possibilities of strong democratisation and democratic legitimation of the EU.

The study is thus a discourse analysis and a comparative study of the two discourses with the overarching research question: *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?* It is split into two part questions, 1. *How do national EU discourses by political, scientific, and economic elites, mediated via national quality newspapers, construct the EU and Europe?* And 2. *How are national EU discourses, and thus the formation of European identity, shaped by specific national contexts and references?*

It should be noted that it follows from the epistemological premises on the effect of discourse set out below that any discourse about a topic necessarily constructs meaning. It is therefore not possible for a discourse to take place without meaning being constructed. The decisive question is, rather, what meaning is constructed – and this can, as the remarks on the German EU discourse in 2005 show, also consist in a far-reaching lack of content. This chapter now further specifies and explains the choice of methods and the research design.

3.1 Methodology and Situating of the Study

Defining a study as a discourse analysis opens a field of methodological concepts that is not only diverse, multi- and interdisciplinary but also confusing. Discourse-analytical approaches differ considerably with regard to premises, procedures, and

topics, as well as the underlying theories and the levels of analysis considered. Some approaches are more language related, others more broadly rooted in discourse theory and analysis (for overviews see Boreus and Bergstrom 2017; Dunmire 2012; Hamilton, Tannen, and Schiffrin 2018; Johnstone 2018, 1–8; Titscher 2000; Ruth Wodak 2008b; Wood and Kroger 2000, 22–24, 96). The term *Discourse Analysis* usually does not include discourse-theoretical and post-structuralist works (Ruth Wodak 2008a, 4–6). However, these are of particular interest for the present study, as will be discussed below.

The statement that the present study is a discourse analysis is therefore primarily a central methodological premise of the work, but no specific method or procedure follows from it. Rather, conducting a discourse analysis presupposes explicitly defining the study's theoretical and methodological standpoint, the methodology, and also the concept of discourse used, and locating the work within the field of Discourse Analysis.

Despite its breadth, the field of discourse analytical approaches is characterised by the following core of common epistemological and methodological premises, which are also the basis of the present study.

Table 3.1 Epistemological and methodological premises of Discourse Analysis

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- 1 Discourse analytical approaches share a fundamental epistemological perspective: language and its use are not primarily seen as a means of transporting statements, but as objects of investigation. Language is understood as a *social practice and action* (see in detail Wiesner, Haapala, and Palonen 2017) and examined as such: “When you say something you are doing something [...]” (Johnstone 2008, 230).
 - 2 Language is, further, regarded as a social practice that *constructs meaning* (cf. Wood and Kroger 2000, 3), as well as – in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – power relations (Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997; Jäger 2009, 251–253; van Dijk 2001). Analysing linguistic action via Discourse Analysis thus serves to illuminate the way in which it constructs meaning and, potentially, power relations.
 - 3 A *discourse* is understood fundamentally as a set of thematically or institutionally bounded, meaning-constituting, and language-bound events or practices (Johnstone 2018, 2–6; Wood and Kroger 2000, 3–6).
 - 4 Discourse analytical approaches assume that social actors negotiate definitions of reality and symbolic orders via discourses as collective processes of interaction.
 - 5 Discourses circulate ideas – this is how power can be maintained and legitimacy, identification, and ideologies can be spread and constructed.
 - 6 Discourses are not arbitrary or random, but structured according to certain rules that influence the sayability and attribution of meaning to utterances (Johnstone 2008, 16–19, 2018, 141–142; van Dijk 1998, 198; Wood and Kroger 2000, 95).
 - 7 The basic aim of a discourse analysis is to explain what happens in discourse and how this happens, as well as to identify the rules and factors that shape the structure of discourse – i.e., the sayability and meaningfulness of statements – and form systems of knowledge (Johnstone 2008, 78, 124–125; van Dijk 1998, 198; Wood and Kroger 2000, 95).
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Source: references in text, own summary, own representation

3.1.1 *Discourse-Analytical Approaches: An Attempt to Compare Theories*

Beyond these premises, as said above, the discourse-analytical approaches at times differ strikingly, namely, in theoretical foundations, terminology, perspective of analysis, and methodological implementation and with regard to the roles they ascribe to language and context (Wood and Kroger 2000, 20–24). While the field of Discourse Analysis thus can be divided into different areas, the boundaries between them are somewhat fluid (Johnstone 2008, 2018; Keller 2007; Ruth Wodak 2008a; Wood and Kroger 2000, 20–24). Even in these accounts of Discourse Analysis, some authors make certain distinctions that others do not. Overall, this results in different typifications.

Nevertheless, in the following I conduct a logical comparison of the theories of discourse-analytical approaches (Schmidt and Herrmann 2010). Similar to [Section 2.2](#), this should serve to distinguish the approaches' analytical perspectives, explananda, possible social-theoretical reference theories, and normative backgrounds. Again, no empirical comparison of theories is made (Opp 1978; Schmidt and Herrmann 2010), in which the aim would be to determine which theories are particularly explanatory – this would also make little sense in view of the different epistemological presuppositions, explananda, and procedures of the approaches discussed.

- 1 *Discourse Analysis is to be distinguished from frame analysis*, which is frequently used in Political Science, having been developed using Erving Goffmann's concept of framing formulated as early as 1974 (Goffman 2008). For Goffman, framing refers to interpretation schemes by which individuals categorise and interpret social occurrences and events. However, frame analysis does not usually analyse these, but rather the central patterns of argumentation and motifs that shape politically relevant linguistic utterances. The field of frame analysis is confusing, and there is hardly any agreement on the central terminology and approaches (cf. Veters 2008, 143–146). In Political Science, the concept is often used without the necessary theoretical and methodological clarifications. In fact, most of the studies referred to as frame analyses are types of content analyses that collect the central arguments and motifs that are present in a discourse, a document, a speech, or similar linguistic material. Compared to the standards of qualitative content analyses (see [Section 3.2.2](#)), however, many of the corresponding works are found lacking. Coding is rarely systematic and comprehensive, and rules of demarcation between motifs are often not transparent. Frame analyses also usually have little or no contextual reference. A central difference to Discourse Analysis is, therefore, that frame analyses focus on the “what” of political statements, namely, on the question of which motifs are used, but not on the “how”, namely, the analysis of processes of meaning construction.
- 2 *Discourse-analytical approaches gained importance in the Social Sciences in the wake of the linguistic and cultural turn*. From the 1980s onwards,

social scientists increasingly regarded language and culture less as pre-political or given and more as socially constructed – and thus as objects of study (Ruth Wodak 2008a, 2; Wood and Kroger 2000). In Political Science, discourse-analytical approaches have only been in use since the late 1990s (van Dijk 2001, 360); since the late 2000s, they have become increasingly widespread (an example is the constructivist school in International Relations, for instance, Larsen 1997; Waever 2005). Social science discourse analyses are also not characterised by a specific theory, methodology, or approach. Rather, they combine the epistemological and methodological perspective of Discourse Analysis with specifically social scientific questions: discourses use language and construct meaning and are thus central to the construction of social and political phenomena such as identity, legitimacy, norms, or domination. The structures of texts are considered only insofar as speakers and listeners use them to produce meaning (Chilton and Schäffner 1997, 214).

- 3 *The clearest distinction can be made between the analytical perspectives.* There are micro, meso, and macro-perspective approaches, with linguistic approaches generally being more micro-analytical. Two poles can be distinguished that mark the ends of a continuum: Conversation Analysis (CA), as the most micro-analytical approach, considers more how people use language; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or post-structuralist approaches (following on Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault), which are more macro-analytical, look more at the effects of discourses on people and their relationships. Pragmatic approaches and “Discourse Analysis in Social Psychology” (DASP) work both macro- and micro-analytically.
- 4 *Discourse analytical approaches also differ with regard to their definitions of the central basic concept of discourse* (cf. Keller 2007, 14–17; Titscher 2000, 53–55). However, this is not only due to the heterogeneity of the field but also to a lack of definitional precision on the parts of the relevant authors. Wodak points out that Foucault alone uses 23 different meanings of discourse (Ruth Wodak 2001c, 4).

The core definition of discourses mentioned at the beginning – discourses are sets of thematically or institutionally definable, meaning-constituting, and language-bound events or practices – is concretised in various ways depending on different theoretical backgrounds (van Dijk 1998, 193–195; Ruth Wodak 2008a, 4–7). On the one hand, there are interpretations primarily related to language, which are accordingly based more strongly on the tradition of linguistics and the philosophy of language. This is the case, for example, with Teun van Dijk (van Dijk 1998, 198), and Ruth Wodak writes:

Discourse can thus be understood as a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated

semiotic, oral, or written tokens, very often as ‘texts’ that belong to specific semiotic types, that is, genres.

(Ruth Wodak 2001b, 66)

Wood and Kroger refer to discourse as “[...] all spoken and written forms of language using (talk and text) as social practice [...]” (Wood and Kroger 2000, 19). In contrast, Johnstone’s definition of discourse is broader. She speaks of “[...] actual instances of communication in the medium of language (Johnstone 2018, 2) [...]” and then refers to the broader context of discourse-theoretical approaches, underlining that building on Foucault, discourses concern patterns of language as well as patterns of belief and habitual action (Johnstone 2018, 3).

Discourse-theoretical approaches reference social-theoretical analytical frameworks or political theories and use even broader definitions of discourse. For Michel Foucault as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, discourses are to be understood as *networks of relationships between different discursive events*. The three also integrate the concept of discourse into specific, more far-reaching concepts of social and political theory (see below and Table 3.2).

- 5 Depending on the approach, the *objects of study* can – but do not have to – differ as well. While conversation analysis predominantly considers interactions, conversations, and communication, pragmatism tends to focus on spoken language. Critical discourse analyses, on the other hand, tend to look at written texts, and social psychological approaches tend to use all forms (Wood and Kroger 2000, 20–22).
- 6 The heterogeneity of the field of Discourse Analysis is also seen in the sometimes very different *methods* that the approaches employ. Implementing the central epistemological premise that meaning is constructed in discourse and that language should thus be studied as a social practice results in diverse, sometimes even competing approaches. Discourse Analysis is thus not an independent *method* or even an alternative to other methods of analysis (for an overview of possible methods, see Keller 2007; Titscher 2000; Ruth Wodak 2001a, 2008b). In practice, however, discourse analytical approaches mostly use qualitative methods (Wood and Kroger 2000, 20–22).

3.1.2 *Discourses and Their Contexts – To Be Studied or Not to Be Studied?*

Another crucial difference between discourse-analytical approaches is the *role of contexts*: are they to be included in the analysis or not? Some authors emphasise that this should not be done under any circumstances. While every discourse is context-dependent, Discourse Analysis is not a path to an understanding of events in the world outside of discourse as per, for example, Wood/Kroger:

The general principle is that we do not go behind the text to look for a prior reality - events in the world or internal cognitions.

(Wood and Kroger 2000, 64)

However, in this argumentation at least Wood and Kroger implicitly contradict themselves, because on the one hand they emphasise that context is important, but can only be grasped through discourse (i.e., either it shows up in the discourse, or it can be grasped through an expansion of the discourses under investigation). On the other hand, they explicitly state that ethnographic knowledge is allowed to flow into the analysis (Wood and Kroger 2000, 127–130).

The opposite view explicitly relates discourses to their contexts. Johnstone states that discourses are shaped by the world, language, participants, previous and future discourses, media, and purposes; and that they shape these as well (Johnstone 2008, 10). She grounds the connection between discourse and the social world using the *Sapir Whorf hypothesis* (see Wood and Kroger 2000, 37, 73), which asserts that categorisations that people make of things in the world depend on how they are categorised in language. It follows that discourses also express how people locate themselves in the social world, how they relate to others, and the hierarchical position in which they find themselves:

[...] in many ways people's positions in the world are their positions in discourse, since the power to shape the world is, to a large degree, the power to shape how people talk about the world [...].

(Johnstone 2008, 129)

However, relationships are constantly constructed and changed in discourse (Johnstone 2008, 139).

The present study, as has been explained and will be further discussed below, also studies discourse contexts and can thus be situated with regard to the field of Discourse Analysis as follows:

The present study takes the position that discourses are not to be regarded as self-contained sets of meaning in which meaning is constructed largely without external influence.

Rather, it assumes that they are not only potentially open to influences from outside these contexts but also can be fundamentally influenced by power relations, structures, and interests or the respective socio-economic and political background constellations, as well as by established or competing patterns of meaning.

It is thus vital to examine to what extent these factors influenced the respective course of the discourses and to what extent they developed or changed within the discourse.

In accordance with this position, this study aims to grasp discourses in their *contexts*, although it assumes that the context cannot be grasped solely via the discourse and that the concept of context must be operationalised and studied by additional steps of analysis.

Various questions arise with regard to the operationalisation of discourse and context:

The research question of the present study is directed at national EU discourses and their role in the formation of European identity, with an explicit examination of the relations of the discourses to the national context. The study thus adopts a macro-perspective and also aims to shed light on the relationships between discourses and social structures, institutions, and actors.

How is the relationship between the construction of meaning in discourses and the structures and power relations in society and politics to be conceptualised? How are the contexts, i.e., factors outside discourses that influence them, to be operationalised and captured? And to what extent do the approaches offer potential for the study of macro-discourses?

How do the discourse-analytical approaches that were discussed above help operationalising these considerations? More concretely, what role do factors outside the discourse play in the discourse-analytical approaches described so far, and what understanding of context results from this?

In most language-oriented discourse-analytical approaches discussed above, context either plays no role at all, because it is assumed that only factors within the discourse are decisive, or the concept of context is narrowly defined, as in the case of the central representatives of Critical Discourse Analysis. For example, Teun van Dijk uses a purely cognitive concept of context. For him, contexts are subjective constructions or definitions of situations by the participants, to be understood as specific mental models, or as certain perceptions or assessments of a situation by a person (van Dijk 2008, 110). However, in view of the critical perspective of CDA and its focus on structures of oppression, this seems not only surprising but also too short-sighted. Moreover, and this must be seen as a central weakness of CDA, the operationalisation of socio-structural and institutional framework conditions outside the discourse remains unclear. Although it is assumed that they shape the discourse, CDA fails to explicitly address how the researcher knows this or how she can prove it. It remains unclear if the construction of domination or identification can be sufficiently illuminated without systematically considering the socio-structural and institutional context. It cannot be achieved merely by the fact that it emerges in the discourse, because it can only be discovered there against a certain background of prior knowledge. For example, that a negative valuation is attached to a certain term or that certain social groups have little social influence can only be known from the socio-cultural context. In view of the considerations made in [Section 3.2.2](#) on the standards of qualitative research, this is prior knowledge that should be made explicit.

Ruth Wodak does use a broader concept of context, which attempts to take into account extra-linguistic sociological characteristics and institutional framework conditions of the respective utterance situation, as well as the intertextual or interdiscursive references of the utterances (Ruth u. a. Wodak 1998, 46). However, even in this understanding the context is not explicitly ascertained. Rather, Wodak

claims for using “selected linguistic fine analyses” of the material, as well as certain (not further defined) cases by following “discursive traces” to utterances or texts and through intertextual comparisons (Ruth u. a. Wodak 1998, 45–49). This means that the context is not studied itself, but only traced via the ways it is referred to and mentioned in the texts analysed.

Siegfried Jäger also mentions certain contextual categories to include in the analysis, but they are also quite narrowly defined: the context of origin of the texts (e.g., author, medium, event background) and the references to content-related ideological statements (image of man, image of society, ideas of the future, technology, etc.). Jäger also does not explain that or how these contextual categories should be collected or included (Jäger 2009, 175–179).

Thus, none of the language-oriented discourse analytical approaches offers potential for further concretisation and operationalisation of the context categories: political system, parties, citizens as recipients, and socio-economic situation, national identity constructions, and preceding EU discourses.

CDA has various assumptions about the inclusion of aspects external to discourses, some of which are implicit and some explicit. CDA not only explicitly refers to the references a discourse makes to the world and to events outside the discourse. It also interprets discourses as central elements in the dissemination and reproduction of ideologies and assumes that they are determined by socio-economic factors and interests. The methodological position of Critical Discourse Analysis is that social processes and structures influence the creation of the text and the utterances of individuals. Behind this is the assumption that the use of language and the choice of words in discursive contributions also imply decisions about the valuation of facts, actions, and agents. It is therefore an explicit goal of Critical Discourse Analyses to examine the relationship of the discourse to ideology production, social problems, or discrimination as well as the reasons for the choice of words and statements (Johnstone 2008, 53–58; Ruth Wodak 2001c, 2).

CDA aims to address and examine structures of domination, oppression, and resistance to unequal distributions of power. It assumes that the effects of power relations and ideologies are veiled and stabilised in the discursive construction of meaning, leading them to be interpreted as natural or even given. The biased perspective adopted by the researcher thus plays a central role: CDA considers itself to be fundamentally on the side of the oppressed and positioned against the oppressors. This perspective also distinguishes CDA from other approaches to Discourse Analysis; in its objects of research, CDA focuses on racism, sexism, and oppression (Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 259; Jäger 2009, 215–220; Meyer 2001, 15; van Dijk 1998, 193–194, 1993, 249–252, 2001, 352; Ruth Wodak 2001c, 3; Wood and Kroger 2000, 21). CDA displays a strong continuity with critical linguistics (CL; Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 260–264; Ruth Wodak 2001c, 1–3).

Fairclough and Wodak name eight common principles of Critical Discourse Analysis: (1) CDA examines social problems, (2) power relations are discursively

constructed, (3) discourses constitute society and culture, (4) discourses produce ideology, (5) discourses are historical, (6) the relationship between society and text is mediated by media, (7) Discourse Analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and (8) discourse is a form of social action (Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 268–270).

Beyond these common characteristics, however, CDA is also heterogeneous in terms of the social scientific theories and methods used to analyse the material (Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 262–265; Ruth Wodak 2001c, 1–3). The term CDA thus again only describes a common approach and similarly situated questions and objects. The spectrum of reference theories is broad, drawing from micro-sociology, socio-psychology, discourse theory, and linguistic theory and ranging from middle-range theories to micro-macro theories (Meyer 2001, 17–20).

CDA assumes that discourses are determined by structures of domination, that these are influenced by ideologies of powerful groups, and that discourses are historically determined and can be located in space and time. Moreover, they are the setting of ideological conflicts – which is reflected in texts and should be captured by CDA (Ruth Wodak 2001c, 11). Compared to other approaches from the field of Discourse Analysis, CDA is thus open to the broadest spectrum of influencing factors external to the text, and it also analyses relationships to other texts. In contrast, it uses only a narrow range of linguistic categories; CDA essentially works hermeneutically (Johnstone 2008, 54–59; Meyer 2001, 15–18). Often, but by no means always, a micro-perspective with rather small-scale analyses of linguistic and grammatical elements dominates (see, for instance, the example in Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 268–271). However, there are also studies explicitly belonging to CDA that take a macro-perspective (see, for example, Ruth u. a. Wodak 1998).

In all this, and this limitation is central, the socio-economic context of the discourses is not specifically surveyed in CDA either. Moreover, in all approaches to CDA, the definition of context is rather narrow and/or remains unclear. Thus, it is not possible to identify a clear position, but rather a mere tendency: CDA is primarily concerned with capturing the relationships between discourse and context in discourses and through discourses. In doing so, it assumes that societal power structures shape the contributions of the discourse, pathways of access to the discourse, the contents of the discourse, and also the patterns of perception of the participants in the discourse (Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 277; Jäger 2009, 158–161, 215–219; van Dijk 2001, 356).

Moreover, for CDA, as for the entire field of Discourse Analysis, there is almost never an explicit operational distinction on whether to take a micro- or a macro-perspective. However, whether one analyses a conversation or a society-wide debate (such as the question of whether the expansion of children's day care is desirable) sets different conditions for the research question, methodology, and procedure. This is why I turn in the following to the discourse-theoretical approaches by Laclau, Mouffé, and Foucault that provide such a perspective. These authors also offer useful concepts for studying discourse contexts.

3.1.3 *Politics, Society, and Discourse: Foucault, Mouffe, and Laclau*

The discourse-theoretical approaches of Michel Foucault as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffé aim at the macro-perspective, as do discourse-analytical

approaches that rely on them (Angermüller 2014; Angermüller, Mainguenuau, and Ruth Wodak 2014; Howarth and Torfing 2005; Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis 2000). In all three, the discourse concepts are based on considerations of Social or Political Theory. They understand discourses as processes of construction and/or expressions of patterns of order and meaning in society, which in turn are an expression of power relations and are to be understood on the meso- or macro-level. Foucault's corresponding analyses also tend to target macro-discourses, including institutions. This naturally brings the relationship between discourses and social relations more into focus. Discourses become part of this relationship and shape it. In this respect, the approaches of Foucault as well as Laclau and Mouffe are more relevant for the present study than the approaches from Discourse Analysis described above.

Laclau and Mouffe do not develop a discourse-analytical model, but rather a discourse-theoretical model that is situated in a broader political-theoretical framework and is not operationalised. However, their conception of discourse theory is helpful for the present study insofar as it helps to explicate the political role of discourses as well as the relations between discourses and social structures. Laclau and Mouffe situate their concept of discourse within the framework of a radical, pluralist model of democracy (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 1992). It is based on the assumption that democracy consists in perpetual conflict, antagonism, and division. Laclau and Mouffe assume that societies and politics are shaped by existing differences and the antagonisms resulting from them. Accordingly, they interpret politics as a permanent balance of power of antagonistic relations (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, xvii–xviii). In this approach, the concept of discourse has a central role: the conflicts, antagonisms, and power relations of the political are expressed in discourses, and they constitute social relations (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 105–122). Laclau/Mouffe's concept of discourse is thus more open than previously presented conceptions with regard to the direction assumed for the construction of power relations, and it opens up more possibilities: antagonisms and conflicts can potentially arise in all directions; Mouffe and Laclau are thus not exclusively concerned with top-down processes of oppression or domination.

This discourse-theoretical approach refers to a different level than language-oriented Discourse Analysis and is more abstract: it is not primarily about linguistic action and analysis of it. Rather, discourses are a part of the political and are vital in shaping it. Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe, discourses not only are sets of linguistic acts that constitute meaning but also constitute and organise social (power) relations and thus have a material character. Moreover, linguistic and non-linguistic elements in discourse are not clearly distinguishable. Institutions, rituals, and practices also structure discourse formations (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 93–114). To analyse discourse would thus ultimately mean, if operationalising Laclau's and Mouffe's theory directly, analysing political occurrences and the emergence of power relations and hegemonies.

Foucault's concept of discourse is also embedded in a broad social-theoretical and historical research concept, often referred to as "Historical Discourse Analysis" (Blatter, Janning, and Wagemann 2007, 95). Foucault most often focuses on the relations between institutions and citizens and the social practices associated with them. He sees discourses as part of the production, circulation, and maintenance of power and domination.

For Foucault (Foucault 1972, 1981), a discourse is a set of linguistic performances or statements that belong to the same discursive formation and are thus shaped by the same rules. Examining a discourse accordingly requires seeking its rules of discursive formation. Foucault (like Laclau and Mouffe) does not assume that discourses have only one direction of action, from top to bottom. Rather, he emphasises that discourses are always eventful and random – and that is precisely why they are simultaneously controlled, selected, organised, and channelled in societies.

In “The Order of Discourse” (Foucault 1981), Foucault names three types of processes through which this happens. The first, *exclusion*, operates from outside the discourse. One does not have the right to say “everything”; there are demarcations, such as those between madness and reason or the true and the false. The second process of control operates within discourses, through *principles of classification, arrangement, and distribution*. Finally, the third process regulates *access* to the discourses; it involves a contraction of the speaking subjects, the formation of doctrines, and thus a subjugation of the discourses to the group of speaking subjects and, conversely, their subjugation to the discourses. In this way, it ultimately also leads to divisions in the social appropriation of discourses (Foucault 1981).

Foucault’s aim is to trace the *rules* that structure discourses (Foucault 1972, 1981). He explicitly distances himself from purely language-related forms of analysis when he describes how discourses should be studied:

The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?

(Foucault 1972, 27)

In “The Archaeology of Knowledge” (Foucault 1972, 37–38), Foucault concretises his heuristic and methodological considerations on analysing discourses. As necessary to include, he specifies (1) relations of statements among each other, (2) relations between groups of statements thus established, and (3) relations between statements or groups of statements and events of a completely different order. However, Foucault is not concerned with examining chains of inferences (as in philosophy) or tables of differences (as in linguistics). Rather, he wants to grasp systems of dispersion of statements or groups of statements. If regularities could be recognised from these scattering systems, one would recognise discursive formations with formation rules. The term discursive formation thus denotes the principle of dissemination and distribution and the regularity of statements.

3.1.4 *Studying Discourse Context*

The questions posed earlier about the context of discourse must now be taken up again: how is the concept of context to be concretised within the discourse-theoretical research design of the present study?

In the “Archaeology of Knowledge” (Foucault 1972, 50–63), Foucault applies a concept of context that is well suited to finally concretise and operationalise the concept of context in the present study. It arises from the questions of the *formation of the rules of utterance* and the *organisation of the field of statements* in which concepts appear and circulate. The formation of the rules of utterance can be captured by means of three questions, according to Foucault (Foucault 1972, 50–55):

- 1 “Who is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (*langage*)? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who – alone – have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?” (Foucault 1972, 50).
- 2 What are the institutional positions of the speakers?
- 3 What are the positions of the subjects?

These questions are relevant for specifying two interrelated parts of the research design:

For one, the *hierarchical roles and the strategic interests of the discourse actors* must be included – as part of the survey of the contexts.

Second, however, the study of the discourses themselves must also consider how the roles of the actors in them are shaped and have an impact, so this must also be part of the discourse analysis.

The organisation of the field of statements can also be captured by three aspects, which Foucault defines in more detail as follows (Foucault 1972, 56–63):

- 1 *Successions*: Arrangements of utterance sequences, dependency types of statements, rhetorical schemes of combination.
- 2 *Coexistences*: These concern three further fields or organisational structures of discourse, which Foucault defines individually as follows:
 - a The field of presence (by which is understood all statements formulated elsewhere and taken up in a discourse, acknowledged to be truthful, involving exact description, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presupposition) (Foucault 1972, 57).
 - b The field of concomitance (this includes statements that concern quite different domains of objects, and belong to quite different domains of objects, and belong to quite different types of discourse, but which are active among the statements studied here, either because they serve as analogical confirmation, or because they serve as a general principle and as premises accepted by a reasoning, or because they serve as models that can be transferred to other

- contents, or because they function as a higher authority than that to which at least certain propositions are presented and subjected (Foucault 1972, 58).
- c the field of memory (statements that are no longer accepted or discussed, and which consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity, but in relation to which relations of filiation, genesis, transformation, continuity, and historical discontinuity can be established) (Foucault 1972, 58).
- 3 *Procedures of intervention* (rewriting, transcribing, or translating statements) are finally the third factor that organises the field of statements (Foucault 1972, 58).

These considerations concretise *analytical dimensions* (see [Table 3.3](#)) and *rules* of discourse as categories of analysis in a discourse analysis.

Considering the role of preceding discourses furthermore contributes to the *concretisation and operationalisation of the context categories* – preceding discourses should also be taken into account in the survey of contexts as well as in the discourse analysis itself.

3.1.4.1 *Concretisation of the Context Categories*

Building on four of Foucault's questions – Who speaks? What are the institutional positions of the speakers? What are the positions of the subjects? What are previous or parallel statements that are effective for the discourse? – and on the following reflections, the context was operationalised for the present study as follows:

- 1 The *political system* refers to the institutional framework of discourses and its changes through Europeanisation. Institutions and political structures shape access to and the course of a discourse. Also important are the roles and positions, interests, and strategies of the actors in the discourses, since they indicate the reasons for statements and interventions in discourse. The *effects of Europeanisation* on the political systems were strong in France and significantly weaker in Germany (see [Chapter 7](#)).
- 2 The *party system* and European integration: Central actors in both discourses are based in political parties. In France, the positioning on European integration and the domestic political interests of the actors influenced the structures of the party system.
- 3 The citizens as *recipients* of the discourses and their attitudes: Citizen attitudes on the topic of the EU can influence not only the orientation of the discourse but also the reception of the arguments. Moreover, the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the two discourses influenced the topics and aspects that were subjectively experienced as important. The French discourse took place in the context of an election campaign; citizens were also decision-makers on the issue at the end of the discourse. There was ample evidence that the discourse both referred to and was influenced by their attitudes towards the EU and the socio-economic situation and climate of opinion at the time of the discourse (see [Chapters 4 and 7](#)).

- 4 Central motifs of *national identity narratives*: They are powerful, at least indirectly relevant, historical reference discourses (historical intertextuality). While national identity is strongly based on the heritage of the French Revolution in France, it is decisively influenced by European unification and the post-war rupture in Germany.
- 5 Central motifs of previous *national EU discourses*: They are also powerful, but directly relevant, historical reference discourses (historical intertextuality). While there were numerous previous conflicts over European integration in France, an extensive elite consensus in favour of European integration dominated in Germany.

3.1.5 *Situating the Discourse-Analytical Approach*

Table 3.2 presents the results of the theory comparison of discourse analytical approaches.

Table 3.2 Comparison of theories in Discourse Analysis

	<i>CA, pragmatism, DASP</i>	<i>CDA</i>	<i>Laclau/Mouffe</i>	<i>Foucault</i>
Concept of discourse	Narrow, language as social action, micro-oriented	Language as social action, micro- to macro-oriented	Construction and expression of social patterns of order and power relations	Construction and expression of social patterns of order and power relations
Analytical perspectives	Rather micro-linguistic	Vary	Macro-oriented	Macro-oriented
Objects of investigation	Interactions, conversations, communication, spoken language	Effects of discourses on people and their relationships	None in the proper sense, as social theory	Historical discourses, social practices
Inclusion of context	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Concept of context	None	Narrow understanding of context	Broad contextual term	Broad contextual term
Socio-theoretical reference theories	Can vary	Normative perspective: critique of domination and oppression, theories on racism, sexism, class domination	Normative theory of democracy	Vary
Degree of operationalisation	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium

Source: Own Representation.

Accordingly, this study cannot be neatly classified within the field of Discourse Analysis. In fact, the structure of the study represents an innovation. It examines the macro-structures of discourse and their relation to the social, ideological, and societal context of the discourse. In this way, the work clearly differs from almost all the strands of Discourse Analysis presented, as these are usually micro-linguistically oriented and fail to consider the context. All in all, the research design can be classified in the following way.

The *research perspective* builds on the premises of Laclau and Mouffe as well as Foucault:

Discourses construct power relations, domination, or belief in legitimacy, and these also find expression in discourse – but they can also be changed through discourse.

Discourses therefore not only constitute domination but can also shift social power relations. On the one hand, such shifts take place in discourse and through discourse; on the other hand, they show themselves in discourse.

Discourses can thus work not only in one direction (from top to bottom) but also potentially in all directions.

Thus, discourses can be methodologically classified between the micro- and macro-levels and basically touch both levels or are influenced by both and influence both: a discourse can construct ideologies and meaning, i.e., shape the convictions of individuals, and is shaped by individuals; at the same time, it is also shaped by institutional framework conditions and also power relations and can influence these.

With this assumption, the study follows the methodological premise of moderate methodological holism discussed in [Section 2.2.1](#) (G. Albert 2005, 2007).

The approach furthermore builds on seven of the eight discussed methodological premises of CDA (cf. Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 1997, 268–280 and above):

- 1 Power relations are discursive
- 2 Discourses shape society and culture
- 3 Discourses form ideologies
- 4 Discourses are historically embedded
- 5 The relationship between text and society is mediated by the media
- 6 Discourse Analysis is interpretative and explanatory
- 7 Discourse is a form of social action

However, the present study develops an approach that goes beyond Critical Discourse Analysis in three aspects:

Firstly, it is oriented towards macro-structures, different from the CDA approaches.

Secondly, the concept of context is explicitly conceptualised and operationalised. This is central to the structure of the study, but differs from most work in CDA, which operationalises contexts more narrowly and neither makes them explicit nor elicits them in a targeted and comprehensible way.

Thirdly, a discourse is understood as a process with different directions of action. This, again differs from the CDA perspective which focuses on ideology production with an exclusive perspective on oppression and discrimination.

In line with the main research questions, the perspective is decidedly open:

The research focuses on the construction of meanings of European identity and thus primarily on capturing the two discourses and then analysing which arguments are used and by whom, which ones prevailed, how the discourse developed, and why this happened in each case.

Power relations and social inequalities have a role to play in these questions, but the analysis does not take the side of a formally less powerful camp (such as the opponents of the Constitutional Treaty in Germany and France) from the outset, as it would have been the case in CDA. Rather, it is assumed that the analysis will show how positions of power played out in the discourse and which ones were decisive. It is assumed that even formally less powerful persons and groups can decisively influence discourses (otherwise, changes in ideologies would be difficult to achieve). In line with Johnstone, it is assumed that “People constantly create and renegotiate their relationships with each other in the process of interacting [...]” (Johnstone 2008, 139).

Accordingly, the present work is *not* a critical discourse analysis.

Finally, in most existing discourse-analytical approaches, the *transition* between the macro-level of political institutions and discourses and the micro-level of individual communicative behaviour, individual attitudes towards the EU, or individual voting behaviour is hardly or only implicitly addressed. They do so by assuming that discourses located at the macro-level generate meaning, i.e., also influence persuasions on the micro-level of individuals. Teun van Dijk is one of the few authors to describe a connection here (van Dijk 2001, 358). However, he describes a one-dimensional model of media effects, which in short reads: whoever controls

more discourses has more influence on the formation of consciousness and opinion (van Dijk 1995, 9–10, 16). Regarding the question of how individual convictions about certain ideas and facts are shaped by discourses and structural influences on the macro-level and how, conversely, individuals influence the discourse and the macro-level, the present study also uses an open approach. As laid out elsewhere (Wiesner 2015), the findings allow for a detailed and differentiated setting of hypotheses on the linkages between discourses and individual attitudes that are not discussed in detail in this book.

As described above, it is assumed that discursive impacts do not flow solely from the rulers to the ruled, but that discourses articulate a wide variety of social interests and relations that can work in different directions.

3.1.6 *The Comparative Approach*

The study is comparative, which is rare for discourse-analytical work. The basic methodological assumption thus is that controlled comparisons constitute a method of gaining knowledge. Despite a traditional dominance of quantitatively oriented procedures, comparative research today lacks a unified knowledge goal, a unified theoretical approach, a unified method, and a unified subject area. Instead, the comparative method allows for qualitative, quantitative, and historical approaches. However, most comparative research is oriented towards institutional, economic, behaviourist, and functionalist or systems-theoretical approaches. The focus here has traditionally been not only on quantitative and generalising comparisons but also on classical fields more related to institutions, such as Comparative Systems Research, Comparative Institutional Research, Comparative Government Research, and Comparative Democracy Research (see, for instance, Caramani 2020; Landman and Carvalho 2016). Cultural and language-related phenomena, on the other hand, as they are at stake in the present study, have seldom been objects of Political Science comparisons. Accordingly, not only are there few contributions in this field, but the standards of comparative studies of culture- and language-related phenomena with primarily qualitative methods have also been little concretised so far. Different from the bulk of work in Comparative Politics, the present study is also primarily qualitative and small-N oriented (two cases). It is not designed to test hypotheses, but rather analyses the relationships between the complex dimensions, describes emergent processes, and plausibly explains underlying relationships. On this basis, its goal is to build models and theories.

The orientation of the study towards the comparison of discourses, i.e., culturally conditioned and anchored processes, thereby expands the field of classical topics of comparative Political Science. This requires comprehensive reflection on the comparison criteria and research design, as has been done in the present study. Moreover, through its discourse-analytical approach, the study also expands the established canon of methods in Comparative Political Science.

Despite its focus on discourses and its qualitative methodology, the present study has a number of linkages with the classical fields mentioned. In the sense of comparing political systems, it looks at core elements of two political systems in a comparative perspective – political institutions or collective actors, as well as individual political actors. In doing so, it also includes central insights from comparative studies of systems in both countries. In the sense of comparative Political Culture Research, it examines determinants and characteristics of the relationships between citizens and political systems. Similarly, the study has numerous intersections with comparative political communication research and comparative party research. However, the explanandum differs in that the question is primarily directed at analysing discourses and not at comparing systems or policies, which gives rise to the question of the role of discourse and its analysis. In this study, Discourse Analysis is therefore not an explanatory tool in the comparative analysis of policies, systems, or attitudes. Rather, these are conversely explanans in the comparative analysis of EU discourses.

Building on a distinction made by Charles Tilly, the comparative approach of the study can be located in more detail. In his book “Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons” (Tilly 1984), Tilly discusses the possibilities and conditions of complex comparisons on the macro-level. He distinguishes four types or levels of comparison: world-historical, world-system, as well as macro-historical and micro-historical comparisons (Tilly 1984, 61). In that categorisation, the study represents a macro-historical comparison.

Building on Tilly, it is argued that for macro-historical comparisons, complex research designs with small numbers of cases are often more suitable than comparisons of many cases, which necessarily struggle to capture complex interrelationships:

As we move towards the identification of historically specific regularities in social structures and processes, we should also move away from the habit of packing large numbers of cases into extensive statistical analyses. On the whole, comparative studies of large structures and large processes yield more intellectual return when investigators examine relatively small numbers of instances. With small numbers, the student of a structure or process has little choice but to pay attention to the historical circumstances and particular characteristics of the cases at hand and thus to work harder at meeting the commonsense conditions for effective comparisons. With large numbers, critical defenses and familiarity with context decline.

(Tilly 1984, 76–77)

This argument leads Tilly to a criticism of quantitative large-N comparisons and the analytical added value they bring about:

Little of long-term value to the Social Sciences has emerged from the hundreds of studies conducted during the last few decades that have run statistical analyses including most of the World’s national states. [...] Yet during

the same period, most of the outstanding, influential studies of large-scale structural change have been explicitly [...] comparative. The lesson reads: Stick with careful comparisons of small numbers until you have a very clear idea what you need from large numbers and how to make the comparison valid.

(Tilly 1984, 76–77)

In order to adequately compare macro-processes, Tilly contends that it is necessary to use the classical logic of comparative research. This does not require the search for a perfect comparative pair of structures or processes, but rather for cases that are relevant in terms of the phenomena to be studied, their causes, as well as the assumed relationships. Therefore, a considered approach must be taken especially when selecting cases and defining the criteria for comparison (Tilly 1984, 80).

Accordingly, this study greatly emphasised a case selection strategy based on theory, prior knowledge, and preliminary surveys.

Tilly further distinguishes four types of comparisons: (1) *individualising* comparisons, which focus primarily on individual particularities of a few cases; (2) *inclusive* comparisons, in which some individual cases are compared in relation to a larger unit to which they all belong, with all cases possessing something in common, but not necessarily something universal; (3) *variation-seeking* comparisons, which examine general processes in their manifold manifestations, such as industrialisation, and (4) *generalising* or *universalising* comparisons, which examine general rules of human action or worldwide communication, organisation, and movement (Tilly 1984, 81–83).

According to this categorisation, the present study is an *inclusive comparison*: individual cases of national EU discourses are considered in their contexts as examples of national EU discourses in general.

3.2 Operationalisation and Research Design

This section presents the considerations for the operationalisation of the research design.

3.2.1 *Development of the Comparative Discourse Analysis Design*

As discussed above, the central questions of a discourse analysis are *how* meaning is constructed in discourse and *why* (see also Wiesner 2022; Wiesner,

Haapala, and Palonen 2017). While, as will be discussed in more detail below, the techniques employed in the research are those of qualitative research, the research design could not solely rely on the principles of qualitative content analysis alone, since this cannot cover all aspects relevant to the cognitive goals of a discourse analysis. Qualitative content analyses first record a “what” – the *contents* of statements, central themes, types of attributions of meaning, etc. The “how” and “why” are what need to be laid out in further interpretative steps, since

a discourse analysis requires, beyond coding the central statements, capturing the “how”, namely, relevant references that exist or are constructed between different discourse components and actors, and the “why”, namely, the background of the statements and the meaning attributed to them.

This means that a discourse-analytical research design must therefore aim at grasping these knowledge goals beyond the content-analytical aspects. It follows not only that the relevant links between discourse components, actors, interests, and backgrounds of statements must be captured, but also that the context of the discourses and its effects in the discourses must be ascertained and included to recognise and plausibly explain patterns of “how” and “why”.

This requires combining the discourse-analytical qualitative steps of analysis with further analytical steps such as the targeted analysis of the context in which the linkages of discourse components, actors, interests, and backgrounds of statements as well as the effects of the contexts of the discourses are analysed. On this basis, patterns of “how” and “why” can be described and further theses formed.

There are only a few concrete proposals to be found for such a proceeding in the discourse-analytical approaches discussed in [Section 3.1](#). Therefore, the research design in the discourse-analytical part of the study was developed independently, building on the methodological considerations just discussed, as well as on the following methodological considerations for implementing the discourse-analytical premises.

In doing so, sensible suggestions from the approaches and authors in the field of Discourse Analysis discussed in [Section 3.1](#) were included (see in particular Jäger 2009, 158–160; Keller 2007; Titscher 2000; Ruth Wodak 2008a) as were, secondly, the explanations by Kelle (Kelle 2008) as well as by Kelle and Kluge (Kelle and Kluge 1999) on qualitative research, thirdly, the standards of qualitative content analysis developed by Mayring (Mayring 2008) as well as by Gläser and Laudel (Gläser and Laudel 2004), and, fourthly, procedures from *grounded theory* (Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss 1967, 2005; Khan 2014; Vollstedt and Rezat 2019). The following methodological considerations were taken as a basis:

Firstly, Discourse Analysis is about examining *how* meaning is constructed in discourse and not only about *what* (content, topics, contributors) occurs in discourse or how the content is distributed. Thus, the content (what) of the discourse as well as processes and relations between discourse content, actors, and contexts (how is meaning constructed using the discourse content?) are to be examined.

Secondly, quantifications are not very helpful. They could even be misleading because quantities of “what” (contents, themes, motifs, actors, codes) do not describe references, processes, or patterns – i.e., exactly not the “how” of the process of meaning construction.

An accumulation, an increase, or a decrease of certain discourse contents only says that there was possibly or probably a certain development in the discourse at these points – but not which development it was or why it occurred. But these are the very questions that need to be answered. Quantities can only give clues as to which phases of the discourse need to be investigated further. In addition, it would have to be possible to count quantities of codes at least in a sample that is representative of the total number of articles and the number of articles per newspaper, or better yet in the entire material, to allow for reliable statements to be made. This is an undertaking that is contrary to the aims of the study. It simplifies contexts and reduces complexity. However, complex contexts for the evaluated discourse contents must be captured and recorded, but not compressed or summarised.

The present study therefore only quantified the development of the *intensity* of the discourses, i.e., the increase and decrease of the collected contributions.

Thirdly, in order to understand the “why” of a statement or ascription of meaning, it is necessary, as described earlier in the explanations of the contexts of discourses, to systematically and specifically collect the contextual knowledge about the discourses according to the research question and to make this explicit. This is the only way to explain the reasons for the appearance of certain statements in certain places at certain times.

From these and the preceding considerations, eight analytical dimensions emerge that shape discourses and the attributions of meaning that take place within them (Table 3.3).

The operationalisation of the three guiding questions of a discourse analysis developed above – (1) *What* happens in discourse? (content), (2) *How* is meaning constructed in discourse? (references), (3) *Why*? (reasons) – can be summarised by the overview presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3 Eight analytical dimensions of discourses

1	Course	The course of the discourse with regard to <i>topics, intensity/ number of contributions, significant events</i>
2	Actors	The central persons or institutional actors shaping the discourse
3	Rules	They structure the course of discourse and the sayability of utterances
4	Reference level	Political levels (EU, foreign, domestic) or thematic fields to which the discourse relates
5	Topics	Content areas touched upon by the discourse
6	Motifs	Types of attributions of meaning in the sense of attributed characteristics and motives for action
7	Arguments	Typifying the course of meaning attributions or argumentation processes
8	Cross-references	Relationships between conceptions, subject areas, reference levels, rules, actors, or contextual factors constructed in discourse

Source: Own Representation.

3.2.2 The Qualitative Techniques

The question now arises as to how the present study should concretely implement the methodological considerations laid out so far, i.e., which research techniques are useful. Since the study, as a macro-oriented social science Discourse Analysis,

Table 3.4 Capturing the what, how, and why of a discourse

<i>What happens in discourse</i>	<i>How is meaning constructed?</i>	<i>Why does the discourse proceed in this way, why do certain motifs prevail and others not?</i>
Surveying the course: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overviews (protocols) • Event overviews • Intensity (counting articles) • Actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which rules of discourse are recognisable/can be deduced? (Contextual knowledge, protocols, result of evaluation) • Which arguments dominate and prevail? Where and how? • What connections can be found between motifs and arguments? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which rules of discourse are recognisable/can be deduced? • What references to contextual factors can be found in the discourse? • Which combinations of arguments and which references seemed particularly effective?
Surveying discourse content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motifs • Arguments • References • Topics • Reference levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What references to relevant contextual factors can be identified? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to principles of qualitative research: coding, collecting relevant combinations of characteristics, typifying, categorising, forming models/theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to principles of qualitative research: coding, collecting relevant combinations of characteristics, typifying, categorising, forming models/theories

Source: Own Representation.

deals with texts, the methods of social scientific qualitative text and content analysis are relevant. Qualitative content analyses are procedures of systematic, theory-guided, and rule-guided text understanding and text interpretation (Bhattacharya 2017; Flick 2018a, 2018b; Halperin and Heath 2020; Liamputtong 2020; Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault 2016). They refer to the analysis of symbolic material that originates from some kind of communication. The material is thus not analysed on its own, but as part of a communicative process; the aim is to draw conclusions about certain aspects of the communication. The procedure in qualitative content analyses is systematic, not free or associative; it is rule-guided and theory-guided, and the analysis is carried out using a specific research question. However, qualitative analyses are based on understanding procedures of text analysis and interpretation; i.e., they work hermeneutically. On that basis, the techniques used in the present study then rely largely on the standards and criteria of qualitative research as explicated by Kelle and Kluge (Kelle and Kluge 1999):

- 1 Qualitative studies are fundamentally characterised by the fact that they tend more to examine *complex objects* (e.g., processes) than to isolate individual explanatory variables (Mayring 2008, 16–18). As Lazarsfeld programmatically formulated it in 1960, it is about empirically grasping complex circumstances (Lazarsfeld 2008, 14).
- 2 When setting up a qualitative study, one central question is the role of theoretical and empirical *prior knowledge*. There are different approaches to this. In the *grounded theory* of Glaser and Strauss, the researchers' prior knowledge should play as little a role as possible at the beginning of the material collection (Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss 1967). However, Kelle and Kluge rightly point out that this claim is hardly realisable, as scientists do not simply “find” concepts and prior knowledge cannot be forgotten. Researchers always see the reality of their empirical field through the lenses of existing concepts and theories. Therefore, Kelle and Kluge advocate making the researchers' prior knowledge explicit (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 14–18). It flows, as it does in the present study, explicitly into the analytical design, into its heuristics, and it is also taken into account in the evaluation of the material, for example, when constructing categories.

Prior knowledge can come in four different dimensions: (1) the empirically rich theoretical knowledge of researchers, which can serve as a heuristic for the research question, (2) the empirically rich everyday knowledge of researchers, (3) the empirically rich everyday knowledge of actors, and (4) the empirically rich theoretical knowledge of actors. At the end of the research process, these four dimensions of prior knowledge are joined by another: (5) the empirically rich theoretical knowledge of researchers in the form of categories, statements, hypotheses, and theories resulting from the research process.

There are four rules for dealing with prior knowledge. First, make it explicit. Secondly, acknowledge its origin, i.e., distinguish researcher knowledge from actor knowledge. Thirdly, take into account the degree of theorisation (everyday knowledge can be included, but not uncritically adopted). Fourthly, reflect upon the extent of the empirical content of prior knowledge.

Openness is central to the use of prior knowledge. In this respect, the structure of a qualitative study differs from a quantitative one in the structure of the prior knowledge and in its use for theory building. The conceptual vagueness of social scientific concepts is not an obstacle to the analysis, but rather an essential feature that is necessary and helpful. The open concepts or theoretical terms from social scientific theories are used as sensitising concepts, concretised in their encounter with the empirical field, and thus transformed into definitive concepts (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 27).

In the present study, extensive prior knowledge of the following types had to be taken into account: (1) empirically rich theoretical knowledge on European identity and the role of national EU discourses, (2) empirically rich everyday knowledge of the researcher on cases and source material, (3) empirically rich everyday knowledge, and (4) empirically rich theoretical knowledge from other researchers.

- 3 A *theory-guided approach* in qualitative research does not necessarily mean that empirically sound, precise hypotheses are formulated at the beginning of the research process – depending on the subject matter, this could even be counter-productive, e.g., if the explorative function of the study were to be lost. In order to ensure this, qualitative studies usually begin with general and theoretical concepts and assumptions that have little empirical content (or even fuzzy concepts), which are then successively refined in the course of the study; or with prior knowledge that has empirical content and is made explicit (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 25–28).

Accordingly, this study is based on a range of not yet empirically substantial research questions and some empirically substantial theses.

- 4 There is a *complex reciprocal relationship between prior theoretical knowledge, research material, and their evaluation*. In order to justify the development of theoretical concepts on the basis of qualitative material appropriately, the concepts and typologies have to be empirically justified and theoretically informed in equal measure. The researcher integrates prior theoretical knowledge and empirical findings in a back-and-forth process (cf. Kelle and Kluge 1999, 21). At the end of such a qualitative research process, theoretically sound results developed from the empirical source material are generated, with empirically rich categories and statements being formulated through a combination of heuristic theoretical concepts and everyday knowledge (cf. Kelle and Kluge 1999, 36).

Categories, (hypo)theses, and theories thus are developed based on the theory-guided interpretation and evaluation of research material based on prior knowledge. In turn, several connections are possible: *qualitative induction*, in which knowledge of the validity of previously known rules is extended to new objects, and *qualitative abduction*, in which the conclusion is drawn from an unexpected event to a new rule. On the whole, however, according to Kelle and Kluge, this procedure of theory building is neither inductive nor deductive in the proper sense. Rather, logical inferences that lead to the formulation of new concepts and the discovery of new insights are, according to Charles Sanders Peirce, *hypothetical reasoning* (Peirce 1994). Lazarsfeld speaks in a similar way of inferences that cannot be derived via logical necessity, but guided by additional knowledge and general experience with great plausibility (Lazarsfeld 2008, 17).

This form of hypothetical reasoning underlies the development of explanatory models and theses in the present study.

- 5 *Sampling* in qualitative research is the process of collecting source material and selecting *units* for the empirical analysis; the term is used in this sense here. The selection of research cases, on the other hand, is referred to as *case selection*. In qualitative studies, the sampling of cases and source material aims to *obtain relevant* combinations of characteristics for the research question and the research design (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 34–37). It is not about representativeness as in quantitative methods, where all relevant combinations of characteristics must be sufficiently numerically considered. On the contrary, random sampling can distort qualitative studies in particular because they require theoretically relevant source material. It is therefore essential that carriers of theoretically relevant combinations of characteristics are sufficiently represented in the sample (cf. Kelle and Kluge 1999, 38).

This results in the necessity of a criterion-based selection of source material for analysis. A qualitative sample is therefore not drawn at random, but through a systematic contrasting of analytical units and their specific characteristics on the basis of the comparative dimensions relevant to the research question. Particularly conspicuous or frequently occurring characteristics are of central importance because they can be used to trace structural patterns. The comparative dimensions can either be determined while constructing sampling plans on the basis of prior knowledge or developed during the evaluation by searching for counterexamples or theoretical sampling (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 40–43).

Accordingly, in the course of the research process, prior knowledge is important (1) when selecting source material and research units, or sampling, (2) when structuring and categorising the source material (coding), (3) when constructing subcategories and dimensions, and (4) possibly when generating types as links between empirics and theory and thus as the basis for empirically founded theory building (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 34–36).

Based on these explanations, the structure and objectives of the present study can be summarised as follows:

Building on a heuristic that integrates various theories for the study of collective European identity, a sub-process of the construction of European identity (construction of meaning through national EU discourses) will be *plausibly explained*, and *further theses and theoretical approaches* derived from this.

The study is thus (1) descriptive (course of discourses), (2) understanding (which arguments come from where, prevail, spread, which do not?), (3) explanatory (which statements appear why, which prevail why?), (4) thesis-building, (5) model-building (for the effects of national *contexts* on national EU discourses and the construction processes of European identity, as well as the *processes and factors that* shape the construction of European identity through national EU discourses), and (6) theory-building.

The explanations that the present study can provide are complex and plausible explanations of causal relationships. In accordance with the qualitative nature of the study, they are not based on a testing of hypotheses. Causal factors are thus plausibly described in the sense of Lazarsfeld and Peirce summarised above, but not proven in the sense of Hempel and Oppenheim (Hempel and Oppenheim 1948). The steps of the analysis are: (1) Building on prior knowledge of different types as well as first samples of the source material: develop the heuristics (see [Sections 2.1, 2.2, and Chapter 3](#)), (2) case selection, and (3) source material selection (see the following sections). This (4) is followed by the analysis of contexts and discourses and the synthesis phase.

3.2.3 Case and Material Selection

As said above, the research material of qualitative content analyses is usually texts. The sampling of these texts, i.e., the selection of units of analysis as part of the research process, can follow different procedures. Three basic procedures can be distinguished: (1) contrasting units of analysis in the tradition of the *Chicago School*, (2) theoretical sampling according to Glaser and Strauss, and (3) deliberate sampling plans. Sampling procedures can be applied not only during material collection but also during coding, when making or repeating a selection of texts or text passages from the available material for detailed analysis, as was the case in the present study. In all three cases, the central criterion for selecting the sample is not representativeness in the statistical sense, but as always to ensure that theoretically relevant characteristics are represented in the sample to a sufficient extent.

Regarding (1): The approach of contrasting units of analysis seeks counterexamples. Here, one begins from theses that already have empirical content, which

are repeatedly falsified using the material and then concretised and further developed until no more counterexamples can be found. This procedure only works for empirically sound theses (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 40–42). It has not been used in the present study.

Regarding (2): If this is not the case, i.e., if only theoretical, empirically empty heuristics exist at the relevant stage of the research process, the procedure of theoretical sampling according to *grounded theory* is usually used. The research material analysis and sampling of units of analysis occur in parallel. Neither sampling plans nor the duration of the survey is predetermined. The question guiding the selection is which groups or sub-groups of units of analysis to turn to next, with which theoretical intention, and according to which theoretical criteria. The search for units of analysis is guided at every point in the research process by the emerging theory; i.e., the selection criteria for the theoretically relevant units are formed during the investigation using the results of the investigation so far, or are concretised in the process. Certain criteria are kept constant, while others vary – minimally or maximally. The research process ends at the point of *theoretical saturation*, namely, when no more theoretically relevant differences can be discovered in the material. Achieving theoretical saturation therefore requires exhausting the maximum variation of study groups (Glaser and Anselm L Strauss 2005, 53–57; Kelle and Kluge 1999, 44–47):

The research design in the present study is primarily oriented towards theoretical sampling in the second, third, and fourth phases of the discourse analysis.

Regarding (3): *Qualitative sampling plans* are useful if knowledge about relevant structural factors in the field is available. A priori selection criteria can then be defined to ensure that carriers of theoretically relevant characteristics are represented in the sample. Sample size and sampling criteria are then determined using prior knowledge of the field and are defined in part or in whole before the survey. Determinations are made about characteristics relevant for the selection of the units of analysis, characteristic values, and the size of the sample. The material is analysed only after the sampling (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 46–48).

The case and material selection of the present study are based on a sampling plan.

3.2.3.1 *Case Selection and Prior Knowledge of the Cases*

At least two cases were needed in order to conduct a comparative study of national EU discourses. Since this was a complex study with an exploratory character, in which the respective national contexts were also to be included, it was clear that the case studies had to be designed as a classic small-N study. I therefore chose

a *dual-case design*. The question was then, which two cases were relevant and meaningful to combine in order to answer the research question? The case selection criteria were thus of central importance. I therefore made the following considerations to select from the 27 current member states of the EU (on the following, see also Wiesner 2022):

The explanandum in this study is the *national EU discourses as means for the construction of European identity and the democratisation of the EU*. The central explanans are the national contextual factors that shape these discourses. These were, again in short: (1) the national political systems and (2) the party systems, (3) citizens as recipients of the discourse, (4) the national identity narratives, and (5) previous discourses on European integration. In order to achieve the most meaningful results possible, it made sense to select cases that contrasted in these context dimensions, i.e., to use a most different case design.

However, to ensure comparability, the characteristics of the cases that are not central to the research questions, i.e., the roles of the states within the EU, should be the same. It was therefore necessary to look for cases or states that were in a comparable situation and development phase in terms of the duration of their membership, their size, the development status of their political systems, and their political cultures. These factors also influence national EU discourses: for example, governments of larger states generally have and demand more influence in EU policymaking than those of smaller ones, which conversely resist being overruled by larger ones. In new member states, unlike in older member states, longer term institutional and political-cultural effects of Europeanisation are not yet apparent. Former transition states also have different starting conditions than Western democracies that have been established for several decades. It was thus imperative to exclude the possibility that these contextual factors had some effect.

Firstly, it made sense to use large EU member states for the study. These have a greater structural impact on the development of the EU than smaller member states. We can therefore assume that political-cultural developments in them more decisively impact the development of the EU as a whole than those in smaller member states. To put it bluntly, large member states probably have a greater power of political-cultural definition and interpretation for the EU as a whole than smaller ones.

Secondly, it was particularly fruitful for the study design to select *long-term* EU member states. Only in long-term member states is it possible to observe the expression of the five contextual factors over time. This is relevant for all context areas (see [Chapter 7](#)). Political systems not only change as a result of many years of Europeanisation; these changes also have political-cultural effects, the development patterns of which only become discernible over time. Similarly, it is easier to view the development of citizens' attitudes towards the EU in long-standing member states over time. As far as the historical reference discourses on national identity and European integration are concerned, it is easier to uncover revealing patterns of development in long-term member states given the longer time span to be observed.

Thirdly, these considerations argued in favour of using *EU founding states* as cases. In them, the history of European integration and its effects is at least 20 years longer than in the member states that joined in the first two rounds of enlargement.

I therefore decided to draw on *large EU founding states* for the study. The first, theoretically particularly relevant case was the *French discourse on the EU referendum in 2005*. It was particularly relevant because (1) an *intensive discourse* had taken place in France, i.e., comprehensive source material would be available, and (2) *significant controversies* surrounded the question of approval or opposition to the Constitutional Treaty. It was thus a discourse that promised to make it possible to ascertain the conflicts and controversies as well as the various meanings attributed to the EU within a national context. Additionally, (3) it was noticeable that *specifically French motifs* had been used in the discourse, which were less significant in other states. The case thus offered the opportunity to examine specific connections between French national identity and European identity. Finally, (4) *a discourse on the ratification of a constitutional treaty seemed particularly promising* in view of the research question since constitutions formally establish the fundamental ideas and political-democratic meanings that are supposed to be characteristic of a polity.

The question then became, which case would it make sense to contrast with the French discourse? Due to the *dual-case design* described above, it seemed sensible to choose a second case that was very different from the French case in terms of context.

I chose *Germany and the discourse surrounding the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005* for two reasons, one of which does not apply and one of which only applies to a limited extent to the other possible case, Italy. First, the pair Germany-France fulfils the criterion of definitional power in the EU particularly well. The governments of both states have from the beginning often and gladly referred to themselves as the drivers of integration and to this day regularly meet to organise their efforts at shaping the development of the EU. The governments of the two states thus not only regularly and explicitly claimed the EU's internal power of definition for themselves but also repeatedly implemented it in practical policy throughout the history of integration. In Italy, neither of these dynamics is the case to any comparable extent.

Secondly, as intended (see [Chapter 7](#)), the contextual factors in Germany, which are central to the study, are in large part contradictory to the first case of France. This was also only partially true in Italy. There were differences in (1) the *conditions of the discourses*: in France, there was a referendum. It allowed for an intensive discourse in which elite discourses and citizens' opinions interacted. The EU became a central political issue for six months across almost all classes and strata of society. Germany, on the other hand (as in Italy), undertook this vote via parliament, and there was little public discourse. Moreover, France's political system and political culture – presidential, with a traditionally strong role of protest movements, rather weak parties, and a weak parliament with majority voting – set quite different framework conditions for the discourse. These contrasted with Germany and its parliamentary system with proportional representation and a pronounced culture of consensus.

The (2) *effects of Europeanisation on the political systems* also differed: France changed more than Germany as a result of Europeanisation, both regarding its state

apparatus and its party system. Italy seemed less impacted by Europeanisation than France, though with some similarities; parties tend to be even more unstable in Italy than in France, and the parliamentary system is more crisis-prone than that of France.

Finally, (3) the role of *reference discourses* also differed: in Germany and France, both the models of national identity and their relationships to European integration differ. In France, the relationship of both national identity patterns and political elites to the EU is traditionally adversarial. In Germany, on the other hand, a positive relationship between national identity and European integration has traditionally been constructed, and there is a broad national elite consensus in support of the EU. In Italy, these relationships are not as pronounced and reliably positive as in Germany.

In addition, (4) *both the German and French discourses took place in spring 2005 and both referenced each other*, which made it possible to include these references in the investigation. The Bundestag voted in mid-May and the French population at the end of May; in contrast, in Italy, parliamentary ratification had already taken place in January 2005.

I therefore chose to use *Germany and the discourse surrounding the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in the German Bundestag and Bundesrat in 2005* as a second case.

The objects of this study are thus the two discourses on the ratification proceedings of the EU Constitutional Treaty in Germany and France in 2005. They ascribe meaning to the EU and are seen as potential means for the construction of European identity. As such, they also influence the possibilities for strong democratisation and democratic legitimisation of the EU.

3.2.3.2 Source Selection and Prior Knowledge of the Material

The next step was to determine the *corpus of research material*. At the beginning of a qualitative study, it is necessary to compile a corpus of texts according to theoretically and methodologically coherent criteria defined by the research question. Before material sampling is begun, it is unclear whether the adopted selection criteria actually provide relevant research material. Therefore, a complete corpus collection should be preceded by test surveys to ensure that the selection criteria actually yield relevant text material, as was done in the present case (Mayring 2008, 42–44). What was the relevant and appropriate corpus in the present study, and according to which theoretically and methodologically coherent criteria defined by the research question was it to be selected? This led to the further question of how to determine the two national EU discourses.

Here, the first question concerned their *temporal limitation*. This was straightforward, arising from the relevant facts. On 1 January 2005, France's then President Jacques Chirac announced in his New Year's address that there would be a

referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty. This date therefore marks the official start of the discourse. The referendum took place on 29 May 2005. Before that, on 12 May 2005, the German Bundestag had approved the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty, and on 27 May the Bundesrat did so as well. It was also necessary to include the discursive evaluation of the outcome of both events, so that the end date chosen was the end of reporting on the European Council meeting on 16 and 17 June 2005, at which the negative referendum results in France and the Netherlands and the further procedure were discussed. This resulted in an investigation period from 1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005 (one week after the European Council meeting).

A second question related to the research material used as the basis of the discourse analyses. Discourses are only partly media-related, and they are of course also partly based on direct interactions between the participants. For example, in France not only did numerous discussion events on the EU Constitutional Treaty take place, but many citizens also discussed the issue in private. However, these contributions to the discourse, which were not media-related, could not be included after the fact. In this respect, it was clear that the research process had to refer to media-related discourse contributions. These included contributions from television and radio, the internet, leaflets and pamphlets, books, and finally contributions in daily newspapers and magazines. Here, a first narrowing down emerged early on: the object of the investigation was the attribution of meaning to the EU, i.e., the content of the statements. Essential aspects of the messages on television (facial expressions, gestures) or radio (tone of voice) did not fall within the narrow focus of the investigation. Restricting the analysis to the content might even have proven counterproductive. In addition, television and radio contributions would have been difficult to compare with the written contributions. For this reason, I decided very early against including audiovisual media and in favour of limiting the study to written language.

At the beginning of the research project – based on theoretical prior knowledge about discourse analyses and empirically rich as well as ethnographic prior knowledge about France and its press landscape – I, therefore, sought to include a selection of different written media and to collect contributions from books published during the period under consideration, from two quality daily newspapers, one of which tends to serve the conservative spectrum (*Le Figaro*) and one the liberal spectrum (*Le Monde*), two weekly political newspapers of the liberal centre (*Le Point* and *L'Express*) and internet contributions. This selection would have covered several types of media and several types of authors: books and newspapers are more likely to be written by people characterised as elites in the present study, while internet contributions may be different.

However, I decided to change this material selection in the course of a research stay in France as a result of a random sampling of potential sources, an analysis of secondary literature on discourse, and on the basis of expert discussions with French researchers.¹ In this respect, the selection of material was already part of the discourse analysis, too. I thus followed a strategy that is essentially recommended for any qualitative research: before material sampling is begun, it is unclear whether the adopted selection criteria actually provide relevant research material.

Therefore, a complete collection of raw textual data should be preceded by test surveys to ensure that the selection criteria actually yield relevant text material, as was done in the present case. The embedding of the material in its communicative context should also be considered, for example, by recording the situation in which it was created and the formal characteristics of the material (Mayring 2008, 42–44).

After a sample survey of the two daily newspapers *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, a tendency emerged that was substantiated in the analysis of secondary literature on the discourse as well as in expert discussions with French colleagues. *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* mainly advocated the “Yes” vote in the referendum, primarily gave public forums to supporters, and thus contributed to the construction of positive or at most ambivalent attributions of meaning to the EU, as did the political weeklies *Le Point* and *L'Express*, which were originally planned as material for the study. In contrast, a central conflict over the question of how to vote on the EU Constitutional Treaty and how to evaluate the EU existed within the camp of the moderate left PS. In addition, both left-wing and right-wing extremist parties and their voters were clearly opposed to the EU Constitutional Treaty.

However, all three of these theoretically particularly relevant units of analysis would hardly have been represented in the originally planned sample. In order to be able to capture the breadth of the discourse, it was necessary to add two media outlets that represented the critical arguments. I decided to include left-liberal *Libération*, because the internal dispute among the Socialists and the left-liberal milieu was best represented there, and also the Communist *L'Humanité* because it is the only daily newspaper of the far-left spectrum that played an important role in the referendum discourse. There is no counterpart on the extreme right, which also opposed the Constitutional Treaty.

Internet contributions were not collected as planned. Although they played a central role, especially for the opponents of the treaty, they had not been thoroughly archived. *Books* were mostly written by people already extensively represented in the press and did not contribute any additional information. They were collected, but not systematically evaluated.

Overall, this resulted in a *narrowing of the material corpus to quality daily newspapers* instead of a broader overview of several media. This offered the possibility to do justice to the *entire political spectrum of discourses within one medium*, i.e., to go into greater *depth*. Another argument in favour of the quality press was that it is a *primary conveyor of the elite discourses considered to be formative*, which was confirmed by the random samples of articles (see below).

The corpus of source material for the French case was collected for the survey period (1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005) from the *BPE Europresse* database accessible at the Institut des Études Politiques in Paris. I included all articles for the search term “referendum” in the four French quality newspapers. Test surveys with

other possible search words ensured that the theoretically relevant articles were included in the sample. A total of 6373 articles were collected; this was significantly more than expected. For the French articles, it was only necessary to sort out thematically irrelevant ones in rare cases; the main corrections here were duplications. In total, 6358 articles were deemed relevant after the corresponding correction.

The corpus of material for the second case, the German discourse, was compiled in such a way that it was as similar as possible to the French database. Thus, I included the daily newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (conservative), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (liberal), *taz* (left-liberal), and *Neues Deutschland* (far left). In Germany, however, I varied the search terms due to the different constellations of events. Here, I collected all articles containing the search words “EU AND constitution*” or “EU AND referendum” via the databases of the Marburg University Library. Test surveys with other possible search words also ensured that the theoretically relevant contributions were included. This initially resulted in a material corpus of 2152 articles. I cleansed this material set as it initially included a number of articles for the search words that did not relate to the Constitutional Treaty and the events surrounding it, especially at times when the discourse was less intensive (the search words also covered undesirable combinations, such as articles that contained “eu” and elsewhere “constitution” or “referendum”). These were sorted out during the first review of the source material. A total of 1787 articles were relevant to the research question.

Thus, the present study considers the part of the respective EU discourses that took place in quality newspapers. The selection of two times four theoretically particularly relevant quality dailies means that the relevant breadth of the political spectrum is included in the corpus.

Samples of the source material confirmed that this selection was theoretically particularly relevant because, as expected, the discourse in the quality newspapers was predominantly shaped by elites, who are particularly important in the construction of national EU conceptions. Moreover, the sample not only included elites belonging to the opposition or close to it but also represented their different points of view.

As a result, the comparative research design is based on a sample of a total of 8145 articles in four national newspapers of record for each country, which are largely representative of the political spectrum in each. This is an innovation with regard to other studies. In previous comparative discourse-analytical studies of national EU discourses, usually one daily newspaper was analysed, and that means that only a limited portion of the corresponding discourse was taken into account.

The corpus was formed and evaluated solely according to the criterion of theoretical relevance: after a complete survey of the theoretically relevant period of 1 January 2005 to 23 June 2005, all articles were included in the evaluation, with particularly theoretically relevant articles (theoretical sampling) then evaluated more precisely for each case. A total of 2247 articles were coded.

3.2.3.3 Further Prior Knowledge of the Sources: Press and Quality Daily Newspapers in France and Germany

When examining media of any kind, it is fundamentally important to note that they are themselves discursive actors. They are not only part of the political public but are also gatekeepers and choose which topics, actors, and positions they disseminate (Pfetsch and Adam 2008, 11). Thus, they can help to determine the construction of meaning at a decisive point insofar as they can help to decide which contents and actors find their way into that part of the discourse taking place in quality newspapers. The present study accounts for this by including media of different political orientations. However, it should be pointed out that there can also be reverse processes, where citizens assert issues via their activities and the press reports on them. Moreover, the gatekeeper function of the media says nothing about which meanings are actually received by other actors.

What are the central characteristics of the selected quality dailies in France and Germany? It was first apparent that there were far fewer national quality dailies in France than in Germany; i.e., there were only 11 in 2009. In addition to this concentration of quality publications, there was a visible interweaving of the press with large corporations in France, as a result of a process that began in the 1980s (Charon 1991, 85; P. Albert 2008, 121–123). However, this constellation did not seem to have any discernible influence on the discourse. On the contrary, the daily newspapers studied are roughly comparable not only in terms of their political orientation but also in terms of their circulation figures. The only exception was the left-liberal spectrum, where the French *Libération* had a much higher print run than the German *taz* in 2005. Table 3.5 provides an overview of the circulation figures.

However, daily newspapers played a somewhat more important role in Germany than in France in providing information about the EU, as the results of the Eurobarometer survey from May and June 2005 show (Table 3.6).

Table 3.5 Circulation figures of the newspapers studied, for 2005

Circulation levels total print run 2005 ^a	Germany	France
Conservative	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 477,863	Le Figaro 436,401
Liberal centre	South German Newspaper 547,124	Le Monde 481,805
Left-liberal	Taz – the daily newspaper 81,075	Libération 202,081
Far left	New Germany 58,131	L'Humanité 74,919

Sources: Association pour le contrôle de la diffusion des médias (2010); Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V. (2010) Own representation.

Note:

a For Germany, an average of the quarterly circulation figures was calculated.

Table 3.6 Preferred information media in Germany and France 2005

<i>Preferred sources of information about the EU</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>France</i>
Television	81%	75%
Daily newspapers	60%	40%
Radio	46%	36%
Discussions with relatives, friends, colleagues	29%	33%
Internet	23%	23%
Other newspapers, magazines	23%	21%
Books, brochures, leaflets	15%	17%
Meetings	6%	4%
Phone	1%	3%
None of the above	9%	0%

Source: Eurobarometer (2005, 82); own Representation.

In both states, television was by far the most important source of information, followed by daily newspapers. At first glance, it is surprising that in France the values for the role of discussions with friends, relatives, and colleagues, for brochures, books, and leaflets, and for meetings are hardly higher than in Germany, despite the survey being conducted at the height of the referendum discourse. These media should be interpreted as classic channels through which a highly politicised discourse would proceed; moreover, the results do not correspond to the importance that the EU had as a subject of debate in conversations in France in May 2005 (see [Chapter 6](#)).

3.2.4 *Steps of Coding and Theoretical Sampling*

After the collection of material has been completed, the relevant information is *extracted* from the text or at least marked in the text. The text is *coded* (Adu 2019; Elliott 2018; Gibbs 2013). The term “coding” originally came from quantitative research but has now become accepted in qualitative research. Ideally, it is assumed that qualitative content analyses always separate themselves from the original text at an early stage and consistently. In fact, however, the marking or coding of the relevant information is the central criterion (Gläser and Laudel 2004, 44); a possible recourse to the original text does not significantly change the characteristics of this procedure. The codes, i.e., the selection categories for relevant material, must be specified, and the extraction or marking of relevant text passages follows a *coding process*: building on theoretical and empirical prior knowledge and, if necessary, on insights gained in the course of the study, a *category system* or *code system* is developed that serves to mark information relevant to the research question. *Coding thus means a procedure for the systematic and methodically controlled interpretative evaluation of the material*. It is an essential part of the research concept because it makes text and code the common object of analysis (Gläser and Laudel 2004, 193). In the present study, the coding process followed the following quality criteria and reflections.

A coding process usually follows three steps: (1) text passages are coded, i.e., assigned to certain categories, (2) then, a synopsis of all text passages that share

certain features is carried out, and these are analysed comparatively, and (3) on this basis, structures and patterns in the material are identified, which can then lead to the formation of new categories (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 54–56). This basis is used to generate further theses, models, and theories.

In terms of research logic, coding is thus a form of *hypothetical reasoning* (cf. Peirce 1994). Two coding strategies can be discerned: subsumptive coding based on a prepared coding scheme and abductive coding, in which new categories are developed based on the material (for abduction and hypothetical reasoning, see Section 2.3.2). While classical content analyses develop evaluation categories before they approach the text, procedures oriented towards *grounded theory* (Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss 1967; Khan 2014; Vollstedt and Rezat 2019), on the other hand, aim to develop categories *and* theories from the material (Gläser and Laudel 2004, 41–43; Mayring 2008, 74).

It is also possible, as in the present study, to combine both procedures. A variety of mixed forms are possible and common, in which categories are developed theoretically and/or based on prior knowledge and are checked, concretised, and supplemented via the material (see the following section). The code system then, on the one hand, builds on the research dimensions conceived in the theoretical preliminary considerations, but it is, on the other hand, adjusted during extraction if information emerges in the text that is relevant but does not fit into the code system. This means that the dimensions of existing categories can be changed, and new categories can be constructed. Thus, the structure of the informational basis is shaped both by prior knowledge and by the information contained in the material (Gläser and Laudel 2004, 193–196). Prior knowledge can enter in its various forms, regardless of whether it is coded abductively, subsumptively, or using a mixed strategy. Thus, (1) empirically non-substantial theoretical concepts and terms can be incorporated as heuristics; (2) everyday knowledge can refer to thematic fields for coding, and (3) empirically substantial categories can be derived from sociological knowledge, which are of particular interest for the theory-building function. Different categories of codes can be derived from different categories of prior knowledge. In the special case of axial coding, codes developed on the basis of the material are ordered in a second step along the axis of the emerging theory, according to the *phenomena*, the *causal conditions*, the *properties of the context of action*, *intervening conditions*, *action and interaction strategies*, and *consequences* (Kelle and Kluge 1999, 58–60).

After coding, different procedures can be followed depending on the research design – further coding can be done, the original texts can be referred back to in order to reconstruct contexts of meaning and connections, or the extracted information can be used on its own.

In total, there are three investigation steps: *preparation of the coding*, *coding* (and, if necessary, extraction), and *evaluation*, as shown in the model presented in Table 3.7.

With a mixture of theory-based and prior knowledge-based procedures and material-oriented coding, steps (5) to (9) cannot be clearly separated chronologically. Rather, as in the present study, several changes must take place from one step to

Table 3.7 Coding steps

Preparation of the coding	1 Determination of the material Embedding the material in its communicative context via
	2 Analysis of the situation of origin and
	3 Consideration of the formal characteristics of the material
Determination of the analysis techniques and the examination procedure;	4 In any case, development of a category/code system, as well as, if necessary
Coding	4b Determination of units of analysis (especially important for quantitative work): coding unit (smallest body of material that may be evaluated), context unit (largest text component that may fall under code), and evaluation unit (which text components are evaluated one after the other?)
	5 Developing definitions, prime examples, and coding rules for the individual categories
	6 Overview on the material
	7 Coding analysis steps: summary (paraphrase), explication, structuring (deriving formal, content-related, typifying, or scaling structures from the material), and reference designation
	8 Back-testing of the code system on theory and material
Evaluation	9 Interpretation of the results in relation to the research question

Source: Modified after Mayring (2008, 42–44, 84); own Representation.

the other in order to complete the code system. It is then of elementary importance that a *code system finally determined* in this way can *always be applied to the entire material*. That means that as soon as codes change in the course of the analysis, the corresponding passages must again be coded conclusively and uniformly on the basis of the final codes.

Finally, the quality criteria of reliability and validity are also central to qualitative content analyses. These were specified by Krippendorff (Krippendorff 2004; see also Mayring 2008, 109–111):

The quality criterion of *reliability* concerns the stability, reproducibility, and accuracy of the results. These are based on exactness in the implementation of and adherence to the standards. Reliability can be tested in various ways (cf. Krippendorff 2004, 211–213; Mayring 2008, 109–111). To test stability, the analytical instrument (or the code system) is applied to the material once more; this corresponds roughly to a retest (does a second pass through the material yield the same results?). Reproducibility of results concerns the extent to which coding leads to different results when carried out by other researchers. Finally, the accuracy of the coding is the most difficult to check. Its central criterion is that the standards of qualitative analyses were adhered to in the coding. In the present study (see following sections), these criteria were implemented as far as practically possible and reasonable.

The quality criterion of *validity* concerns semantic validity, sample validity, correlative validity, predictive validity, and construct validity. Semantic validity is expressed in the appropriateness and accuracy of the code definitions, which are checked by coding rules, definitions, and prime examples. Sample validity concerns the criteria according to which the material was selected. Correlative validity

means validation by reference to an external criterion, especially when results of a study with a similar subject and similar question are already available, which is likely to be difficult in many qualitative studies. Predictive validity can be checked if one can reasonably derive forecasts from the material, the occurrence of which is then examined. The results can also be checked for plausibility on the basis of proven theories. The same applies to construct validity – it can also be checked by comparing it with established theories and models, but also with expert knowledge (cf. Krippendorff 2004, 313–315; Mayring 2008, 109–111). These criteria were also implemented in the present study as far as practically possible and reasonable (see the following sections).

Coding was carried out using the software MaxQDA. It is to be noted that the software was only used as an electronic tool; i.e., it was used to document and register the proceedings of the analysis and the results. This is to be differentiated from computerised analyses that are run automatically. The software offers easy possibilities to order and sort the material and to register the proceeding of research as it develops (on coding software, see also Gibbs 2013; Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019; Lewins and Silver 2014; Maricut-Akbik 2021). It is designed for registering and supporting analyses of large corpora of material, which can easily be handled and interpretatively analysed. The software registers the coding system as it is developing, and it offers different possibilities to sort out the coded parts of the texts at later stages. The limits of using software in the present study shall be underlined, too: the software helps to register the interpretative analysis, but it cannot carry these out itself.

3.2.5 *Proceeding of the Analysis*

Accordingly, the analysis had several phases that will be summarised in the following overview:

Phase 1: In the first phase, the relevant research criteria were developed as described in [Sections 2.3](#) and [3.1](#), research cases and research material were selected, and the material was collected. The study combined analysis of the corpus with the detailed selection of material according to the concept of theoretical sampling. Using everyday knowledge about France, prior theoretical knowledge, secondary literature, and relevant data and documents, the contexts of the discourses were also analysed (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Phase 2: In the second phase, the focus was first set on analysing the course of the discourses (longitudinal section). Firstly, a quantifying overview of the development of the intensity of the discourse was created – all the articles retrieved were counted and the results were put into diagram form. Secondly, a run through of all the articles retrieved was carried out in chronological order from the first to the last day of the study. A detailed protocol of the results was created, which provided an initial overview of the course, central events, actors, rules, reference levels, topic areas, motifs, arguments, and references. This was followed by a run through of the results protocol to determine which facts or patterns

were particularly relevant from a theoretical point of view. This focused on new connections, information, and changes that emerged in the course of the discourse and was particularly relevant for answering the question. Not only did, during this first review, various jumping-off points and conspicuous features emerge that were particularly relevant for further investigation and for answering the research questions, but it also became clear how the discourses developed. In particular, the emergence, dominance, and assertion of certain themes and motifs clearly emerged. This first pass through of the articles also included an initial pre-selection of the articles to be examined in detail, again according to criteria of theoretical sampling. Articles were selected for detailed analysis if they contained new or particularly relevant information. This pre-selection became the basis for the corpus that was studied in detail. A total of 2247 articles were finally coded with MaxQDA.

This selection was conducted in relation to theoretical relevance rather than using a theory-based or prior knowledge-based approach for several reasons. First, types of articles (commentary, reportage, report, etc.), contents (domestic, foreign, EU, etc.), and actors (politicians, scientists, journalists, etc.) were defined and assumptions were made about their relevance for the study. A first sample of the material was then taken using these criteria. However, this sample showed that differences in article types were not relevant for answering the question. There were no categorically assignable differences in the attribution of meaning to the EU depending on the article type, and certain article types hardly appeared in the material – there were only a few agency reports, but many reports by journalists identified by name. Furthermore, not only the articles had very different contents, but also these could hardly be clearly categorised because they usually combined at least two aspects (e.g., domestic political actors commenting on the EU and the French president at the same time). The discourse contributions were thus characterised by the fact that they often referred both to the EU and to France or Germany, or even to domestic political issues in the same breath. This is not surprising insofar as it corresponds to the definition of the chosen research object: national EU discourses were explicitly defined as national discourses around nationally shaped attributions of meaning to the EU. Finally, most of the actors assumed to be relevant (domestic opposition, government, civil society, etc.) appeared in different roles and with different frequencies, but, similar to the contents, no specific statements or attributions of meaning could be assigned to a particular type of actor. Thus, in this sample, the role a certain person held (position, political assignment, etc.) turned out to be relevant to the question, but not which actor type the person belonged to. A classification of articles based on prior knowledge according to types, actors, and contents was thus rejected as a selection criterion from the research material. However, an exclusion criterion was developed based on the material as a result of a second sample (analysis of all articles of one week in all daily newspapers to be investigated). Notes were not suitable for the study because they simply provided too little relevant information.

Apart from this, the only two criteria for including articles in the coding were *theoretical relevance* and the occurrence of *theoretical saturation*. Articles describing new actors, new topics, or new constellations were therefore selected.

Phase 3: Building on the pre-selection of theoretically particularly relevant articles compiled in the first phase, a cross section of the discourses was examined in the third discourse-analytical phase. This involved coding with a view to the eight analytical dimensions (course, actors, rules, reference levels, topics, motifs, arguments, references), references to the context factors, and other relevant information on the dimensions of the analysis. In addition, the interrelationships of their use, variations, and references to each other were examined.

First, a preliminary code system was created based on the prior knowledge already presented, which was applied to both discourses, beginning on 1 January and progressing month by month, and then concretised and supplemented via the material. As in the first pass through the material, the procedure was carried out over time. The results of the coding of one month also formed the basis for (1) the theoretical sampling of further articles to be coded for the next month and (2) an axial coding.

Regarding (1): Theoretical saturations became apparent very early on – certain facts, information, arguments, motifs, references, etc. were recognisable very clearly. This helped reveal where there were still open questions and what information was new. Articles for the next month were then selected for further coding if they could contribute to answering these questions or provide new information. As the selection and coding progressed, there was less and less new information in relation to the total amount of material. Articles with information that only confirmed findings already made were thus still coded, but in smaller numbers than before and with the purpose of recording the sustained pattern of interest. Thus, the proportion of coded articles in relation to the total number of articles in a month became smaller and smaller.

Regarding (2): Not only was the code system completed during the coding that progressed in this way, but it was also increasingly coded axially, i.e., according to the emerging typifications (not yet theories). During the coding process, several passes through the material ensured that the same articles were assessed as theoretically relevant in both the sampling and evaluation and that the same passages were coded in the same way at different times or in different rounds. In order to make the procedure comprehensible and controllable, detailed protocols were also drawn up on the course of the coding, the axial coding, the theoretical saturations that occurred in the process, and the corresponding further steps in the selection of units of analysis. At the end of the interrelated process of coding and theoretical sampling of units of analysis, i.e., after selection and coding for the month of June, the finished coding system was again applied to all the coded material. A total of 2247 articles were coded in this way (for France: 1311 items; for Germany: 936 items).

Phase 4: The fourth phase of the discourse analysis involved the synthesis of the results of the first three phases of the discourse analysis as well as the context analysis, and the final analysis based on this. This step observed how and why certain theoretically particularly relevant meanings were constructed in the discourse. These were categorised and typified. Here, too, the relevant combinations of features and text passages were evaluated using the criteria of theoretical sampling until no new relevant results could be found.

Synthesis phase: In the final synthesis phase, building on these results, (1) the research questions were answered, (2) the contexts of the discourses and (3) the discourses were compared, (4) theses and models for further theory building were developed, and (5) remaining open questions were identified. The research procedure is summarised in the overview presented in [Table 3.8](#).

Table 3.8 Overview of the conduct and steps of the study

Heuristics of the study	1	Development of the integrated research model, the research question, and the heuristics of the study (see Chapters 2 and 3)
Context analysis	2	Determining dimensions for case selection
	3	Based on sampling of French discourse, ethnographic knowledge of France, and discussions with French experts: Systematisation of relevant contextual factors
	4	Foucault's categories => heuristics for capturing the context
	5	Application of heuristics to the case of Germany
	6	Building on everyday knowledge of France and Germany, prior theoretical knowledge/secondary literature, and document collection: capturing contexts
	7	Building on this: comparing the contexts of the discourses
First phase of discourse analysis: material selection and collection of corpus	8	Based on prior theoretical knowledge + everyday knowledge: case selection countries
	9	Based on theory, prior knowledge + everyday knowledge: 1st step material selection
	10	After discussions with French experts: 2nd step material selection
	11	Data collection, search words based on prior knowledge of everyday life and theory
Second phase of discourse analysis: course of the discourses	12	Quantifying overviews of development of discourse intensity
	13	Pass through all the articles raised in chronological order with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed protocol of the results => first overview of the course, central events, actors, rules, reference levels, thematic fields, motifs, arguments, and references • Going through protocols of results to determine which theoretically particularly relevant facts or patterns emerged • Initial pre-selection of the articles to be examined in detail according to criteria of theoretical sampling
Third phase of discourse analysis: cross-section of the discourses	14	Coding and investigation with a view to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight analytical dimensions (course, actors, rules, reference levels, themes, motifs, arguments, references) • Contexts of use, variations, and references to each other • References to the contextual factors • Further relevant information on the study dimensions

(Continued)

Table 3.8 (Continued)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preliminary code system created on the basis of prior knowledge is applied progressively on a monthly basis and concretised and supplemented using the material: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior knowledge => first set of codes • Material => completed codes
	15 Results of coding on one month basis for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theoretical sampling of further articles to be coded • axial coding
	16 Finished code system (as of June) applied again to all coded material. A total of 2247 items were coded (France: 1311; Germany: 936)
Fourth phase of discourse analysis: closing	17 Synthesis of results of first phases of discourse analysis + context analysis
	18 Final analysis: How and why were theoretically particularly relevant meanings constructed in the discourse? => <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typifications of the results via analytical dimensions • Development of explanatory theses and models
Synthesis phase	19 Synthesis phase of the overall results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering research questions • Comparing contexts of the discourses • Comparing discourses
	20 Discussion and further considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of explanatory models and theses for theory building • Identification of remaining open questions

Source: Own Representation.

3.2.6 *Heuristics: Summary of the Assumptions Guiding the Research and the Research Questions*

The integrated research concept is now completely concretised. The heuristics based on the results of the theory integration and the resulting research questions are therefore summarised again in [Table 3.9](#)

Table 3.9 Overview of heuristics and research questions

<i>Heuristics</i>	<i>Research questions</i>
<i>Guiding question/research question 1: National EU discourses as means for the construction of European identity?</i>	
European identity is conditioned by individual identifications as well as patterns of meaning at the macro-level	Guiding question of the study: In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?
Collective identities are socially constructed; one form of this is their discursive construction	

(Continued)

Table 3.9 (Continued)

<i>Heuristics</i>	<i>Research questions</i>
National EU discourses are of central importance in the formation of European identity as a multi-level identity	First research question: How do national EU discourses by political, scientific, and economic elites, mediated via the national quality press, construct the EU and Europe?
National EU discourses are studied as a means of European identity construction	How do the discourses proceed and why?
National EU discourses are marked by eight analytical dimensions	What are the central actors, rules, reference levels, topics, motifs, arguments, and references in the national EU discourses?
National contexts are crucial for the course of national EU discourses	Second research question: How are national EU discourses, and thus the formation of European identity, shaped by specific national contexts and references?
Context is operationalised in the following five areas:	What role do each of the following play in the development of national EU discourses?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a The national political system b The national political parties c Citizens as recipients of the discourses, their attitudes towards the topic, as well as the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the discourses d Central motifs of national identity narratives e Central aspects and motifs of previous European policy discourses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a The national political system b The national political parties c Citizens as recipients of the discourses, their attitudes towards the topic, as well as the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the discourses d Central motifs of national identity narratives e Central aspects and motifs of previous European policy discourses
<i>Research question 2: Are there contributions and references to the self-definition of a European demos in national EU discourses?</i>	
European identity is to be understood as a self-definition of the EU demos, i.e., an awareness of and identification with the EU polity to which rights and democratic practice refer, and a mutual identification and recognition among the demos' members (<i>counterfactual norm</i>)	1 In what respect and to what extent can national EU discourses contribute to generating such a self-definition of the demos?
Thus, European identity is a prerequisite for the stability of the EU as a political system and a condition for the emergence of democratic practice	2 Are references to the formation of EU-related democratic practice recognisable in the discourses?
It can be assumed that in a reciprocal relationship, democratic practice also stimulates the emergence of European identity	3 How are the discourses themselves to be evaluated with regard to this normative premise: are they themselves democratic practice?

(Continued)

Table 3.9 (Continued)

<i>Heuristics</i>	<i>Research questions</i>
<i>Research question 3: Are there references to the ideal of a difference-affirming multi-level identity in the discourses? Which ones?</i>	
European identity is part of a system of multiple identities at different polity levels	1 What references between different polity levels and aspects of identity, in particular between national and European identity, are constructed in the discourse?
In particular, the emergence of European identity is linked to national identity patterns and thus also conditioned by a positive relationship between national and European identities. If there are conflicts between the identity levels, this negatively influences European identity	
<i>Counterfactual norm:</i> A difference-affirming multi-level identity must emerge	2 Are there references to shared political-democratic meaning?
The EU population must develop a minimum degree of positive identification with each other and with the polity, as well as a minimum degree of collectively or majority-shared attribution of political-democratic meaning to the EU	3 To what extent can national EU discourses contribute to citizens sharing them?
These must make it possible to balance conflicting identities and value attitudes and different levels of identities	
<i>Research question 4: What meanings are attributed to the EU in discourses, and what factors shape these attributions?</i>	
In discourses as collective interaction processes, social actors construct definitions of reality and symbolic orders.	1 What happens in the discourse, how does the discourse proceed, and why?
It can be assumed that the following factors condition or influence the construction of European identity and the attribution of meaning:	2 What meanings is the EU discursively loaded with and why does this happen?
1 Inclusion/omission of certain historical or factual circumstances	3 Which attributions of meaning prevail? Why?
2 Stereotypes (attributions to the self/other)	4 Recourse is made to the following:
3 Discursive demarcations to the outside	1 Specific historical and factual circumstances
4 Founding myths	2 Stereotypes
5 Compatibility with central social codes	3 Discursive demarcations to the outside
6 Corresponding to the interests, wishes, and fears of the population so that they can assert themselves	4 Founding myths
7 Media (written languages, communication, public sphere)	5 Central social codes
8 Practices and symbols	6 Fears and emotions
	7 Certain media of penetration
	8 Practices and symbols
<i>Research question 5: What rules shape the discourses?</i>	
Discourses are structured according to certain rules that influence the sayability and attribution of meaning to contributions	What rules and other factors shape the structure of discourses – i.e., the sayability and gained meaning of statements?

(Continued)

Table 3.9 (Continued)

<i>Heuristics</i>	<i>Research questions</i>
<i>Research question 6: Which groups are the central supporting groups of national EU discourses and thus shape European identity?</i>	
Supporting groups have central roles in the construction of European identity:	1 Which supporting groups (EU elites, national elites, citizens) shape the discourses, how do they do so, and what motives for action and strategies underlie this?
EU elites in the Commission or the EP generate and disseminate identity ideas across the EU	2 Do the ideas of the elites prevail in the discourse or can indicators for processes of social penetration be identified in the discourses? Which ones?
National elites form national EU conceptions	3 Are there only dynamics that run from the top-down, or also those that run from the bottom-up?
No causal connection: it is not only because elites construct discursive meanings that they also assert themselves	
Rather, it is true that ideas of elites can prevail in processes of social penetration. These can be strongly driven from the top-down, but must have a bottom-up correspondence in order to be sustainable	
<i>Research question 7: Are the discourses studied open or closed? Which contextual factors affect discourses and how?</i>	
Discourses are not closed, but open to outside influences, and can be fundamentally influenced by power relations, structures, interests, socio-economic and political contexts, as well as established or competing patterns of meaning	Context, inward openness:
	1 To what extent did political and social structures, constellations of interests, or culturally specific contexts of meaning influence the respective course of the discourses?
National EU discourses are probably not purely national. An inclusion of actors and topics from the rest of the EU can be assumed. However, it can be assumed that these discourses are essentially determined by national actors and are substantially shaped by national influencing factors	Openness to the outside:
	2 To what extent did the discourses have a primarily national reference? Is it possibly interrupted by actors from the EU level, actors from other member states, and non-national codes?
	3 Are there shared references or common contents of the two EU discourses?
Operationalisation in the following five context categories:	Are references found in the discourses to
1 Political systems	1 the political system and its specifics,
2 Structures, processes, and actors of the party system	2 the structures, processes, and actors of the party system,
3 Citizens and their attitudes towards the EU, socio-economic situation, and climate of opinion at the time of the discourses	3 citizens as recipients of the discourses and their attitudes towards the EU as well as the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the two discourses,
4 Central motifs of national identity narratives	4 central motifs of national identity narratives, and
5 Previous European policy discourses	5 previous European policy discourses?

Source: Own Representation.

Note

- 1 I owe revealing insights to my conversations with Nonna Mayer, Olivier Rozenberg, and Sophie Duchesne.

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4 France

The Discourse

In [Chapter 3](#), the three decisive guiding questions of a discourse analysis were defined: (1) *What* happens in discourse? (content), (2) *How* is meaning constructed in the discourse? (references), and (3) *Why*? (reasons). This resulted in eight analytical dimensions of discourses, which are the basis of the following analysis: (1) *Course* (topics, number of contributions/intensity and major events), (2) *Actors* (persons or institutional actors who shape the discourse), (3) *Rules* (structure the course of the discourse and the sayability of utterances), (4) *Levels of reference* (political levels or substantive topic areas to which the discourse refers), (5) *topic areas* (content areas that the discourse touches upon), (6) *Motifs* (typical attributions of meaning for properties and motives for action), (7) *Arguments* (typical processes of attributing meaning, argumentation processes), and (8) *References* (relationships between motifs, topic areas, reference levels, rules, actors, or contextual factors that are constructed in the discourse). I analyse these for the French case below. The description of the discourse itself is divided into two sections: [Section 4.1](#) deals with the course, actors, topics, reference levels, and rules of the discourse and [Section 4.2](#) with motifs, arguments, and references of the discourse. [Section 4.3](#) contains a conclusion on the case of France.

The following is based on the evaluation and analysis of the French text corpus of 6358 articles as described in [Section 3.2.3](#). The four newspapers studied are abbreviated in the references: LM stands for *Le Monde*, LF for *Le Figaro*, L for *Libération*, and H for *L'Humanité*. In addition, the date of publication is given in each case, and a number indicates which article of the day in question is being cited. This results in citations of the following type: LM 230305_8. In addition, secondary literature, election results, and statistical data are referred to in some places.

4.1 Course, Reference Levels, Topics, Actors, and Rules of the Discourse

The course, levels of reference, topics, actors, and rules of discourse concern all three guiding questions of a discourse analysis – *What happened in the discourse? How was meaning constructed? Why did certain developments occur?* These aspects are first discussed below in an overview of the discourse, focusing on course

and topics. Subsequently, the levels of reference as well as the actors and rules of the discourse are considered again separately.

4.1.1 *Course of the Discourse, Intensity, and Significant Events*

The prehistory of the French referendum discourse began on 14 July 2004, the national day of France. President Jacques Chirac announced in his televised speech a referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty (TCE). This was his political decision – the French constitution did not require a referendum. Formally, it would have been sufficient to have the Senate and Parliament meet jointly as a congress to ratify the Constitutional Treaty, as had happened with most other European reform treaties, apart from the Maastricht Treaty. Moreover, the political situation tended to argue against a referendum; the governing parties had lost both the regional elections and the EP elections in 2004.

However, Chirac had several reasons for his decision. Firstly, almost all leading representatives of the parties in France had called for a referendum. If Chirac had opposed it, he would have run the risk of appearing undemocratic, the president who refuses to accept the will of the people. Secondly, referenda had already been used in France in 1972 (accession of the UK) and 1992 (Maastricht Treaty) for decisions on the direction of European integration; Chirac could hardly fall short of this benchmark for a vote on a Constitutional Treaty. Thirdly, Chirac had the classic, strategic, domestic political reasons that had influenced almost all referendum decisions in France. He wanted to force his political rivals on the right, Francois Bayrou and Nicolas Sarkozy, to back him in the referendum campaign; he wanted to exploit the division on the left; he hoped to send a signal of his strength with a positive referendum; and he wanted to legitimise a difficult decision by referendum and escape public pressure (Grunberg 2005, 128–130; Martin 2005b, 701, 2005a, 26–28; Morel 2005, 18–21).

This decision by Chirac in favour of a referendum initially caused an *internal vote within the Socialist Party (PS)*, which could not agree on its position on the TCE. Although PS leader Francois Hollande spoke out in favour of a “Yes” vote, he was faced with internal opposition, especially on the left of the party. After the TCE had been adopted in the European Council on 17/18 June 2004, Laurent Fabius, Vice-President of the PS, had already declared on 20 June that he was disappointed with the text of the treaty. On 20 August, Hollande appealed to the party members not to split on the issue – but by 26 August, the three party-internal left-wing associations *Nouveau Monde* around Henri Emmanuelli, *Nouveau Parti Socialiste* around Arnaud Montebourg, and *Force Militante* around the leader of the Northern Regional Association, Marc Dolez, already declared that they would fight a decisive battle for “No” in the intra-party referendum. The “No” supporters were not in the majority among the middle leadership of the PS, but they formed a significant minority: 53 of the 131 MPs, 10 of the 30 MEPs, 10 of the 40 district council presidents, 8 of the 21 regional presidents, and 37 of 72 members of the PS executive committee were in favour of “No” in the intra-party referendum. However, the majority of the party leadership and MPs, especially the former ministers with the exception of Fabius, were in favour of “Yes” (Duseigneur 2005, 74–77).

The primary aim of the internal party referendum was for the PS to go into the national referendum campaign with a unified line after a clear vote. But it also had a central role in the intra-party power struggle: it served to strengthen Hollande's position within the party; after the referendum, the respective winning side would then be able to see itself vindicated.

The PS internal referendum was meticulously prepared. A total of 400 discussion events were held in local chapters and district associations. In addition, there were events campaigning exclusively for "No" or "Yes". The party leadership sent the text of the treaty to each of its members and supported both camps financially. Of the approximately 120,000 PS members, almost 100,000 took part in the vote. The result was announced at the party congress on 4 December 2004: 58.62% of those voting had voted "Yes" to the Constitutional Treaty (Duseigneur 2005; Parti Socialiste 2010, 86). The PS had thus formally decided on the issue; however, in the discourse leading up to the national referendum, it became apparent that it remained divided, and that this division had decisive effects.

The actual referendum discourse began after these events with Chirac's New Year's speech on 1 January 2005, in which he announced the referendum for the first half of 2005. It was then shaped around a number of central events. [Table 4.1](#) summarises them.

In the subsequent development of the discourse, *five phases* can be identified, which can be distinguished in terms of intensity, topics, and central actors. These form the basis of the following overview. Each phase had a specific role in the development and course of the discourse and was marked by specific characteristics. [Table 4.2](#) summarises the five phases of the discourse.

Table 4.1 Important events in the French discourse

1 January 2005	Announcement of referendum in President Chirac's New Year's speech
10 January 2005	Presentation of the "Comité pour le Non populaire et progressiste", Northern Section of the PCF
12 January 2005	EP vote on TCE
15–22 January 2005	Social protests and demonstrations against planned reforms
25 January 2005	Start debate AN
1 February 2005	Vote AN – 450 votes in favour, 34 against, and 64 abstentions
2 February 2005	Jean-Luc Mélenchon (PS) announces to campaign for the "No" vote
3 February 2005	CGT Executive Board positions itself against the Constitutional Treaty with 82% of the vote
5 February 2005	Demonstrations, day of action by CGT, CFDT, FO, and CFTC unions
11 February 2005	Chirac and Zapatero in Barcelona
13 February 2005	Green Party Council prohibits campaign appearances with representatives of other parties and issues a "speech ban" for minority representatives
14 February 2005	Official launch of the PS campaign
14 February 2005	Result of the Green Party internal vote: 52.72% in favour
17 February 2005	Senate vote – in favour, with 27 no votes and 27 abstaining
20 February 2005	Referendum in Spain, result 77% in favour (with 42% non-voters)
25 February 2005	Resignation of Hervé Gaymard, Minister of Finance, for misuse of his state flat

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

28 February 2005	Congress vote – 730 votes in favour, 66 against, and 96 abstaining
1 March 2005	Unanimous vote against the Services Directive in the AN Economic Committee
1 March 2005	Zapatero at the AN
1–3 March 2005	Chirac consults party leaders before announcing the referendum date
2 March 2005	Henri Emmanuelli officially joins the “No” campaign
4 March 2005	Announcement of referendum date by Chirac
5 March 2005	Snowballs thrown at Hollande in Guéret (demonstration against dismantling <i>services publiques</i>)
6 March 2005	UMP party council approves Sarkozy’s pro-TCE text by 90.8%, the start of UMP campaign
7–10 March 2005	Week of demonstrations
9 March 2005	CFE-CGC union president purports to stand for “No” as a private citizen
10 March 2005	Large demonstrations against “social problems”: unemployment, preservation of the 35-hour week, opening of salary negotiations in the private and public sectors
11 March 2005	The PCF officially starts its campaign Emmanuelli compares Socialists’ “Yes” to TCE with “Yes” to Pétain empowerment
13 March 2005	Prime Minister Raffarin sends a signal after demonstrations
15 March 2005	AN approves resolution against Services Directive
17 March 2005	Cover photo “Paris Match” Hollande – Sarkozy
17 March 2005	First joint appearance <i>Non de Gauche</i>
17 March 2005	The first survey appears that sees the “No” in the lead
17 March 2005	Cabinet decisions: state funding for parties in the campaign, broadcasting times
18 March 2005	Conflicts arise at a meeting between employers’ representatives and trade unions; consultations is postponed until 10 June after the referendum
19 March 2005	Europe-wide demonstration against Services Directive in Brussels
20 March 2005	Danielle Mitterrand speaks critically of the TCE
22–23 March 2005	European Council in Brussels, Chirac intervenes against the Services Directive
1 April 2005	New record high in unemployment
4 April 2005	TV debate Sarkozy/Hollande
6 April 2005	Visit Bolkestein in Paris, a demonstration against it
8 April 2005	Francois Hollande says at the PS event that Le Pen is not present in the campaign but rather that others are doing his job for him
14 April 2005	Television discussion Chirac youths
14 April 2005	Second big meeting <i>Non de Gauche</i> at the <i>Zenith</i> in Paris
18 April 2005	Start of Greens’ campaign (for “Yes”)
21 April 2005	Debate on Services Directive begins in EP Economic Affairs Committee
23 April 2005	100th birthday of the PS
23 April 2005	Finance Minister Thierry Bréton announces countermeasures against excessive severance pay for CEOs of large companies
26 April 2005	Franco-German Ministerial Meeting at the Elysée
26 April 2005	Greens lift “ban on speaking” for internal opponents
26 April 2005	Schröder with Chirac at the Sorbonne
27 April 2005	Cabinet postpones privatisation of <i>Gaz de France</i> (GDF)

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

27 April 2005	Medium-sized entrepreneur publicly apologises for a plan of <i>délocalisation</i> to Romania, where he had offered his employees a salary of 110 euros
28 April 2005	Lionel Jospin's first television appearance – record audience
2 May 2005	Chirac receives European cultural workers
3 May 2005	Chirac's second television appearance – even more viewers than Jospin
3 May 2005	PES Group in the EP meets in Paris in the <i>Assemblée Nationale (AN)</i> with the PS
3 May 2005	CSA calls for more equal distribution of airtime
7 May 2005	Figaro political barometer sees Raffarin's popularity at rock bottom
8 May 2005	Laurent Fabius' television appearance
9 May 2005	Television appearance of party leaders (four opponents, four supporters)
11 May 2005	Intervention Danielle Mitterrand for the “No”
12 May 2005	Vote of the German Bundestag
13 May 2005	Jacques Delors says in <i>Le Monde</i> that there could be a plan B
16 May 2005	Whit Monday, protests
16 May 2005	Rouen – joint appearances by Sarkozy and Bayrou/Fabius and Bové
16 May 2005	Start of the official campaign with radio and TV spots
17 May 2005	Interview Laurent Fabius in <i>L'Humanité</i>
18 May 2005	PES representatives come to Paris, deliver support for the “Yes” vote
19 May 2005	Schröder, Kwasniewski, and Chirac in Nancy
19 May 2005	Socialist meeting with Jospin
19 May 2005	CSA warns several media
21 May 2005	Between 3000 and 10,000 people at the last major event of the <i>Non de Gauche</i>
24 May 2005	Jospin's second television appearance
26 May 2005	Chirac's third television appearance – speech
29 May 2005	Referendum
31 May 2005	President Chirac appoints Dominique de Villepin as new Prime Minister
1 June 2005	Referendum in the Netherlands
16 June 2005	Demonstration <i>Non de Gauche</i>
16–17 June 2005	European Council in Brussels – budget dispute, halt to ratification

Source: Own Representation.

4.1.1.1 *The First Phase: January and February, Institutional Launch and Positionings*

The first phase lasted from January to February. It included the institutional *launch and the positioning of the discourse actors*.

After President Chirac's announcement of a referendum, the discourse was initially slow to gain momentum in January and February 2005, but then steadily increased in intensity. In January, a total of 359 articles on the referendum appeared in the four daily newspapers studied, *L'Humanité*, *Libération*, *Le Monde*, and *Le Figaro*; in February, there were already 547.

Table 4.2 Phases of the French discourse

<i>Phases of the discourse</i>	<i>Development of the discourse</i>
<i>First phase:</i> January–February 2005	<i>Institutional prelude and formation of positions in the discourse</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Votes in both Houses of Parliament • Positions of the discourse actors are forming
<i>Second phase:</i> March 2005	<i>Focusing the issues to the left</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation and stabilisation of <i>Non de Gauche</i>, demonstrations against social cuts • Turning point mid-March: strong spread of <i>Non de Gauche</i> issues, Services Directive debate
<i>Third phase:</i> April 2005	<i>Debate offensive of the supporters and stabilisation of the opponents</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous appearances by advocates, targeted efforts • International interventions • Persistently poor labour market situation, government criticism, social protests
<i>Fourth phase:</i> End of April to end of May 2005	<i>Consolidation and decision</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last interventions and performances of all camps • Brief upswing for supporters • Renewed upswing of the opponents • Arguments are known, no further innovations
<i>Fifth phase:</i> 30 May–June 2005	<i>Discussion of what happened, return to normality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and analysis of the <i>non</i> • Discussion and analysis of the <i>Nee</i> • Discussion of the European Council Meeting • Decoupling of the topical focal points in the camps

Source: Own Representation.

The central *event* of the discourse in January was the vote in the *Assemblée Nationale (AN)* on the amendment to the French Constitution necessary for the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. The debate in the AN began on 25 January and the vote took place on 1 February. However, there were early initiatives by the opponents. For example, on 10 January the Northern Section of the French Communist Party (PCF) presented its “Comité pour le Non populaire et progressiste” to the press, and Marie-George Buffet, the General Secretary of the PCF, also made her first appearance on 27 January. The week of 15–22 January also saw various social protests and demonstrations against planned reforms.

The *topics* that shaped the discourse in January were geared towards these events in very different ways. All four newspapers reported on the debate and vote in the *Assemblée Nationale*, and all of them focused on the government and the domestic political situation. Beyond that, however, the topics varied greatly depending on the newspaper. In *L’Humanité*, crucial themes that became decisive for the left “No” campaign led by fringe left parties, trade unions, and socialist and green

dissenters (see below), the *Non de Gauche*, were already clearly visible: the draft EU Services Directive as well as criticism of the government and the related idea of a protest vote were the focus, and there was detailed reporting on all the actions of the treaty opponents. *Libération* also reported in January on the development of the *Non de Gauche*, which was to officially appear as a movement in March, as well as on a central issue of the centre-left: the internal dispute in the PS. As the EU was planning to start its accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, another topic in *Libération* was the question of Turkey's accession to the EU and the positions of French politicians on this. *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, on the other hand, reported primarily on the procedure of ratification in France and the strategies of the government, the parties, and their representatives, but also on the question of Turkey's accession and the draft Services Directive.

In January, moreover, a conspicuous feature of the French discourse was already apparent: its low reference to the EU level and the rest of Europe. This is particularly significant in that the debate and the vote of the European Parliament on the Constitutional Treaty on 12 January, which were central topics in Germany, were only addressed in one or two articles each in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* and did not appear at all in *Libération* or *L'Humanité*.

In February, the two chambers of parliament decided on the necessary constitutional amendments. On 1 February, the *Assemblée Nationale* voted in favour, with 450 votes for, 34 against, mainly from the Communists, and 64 abstentions, mainly from the ranks of the Socialists (LF 020205_2). On 17 February, the Senate also approved the constitutional amendment, with 27 votes against and 27 abstentions (H 180205_5). On 28 February, Congress also voted in favour of the constitutional amendments with 730 votes in favour, 66 against, and 96 abstentions (LM 020305_4).

Alongside this, however, criticism of the TCE increased in intensity and the internal conflicts in the PS started to become clearly visible. On 2 February, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the representative of the left wing of the PS within the *Nouveau Monde* current, announced that he would oppose his party's positive vote in the internal referendum and the explicit party line and campaign for the "No" vote. Francois Hollande, the party leader, only stressed that this was not the party line and that there could only be a PS campaign, but did not promise any sanctions (see below). The internal PS conflicts were also evident in the votes in all chambers of parliament, where the PS never voted even close to unity.

Opposition to the TCE was also forming outside the PS. On 3 February, the executive committee of the formerly communist-oriented CGT union positioned itself against the will of its leader, Bernard Thibault, with 82% of the votes against the Constitutional Treaty. On 5 February, there were further demonstrations on a day of action by the CGT, CFDT, FO, and CFTC unions.

Committees and groups were formed all over the country to stand up for the "No" vote and held their first events. Their actions were directed against the abolition of the 35-hour week and against falling purchasing power. It is notable that this last argument, the question of "pouvoir d'achat", stayed a key topic in France since 2005. In particular, it was a crucial topic for the "Gilets Jaunes" protest movement and then for Marine Le Pen in the presidential election campaign in 2022.

Other important events in February 2005 included a joint appearance of President Chirac and Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero in Barcelona, on the occasion of the Spanish referendum campaign; the official launch of the PS campaign on 14 February; the positive outcome for the Constitutional Treaty of the internal referendum in *Les Verts*, the results of which were also published on 14 February (52.72% in favour; H 160205_3); the Spanish referendum on 20 February with 77% in favour and 42% not voting (LM 230205); and the resignation of Finance Minister Hervé Gaymard for misuse of his state flat on 25 February.

The *topics* of the discourse in February continued to be distributed differently in the four newspapers studied. Again, all reported on the debate and vote in the Senate and Congress, domestic politics and the government, as well as the strategies of the parties and politicians on the referendum, but beyond that, the differences in the topics already mentioned became apparent. *L'Humanité* reported mainly on the draft Services Directive, the protests, and the developing dynamics of the *Non de Gauche* movement. *Libération* also focused on the Services Directive and the *Non de Gauche*, but also on the internal debates in the PS and the development of the opinion polls on the referendum. *Le Monde* reported on the question of Turkey's accession, but also on the situation of the PS, the dispute within the left, and the development of the opinion polls. Finally, *Le Figaro* reported not only on the question of Turkey's accession and the development of the opinion polls but also on the demonstrations.

The *discourse was still open at the end of this first phase*: the camps were only just forming, and it was still a question of which topics, motifs, and messages would be able to prevail. In *L'Humanité* and *Libération*, however, the dynamics that would later have a decisive effect were already emerging. The split in the CGT was the first turning point on the left because the pragmatic line around Thibault was clearly losing, and the newspapers also discussed this. The situation of the left supporters was thus weakened. The fact that the PS and the Greens officially decided not to campaign together made their situation more difficult.

4.1.1.2 *The Second Phase: The Month of March – Focusing the Issues to the Left*

The *second phase* of the discourse led to a *focusing of the issues* – to the left. It began at the end of February with the campaign launches of the other major parties and their representatives for “Yes”. On 1 March, the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero first appeared in the AN to promote “Yes”. On 4 March, after consultations with party representatives, Chirac set the date of the referendum for 29 May. Nicolas Sarkozy, leader of the Gaullist UMP, began his campaign on 6 March. Francois Bayrou, leader of the centrist UDF, started his campaign on 21 March.

However, the discourse in March was dominated by the intensification of the “No” campaign and the social protests. The counter-movement began to have an impact – visibly so in terms of content, politics, and empirically. Thus, although the “Yes” campaign was still ahead in the polls at the beginning of March, it was

already showing a downward trend. A key event also supported the arguments of the opponents: on 1 March, the AN's economic committee voted unanimously – i.e., with the votes not only of the entire PS but also those of the UMP and UDF – against the present draft of the EU Services Directive (in France usually called the Bolkestein Directive), and the AN passed a resolution to this effect on 15 March. After that, the debate on the Services Directive reached its climax. The draft directive and its author, former Competition Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, were stylised by left-wing opponents as symbols of the EU's “ultra-liberalism”, and criticism of the draft directive was now vehemently taken up by all the important representatives of the “Yes” side. Jacques Chirac tabled the French rejection to the European Council on 22 and 23 March.

Various other events underline the dynamics of the “No” side in the discourse in the second phase: on 2 March Henri Emmanuelli, like Mélenchon also a prominent member of the left PS tendency group *Nouveau Monde*, officially joined the “No” campaign at a press conference and shortly afterwards officially withdrew from the PS party executive for the duration of the campaign. There was also growing popular discontent with the social and economic situation. There were more demonstrations against the dismantling of public services of general interest, the *services publiques*. At a large demonstration in Guéret on 5 March, Francois Hollande was pelted with snowballs by opponents of the Constitutional Treaty. From 7 to 10 March, there were several other demonstrations by railway workers, high school students, researchers, and public employees. On 9 March, the president of the CFE-CGC union announced that he would personally stand for the “No” vote – this decision is striking in that it is a union for senior managers (*cadres*). The PCF also officially launched its “No” campaign on 11 March. This date also marked a new stage of escalation in the internal PS dispute. Henri Emmanuelli, in a radio interview, compared the PS's “Yes” to the Constitutional Treaty with the approval of the Enabling Act for Petain, head of the French collaborationist government with Nazi Germany (see below). Then on 13 March, Prime Minister Raffarin sought to send a signal to the discontented – he announced in a radio interview that he would account for the concerns of public employees in the next budget negotiations and appealed to employers to distribute the fruits of economic growth fairly.

These events were signs of incipient turns in the discourse and the mood of the electorate emerging in the opinion polls, linked to the central issues of the social and economic situation in France and the draft EU Services Directive.

Another event contributed to the change of mood: Francois Hollande, leader of the PS, and Nicolas Sarkozy, then leader of the UMP, posed together for the “Yes” on the cover of the yellow press paper *Paris-Match* on 17 March. This photo was immediately exploited by the opponents of the TCE. They argued that the joint appearance of Sarkozy and Hollande symbolised the alliance of right-wing and left-wing politicians at the expense and in disregard of the governed (see [Sections 4.1.2](#) and [4.2](#)). However, as will be shown later, this criticism did not correspond to the

facts at all, because the joint photo was an exception in otherwise separate campaigns by the UMP and PS.

There were other decisive events on 17 March. For example, the representatives of the non-party alliance of the *Non de Gauche* appeared together for the first time at a major event in Paris. The NGO ATTAC, which had officially started its campaign for “No” at the beginning of March, had joined forces in this alliance with the PCF, the Trotskyist LCR, Jean-Pierre Chevènement’s MRC, some civil society groups, but also minority representatives from the PS and the Greens. Jean-Luc Mélenchon and later also Henri Emmanuelli from the PS as well as Francine Bavay from the Greens were among them. The *Non de Gauche* developed recognisably into a grassroots movement; committees and groups for the “No” were founded throughout the country, with initial reporting by *L’Humanité* and later also by other newspapers.

The event on 17 March also coincided with the announcement of the first opinion poll with “No” in the lead: according to the CSA results of 16 and 17 March, the “Yes” vote was at only 49%, the “No” at 51% (LM 190305_9). Compared to the corresponding poll 14 days earlier, the “No” share had thus risen by a full 14 points (Rozès 2005, 31) – a drastic shift in sentiment. This trend subsequently intensified, as various other polls also showed (see Figure 4.1).

On 17 March, the cabinet decided on the rules for the official radio and television campaign. These included 140 minutes of airtime between 15 and 29 May; it thus lasted only two weeks and therefore accounted for only a small part of the discourse as a whole. The cabinet distributed the airtime and state funding for the parties, which was a first in a referendum campaign. To receive both, parties had to either have five AN deputies or five senators, or have obtained more than 5% of the vote in the last European elections, which applied to the parties UMP, PS, UDF, PCF, RPF, FN, Verts, and MPF (LF 180305_4; LM 190305_6; M 180305_3). The extreme left thus received no airtime. Marie-George Buffet, however, made smaller parts of the PCF airtime available to some of its representatives

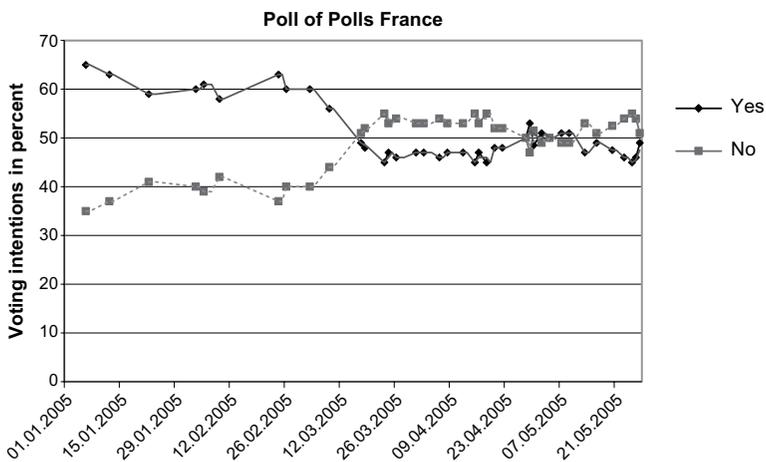


Figure 4.1 Poll of polls of voting intentions in the 2005 referendum in France

Source: IPSOS 2005, own illustration

for publicity purposes. In accordance with the party line, the Greens and the PS allocated all their airtime to their “Yes” supporters alone (cf. Marthaler 2005, 233). As a preventive measure, the media supervisory authority CSA sent out a recommendation to all media on 22 March to respect the principle of equality and to give supporters and opponents at least equal access (LM 250305_6).

Meanwhile, the social protests continued to intensify. On 18 March, a meeting between employers’ representatives and trade unions, which was supposed to only discuss an analysis of salary trends, came to conflict; the consultations were postponed until 10 June, after the referendum. At the Europe-wide demonstration in Brussels against the Services Directive on 19 March, the French opponents of the TCE appeared with their demands and posters for a “No” vote, although the European Trade Union Confederation, which advocated the approval of the Constitutional Treaty, had called for the demonstration. The opponents received support from an unexpected source: Danielle Mitterrand, the widow of former Socialist President Francois Mitterrand, voiced criticism of the Constitutional Treaty on 20 March.

Thus, the middle of March can be classified as a turning point in the discourse in terms of events, issues, voter intentions, and contributions. The *Non de Gauche* campaign had gained decisive momentum and was having an effect on the discourse. Politicians representing the “Yes” camp were increasingly addressing the issues and arguments of the “No” camp, which became particularly prominent in the cross-camp opposition to the Services Directive.

This turn was also reflected in the newspaper articles. While *L’Humanité* had already been campaigning for “No” since January and *Libération* had also been reporting on the protests and the criticism regularly since January, and intensively since February, making the dynamic clear, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* were still concentrating on the government and the major parties’ politicians at the beginning of March. However, due to the numerous and successful demonstrations, the debate on the Services Directive, and the swing in the opinion polls, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* also increasingly focused on the issues of the *Non de Gauche* from mid-March.

The focus of the discourse changed from mid-March onwards and the topics of the newspapers began to clearly converge; a success for agenda-setting from the left.

The overview in [Table 4.3](#) shows this dynamic. *L’Humanité* covered the same topics in March as in January and February, plus the new topics of purchasing power (*pouvoir d’achat*) and the *services publiques*. *Libération* continued to write about Turkish accession, which never gained a decisive role in the discourse, the Services Directive, the social crisis, and the situation of *services publiques*. But *Le Monde* also began to report on the debate about the Services Directive, alongside

Table 4.3 Central themes of the French discourse

<i>Newspapers – months, total number of articles published per newspaper</i>	<i>Themes of the Non de Gauche</i>	<i>Inner</i>	<i>Preparation referendum</i>	<i>EU reference</i>
January				
<i>Humanité</i> 93	Services Directive, protest election, protests, beginnings NDG	Criticism government, domestic politics, camps/alliances	Debate AN	–
<i>Libération</i> 69	Protests, beginnings NDG	Government situation Domestic politics, camps/alliances Dispute PS	Debate AN	Turkey accession
<i>Le Monde</i> 63	Services Directive	Status of the government Status of parties Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Procedure, debate AN Planned policies	Vote EP Turkey accession
<i>Le Figaro</i> 134	–	Government situation Situation of parties Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Debate AN, Strategies	Vote EP
February				
<i>Humanité</i> 169	Services Directive Protests, dynamics of the NDG	Government criticism Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Debate/vote Senate and Congress	–
<i>Libération</i> 104	Services Directive	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances Dispute PS	Debate/vote Senate and Congress Opinion polls	–

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued)

<i>Newspapers – months, total number of articles published per newspaper</i>	<i>Themes of the Non de Gauche</i>	<i>Inner</i>	<i>Preparation referendum</i>	<i>EU reference</i>
<i>Le Monde</i> 102	–	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances Situation PS/dispute on the left	Debate/vote Senate and Congress Opinion polls	Turkey accession
<i>Le Figaro</i> 172	Demonstrations	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Debate/vote Senate and Congress Opinion polls	–
March <i>Humanité</i> 211	Services Directive, protests, NDG dynamics, <i>pouvoir d'achat</i> , <i>services publiques</i>	Government criticism Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Opinion polls (from mid-March when <i>Non</i> is in the lead)	Services Directive EC
<i>Libération</i> 204	Services Directive, <i>crise sociale</i> , <i>services publiques</i>	Government Domestic policy Camps/Covenants Dispute in the PS	Referendum discourse Strategies Actors, Opinion polls	Services Directive, EC Turkey accession
<i>Le Monde</i> 220	Services Directive	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Referendum discourse Opinion polls	Services Directive, EC, Turkey accession
<i>Le Figaro</i> 313	Services Directive, ATTAC, criticism of the NDG (from mid-March)	Government Domestic policy Camps/alliances Position PS	Strategies, Development of referendum discourse Opinion polls	Services Directive, EC

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued)

<i>Newspapers – months, total number of articles published per newspaper</i>	<i>Themes of the Non de Gauche</i>	<i>Inner</i>	<i>Preparation referendum</i>	<i>EU reference</i>
April <i>Humanité</i> 271	Services Directive, protests, dynamics NDG, <i>pouvoir d'achat, services publiques</i> , criticism proponents, contents TCE, civil society actors	Government criticism Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Opinion polls	–
<i>Libération</i> 327	Protests, Reports, Discussion Pro/ Contra	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances Dispute in the PS	Development of referendum discourse Opinion polls, Discussion TCE	–
<i>Le Monde</i> 399	Reaction/Dispute NDG, <i>Délocalisations</i>	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Development of referendum discourse, discussion of TCE	–
<i>Le Figaro</i> 426	Whit Monday, Dispute NDG, Reports	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Development of referendum discourse, opinion polls	–
May <i>Humanité</i> 371	Services Directive, protests, dynamics NDG, <i>pouvoir d'achat, services publiques</i> , criticism proponents, criticism TCE, civil society actors, evaluation debate	Government criticism Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Opinion polls	Interventions
<i>Libération</i> 495	<i>Délocalisations</i> Plan B	Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Discussion of TCE, opinion polls	Interventions

(Continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued)

<i>Newspapers – months, total number of articles published per newspaper</i>	<i>Themes of the Non de Gauche</i>	<i>Inner</i>	<i>Preparation referendum</i>	<i>EU reference</i>
<i>Le Monde</i> 498	Dispute NDG, Reports	Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Development of referendum discourse Opinion polls	Interventions
<i>Le Figaro</i> 679	Analysis of the NDG, reports	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Development of referendum discourse, strategies, discussion TCE, opinion polls	Interventions
June <i>Humanité</i> 200	Update Themes January–May, plus: use the victory of the movement, strengthen the left, create new goals	Situation Left/PS Domestic policy Camps/alliances	Comments and analyses on the referendum	Netherlands, EC, Critique Blair What next for the EU?
<i>Libération</i> 230	–	Government Domestic policy Camps/alliances PS – what next?	Comments and analyses on the referendum	Critique Blair Netherlands, EC, Role France in EU
<i>Le Monde</i> 279	–	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances Situation Left/PS	Comments and analyses on the referendum	Critique Blair Netherlands, EC, How to proceed with EU, Role France in EU
<i>Le Figaro</i> 329	–	Government situation Domestic policy Camps/alliances Location parties	Comments and analyses on the referendum	Critique Blair Netherlands, EC, Role France in EU

Source: Own Representation.

the situation of the government and the Turkey issue. *Le Figaro*, in addition to government policy, not only focused on the debate on the Services Directive but also published reports on ATTAC and, from mid-March, criticism of the *Non de Gauche*, as well as reports on the dispute within the PS.

Overall, the dynamics of the discourse in the second phase set by the left and the *Non de Gauche* were also clearly recognisable in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*. The two papers only discussed them in a different way: there were more reports about the reactions of the supporters of the TCE to the protests than those justifying the dynamics of the criticism.

All newspapers continued to share the topics of government, domestic politics, strategies of the actors, and opinion polls. All newspapers also began to focus on the EU in March, due to the French position against the Services Directive having triggered a debate at both the Commission and the Council, which was also reported on in France.

In this respect, a clear EU perspective within the French discourse is recognisable for the first time in March.

The intensity of the discourse had also increased noticeably, with 948 articles surveyed in the four newspapers.

Overall, at the end of the second phase of the discourse, it is possible to say that:

It was clear that many factors had come together in March that were bound to weaken the “Yes” vote: the discord and strategic difficulties of the PS, the split in the Greens, the alliance problems of the supporters in the PS and the Greens, and an extreme weakness of the government. In this context, the social protests and demonstrations acted as a basis for mobilisation against the Constitutional Treaty. Finally, the unity of the entire political class against the draft EU Services Directive strengthened the *Non de Gauche*.

4.1.1.3 *The Third Phase of the Discourse – Debate Offensive of the Proponents and Stabilisation of the Opponents*

The third phase of the discourse from April onwards, after the turn in favour of “No”, was characterised by a struggle for interpretative sovereignty between the two camps. In reaction to the activities of the *Non de Gauche* movement and the rise of “No” in the opinion polls, there were increased public interventions by

well-known French advocates of “Yes” such as Giscard d’Estaing (who had been chairman of the convention that had drafted the Constitutional Treaty), Jacques Delors (the former President of the Commission), Lionel Jospin (the former Chairman of the PS and former Prime Minister), but also by various foreign politicians (cf. Martin 2005b, 705).

However, before that, there was more ammunition for the opponents. On 1 April, a new record high in unemployment was reported, which had been reached in February (LF 010405_16). On 4 April, Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande faced off in a televised debate. They made their differences clear beyond their agreement on the Constitutional Treaty. On 6 April, Frits Bolkestein, former Internal Market Commissioner, visited Paris for an interview in response to the debate on the Services Directive. Although there was a counter-demonstration, Bolkestein defended his project vehemently. In doing so, he coined the expression of the Polish plumber, the *plombier polonais*, whom he, Bolkestein, would be happy to welcome to his French holiday home. Although this expression was taken up widely abroad, it did not decisively shape French discourse.

Two other important events took place on 14 April. Firstly, the representatives of the *Non de Gauche* met at the *Zenith*, a major event arena in Paris, in front of 6000 supporters. Marie-George Buffet, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Olivier Besancenot, Francine Bavay, Georges Sarre, and José Bové, well-known farmer activist and former president of the alternative farmers’ union *Confédération Paysanne*, appeared together. Secondly, the biggest public defeat that President Chirac suffered in a debate took place on the same evening. He joined in a debate with 83 young people between 18 and 30, who had been selected in advance by the Sofres opinion research institute, on the TF1 television channel. This selection and the format of the programme – it was not hosted by political journalists but by entertainment presenters – had been the subject of fierce disputes and criticism from the opposition and political journalists beforehand. In the event, Chirac tried to put European values and the institutional and political developments that the Constitutional Treaty would bring in the foreground of his argumentation. In contrast, the young people mostly addressed social and individual problems. Chirac not only could not answer some of their questions – he seemed simply not to understand what the young people said, which he even said himself at one point (see [Section 4.2](#)); 50% of those questioned in a survey said the following day that Chirac had not appeared convincing (Grunberg 2005, 134; Miquet-Marty 2005, 84; Windisch 2006, 5–8).

Other important events in April were the start of the Greens’ “Yes” campaign on 18 April and the start of the debate on the draft Services Directive in the EP Economic Affairs Committee on 21 April. The 100th birthday of the PS on 23 April brought together opponents and supporters from within the party, and the event was therefore tense. At a Franco-German ministerial meeting at the Elysée Palace on 26 April, Chancellor Schröder and President Chirac stressed the importance of the Constitutional Treaty for the EU and Franco-German cooperation. Schröder then also appeared with Chirac at the Sorbonne.

Then, at the end of April, there was a series of other events that illustrate the influence of the opponents of the treaty and the dynamics of the discourse. On

23 April, Thierry Bréton, Minister of Finance, made a televised announcement of countermeasures against severance payments for former CEOs of large companies (there had been much public criticism of a planned severance payment of 39 million euros for the former CEO of the *Carrefour* retail chain). Bréton now said he understood the feelings of the French people on this issue and would introduce a bill in June tying the payment of severance pay to the approval of shareholders' meetings. On 26 April, the Green Party executive lifted the ban on Green politicians speaking publicly against the treaty, which had been in place but had never in fact been respected. On 27 April, the cabinet postponed the planned privatisation of *Gaz de France*, and on the same day the leader of a medium-sized business publicly apologised for his plan to relocate (*délocaliser*) his company to Romania, where he had offered his French employees a salary of 110 euros. He had been summoned by the prefect of his region and, following the interview, made his apology public, while offering to find his former employees to work in their region. Despite this, as Grunberg posits, this "offer" conclusively tipped the mood towards "No" (Grunberg 2005, 134).

In April, the convergence of the topics the newspapers discussed also intensified. All four continued to focus on the government, domestic politics, strategies of the actors, and the development of the opinion polls, as well as the new aspects of factual and opinion pieces. But all also reported intensively on the *Non de Gauche* and its issues: protests, demonstrations, social cuts, unemployment, *services publiques*, *pouvoir d'achat*, wages and salaries, as well as the key concepts of (*ultra*)libéralisme and *délocalisations*. While the concept of "ultralibéralisme" designs a merciless Manchester capitalism that is attributed to the European Union, "délocalisations", as discussed above, stands for outsourcing activities of French enterprises that shift production towards low-wage countries. The reference to the referendum was also discussed everywhere, namely, the chance or the danger that it could end in a "No" vote because of the protests.

It was now clear that these left issues would be decisive for the referendum.

It was also easy to see which camps could not set their own topics. The "Yes" camp continued to be very inconsistent in topics and arguments, and the right-wing "No" camp was also unable to shape the discourse with its topics. The question of Turkey's accession and the arguments of the sovereigntists (which were only discussed in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, and even there only to a limited extent) were marginal issues.

In this respect, the topics of the *Non de Gauche* took centre stage in all the newspapers studied.

The intensity of the discourse increased considerably in April – a total of 1423 articles appeared in the four daily newspapers studied.

The "No" remained in the lead in the opinion polls from mid-March to the end of April, in some cases by a clear margin.

Overall, the following can be said about the third phase:

The discourse was very intense in April and took place in various forms and forums. The TCE was debated in civil society activities, in the internal conflicts of the PS, in the demonstrations, in the government, in the ruling party, and by intellectuals and politicians.

The discourse had also broadened thematically and opened up again somewhat through the inclusion of opinion pieces, factual contributions, and the now numerous interventions by supporters. There were explanatory articles and overviews of the Constitutional Treaty in all newspapers. In addition, the most widespread prejudices and questions about the treaty were discussed. Depending on the political orientation of the newspaper, these articles were either critical or supportive of the treaty.

4.1.1.4 *The Fourth Phase: Consolidation and Decision*

Polling numbers for “Yes” experienced a brief upward trend at the beginning of the fourth phase of the discourse. This fourth phase was characterised by a massive offensive by the supporters of the TCE and a stabilisation of the opponents’ camp and arguments.

Thus, the activities of the government and the major parties intensified. Ministers and party leaders made various appearances, and there were more and more statements in the press. The fourth phase began on 28 April, when Lionel Jospin appeared on television in favour of the treaty. He stressed that whoever voted against the treaty was not voting against the government, but against France and the EU. Jospin’s intervention not only reached a record audience of 5.3 million but was also, unlike Chirac’s, rated positively in the opinion polls, helping to shift them back towards the “Yes” vote. On 2 May, President Chirac received cultural workers from all over Europe, and on 3 May he made his second television appearance. He answered questions from two journalists in his presidential office and stressed that there was no alternative to approving the Constitutional Treaty: all in favour of European integration had to vote “Yes”. Chirac reached 6.5 million viewers with this appearance (LM 050505_12). On 3 May, the parliamentary group of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the EP also met in the *Assemblée Nationale* in Paris along with representatives of the PS. All participants vociferously pleaded that the “Yes” vote should prevail in France and openly attacked the PS’s internal opponents of the treaty. This was followed on 9 May by a television appearance by eight party leaders, four of whom were supporters (Nicolas Sarkozy, UMP; François Hollande, PS; Yann Wehring, Verts; François Bayrou, UDF) and four opponents (Marie-George Buffet, PCF; Jean-Marie Le Pen, FN; Philippe de Villiers, MPF; Olivier Besancenot, LCR).

Events not entirely of their making gave a boost to the opponents. On 3 May, the media watchdog CSA (*Conseil supérieur de l’audiovisuel*) noted that the television channels *TF1*, *France 2*, *France 3*, *M6*, *France 5*, and *Canal+* had up to that point

given 18 hours and ten minutes of broadcasting time (63% of the total broadcasting time for the discourse) to representatives of the “Yes” side, but only ten hours and 40 minutes (37%) to representatives of the “No”. The CSA therefore called for a more equal distribution of airtime (LM 050505_9). On 7 May, the *Figaro Political Barometer* saw Prime Minister Raffarin’s confidence rating at a new low of only 22% (LM 070505_5). Then, on 8 May, Laurent Fabius broke the public silence he had imposed on himself and intervened in the discourse for the first time with a television appearance. On 11 May, Danielle Mitterrand finally spoke out in favour of “No”.

An event that should have supported the “Yes” vote, on the other hand, had no effect on the discourse. The vote of the German Bundestag to ratify the Constitutional Treaty on 12 May was covered in the French press but made little difference to the further course of the discourse. And a statement by Jacques Delors, which should also have worked in favour of a “Yes” vote, had the opposite effect. In a lengthy interview on 13 May in *Le Monde*, Delors had stated that the immediate effect of a French “No” would initially be a weakening of France and the entire EU, which would be difficult to reverse, but if one answered truthfully, one would have to say that there could of course be a Plan B should the French vote “No” (LM 130505_7). Delors had thus taken up a central argument of the supporters, but was quoted by the opponents as proof that plans were already being prepared in Brussels for a “No” victory, thus proving that after a “No” vote there would be no stagnation in the EU. This idea had been advocated for some time by Laurent Fabius, who stressed that the treaty could be renegotiated (cf. Cambadélis 2005, 30–33; Grunberg 2005, 134; Miquet-Marty 2005, 84).

For the first time, 16 May, Whit Monday, remained a working day – the Raffarin government had cut the holiday to finance social benefits – and there were again numerous protest rallies. Laurent Fabius and José Bové appeared together in Rouen. There, Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) and Francois Bayrou (UDF) also made one of the few joint appearances by representatives of different parties in favour of the “Yes” vote. 16 May also marked the beginning of the official referendum campaigns with radio and television spots. But despite all efforts of the “Yes” camp, from that day onwards, the “No” side held the lead in the opinion polls right up to the referendum.

16 May thus marked the last decisive turning point in favour of “No”.

The representatives of the “No” were also active during the final phase of the discourse. On 17 May, an interview with Laurent Fabius appeared in *L’Humanité*, and on 21 May, between 3,000 and 10,000 people (according to the police and the organisers) came to the *Non de Gauche*’s large event at the *Place de la République* in Paris. The *Non de Gauche* again received support from the media watchdog CSA, which explicitly warned several media outlets on 19 May for their underrepresentation of the “No” side.

The interventions of foreign politicians in favour of “Yes” became more frequent in the final phase of the discourse before the referendum, but could no longer

slow down the momentum in favour of “No”. On 18 May, prominent representatives of the PES again came to Paris to campaign for the “Yes” vote in a major event with Francois Hollande. On 19 May, Chancellor Schröder, French President Chirac, and Polish President Kwasniewski appeared together in Nancy with this aim, and on the same day Lionel Jospin spoke in Nantes for the first time at a major event held by his party. He then made his second television appearance on 24 May. On 26 May, President Chirac appeared on television for the third time during the campaign – in a very presidential manner, he addressed his people and appealed for the last time to the responsibility of the French. However, he already announced new impulses for the period after the referendum, which indicated that he was at least calculating a defeat. In May, Prime Minister Raffarin began appearing less and less publicly, and there were a number of signals of an imminent change of government. The vote itself took place on May 28th and marks the beginning of the fifth phase of the discourse (see below).

In May, the discourse also intensified in quantitative terms: the most articles of all months appeared, 2979 in the four daily newspapers studied alone.

Also, the discourse had now become recognisably Europeanised: there were more contributions about foreign countries, more reactions from abroad, and more appearances or even appeals from European politicians.

Towards the end of May, the discourse died down again. On the one hand, it was thematically decided: the left-wing “No” side had visibly prevailed; there were no new topics. The “Yes” arguments were almost exclusively defensive or used threatening scenarios about what would happen if “No” won. Moreover, the discourse was also portrayed as decided as the opinion polls predicted a clear victory for “No” with a result of around 55%.

When considering the distribution of *topics*, the convergence that had become apparent in April persisted. All four newspapers continued to report on the standards of government, domestic policy, strategies, and opinion polls and carried factual and opinion pieces; the issues and arguments of the *Non de Gauche* held fast in all. At the same time, different perspectives remained visible. *L’Humanité* emphasised civil society actors more strongly, along with the activities of ATTAC. *Le Monde* was the only one to be explicitly critical of the arguments of the *Non de Gauche*.

Thus, it remained clear that the discourse dynamics set by the left maintained their strength. However, it also became clearly visible that this was not expressed in all newspapers as a simple adoption of the arguments and motifs: *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* took up the left topics, but did not make them their own, rather relating them to their core topics and their specific orientation.

Le Monde argued more with a neutral, factual, and informational style, as well as recognisably for “Yes”, but less strongly than *Le Figaro*. *Le Figaro* mainly argued via opinion pieces and in factual categories for the government and for “Yes”. *Le Figaro* and *L’Humanité* followed a similar strategy: both had a category that dealt with the arguments in the discourse, and both used it to attack their respective opponents. *Le Figaro* took up the opponents’ arguments under the heading “Vrai/Faux?” and refuted them for the most part. *L’Humanité* posed factual questions about the Constitutional Treaty, but used them to present its own arguments against the treaty.

4.1.1.5 *The Fluctuation of Opinion Polls*

The ups and downs of the discourse and the twists and turns it took corresponded, as described, to a fluctuation in the opinion polls that had not been seen to this extent in France before, and which, conversely, further influenced the discourse. The curves depicting voter intentions in favour of “Yes” or “No” crossed three times within only nine weeks. The following graph shows a “poll of polls”, i.e., an average of all opinion polls taken over the duration of the discourse (IPSOS 2005). Since the polls were not created using an identical methodology or identical questions, the values should only be understood as tendencies. They do, however, illustrate the development described: “Yes”, which had been the clear leader in the mean of the six leading French polling institutes (TNS Sofres, IPSOS, CSA, IFOP, BVA, Louis Harris) until the beginning of March – with between 65% and 60% of voter intentions – fell rapidly below 50% by mid-March, while “No” came in well above 50%. At the beginning of May, “Yes” once again took the lead for almost two weeks, but from 15 May onwards it was continuously surpassed again by “No” (Piar and Gerstlé 2005, 43).

4.1.1.6 *The Fifth Phase: Discussion of What Has Happened and Return to Normality*

The referendum itself occurred on 28th May 2005. In the end, the result for “No” even exceeded the forecast of the last opinion polls. 54.67% of voters voted “No”, and only 45.33% voted “Yes” (Boy and Chiche 2005, 94). The reports after the referendum on 29 May marked a quantitative peak in the French discourse – but its intensity subsided again very quickly, as [Figure 4.2](#) shows. As [Figures 5.1](#) and [6.1](#) indicate, reporting on the referendum also marked the quantitative peak of the German discourse.

In total, 1028 articles were still published in the four newspapers studied by the end of the evaluation period on 25 June, but there were only very few events that noticeably shaped the discourse.

The fifth phase of the discourse primarily served to discuss what had happened and to return to normal.

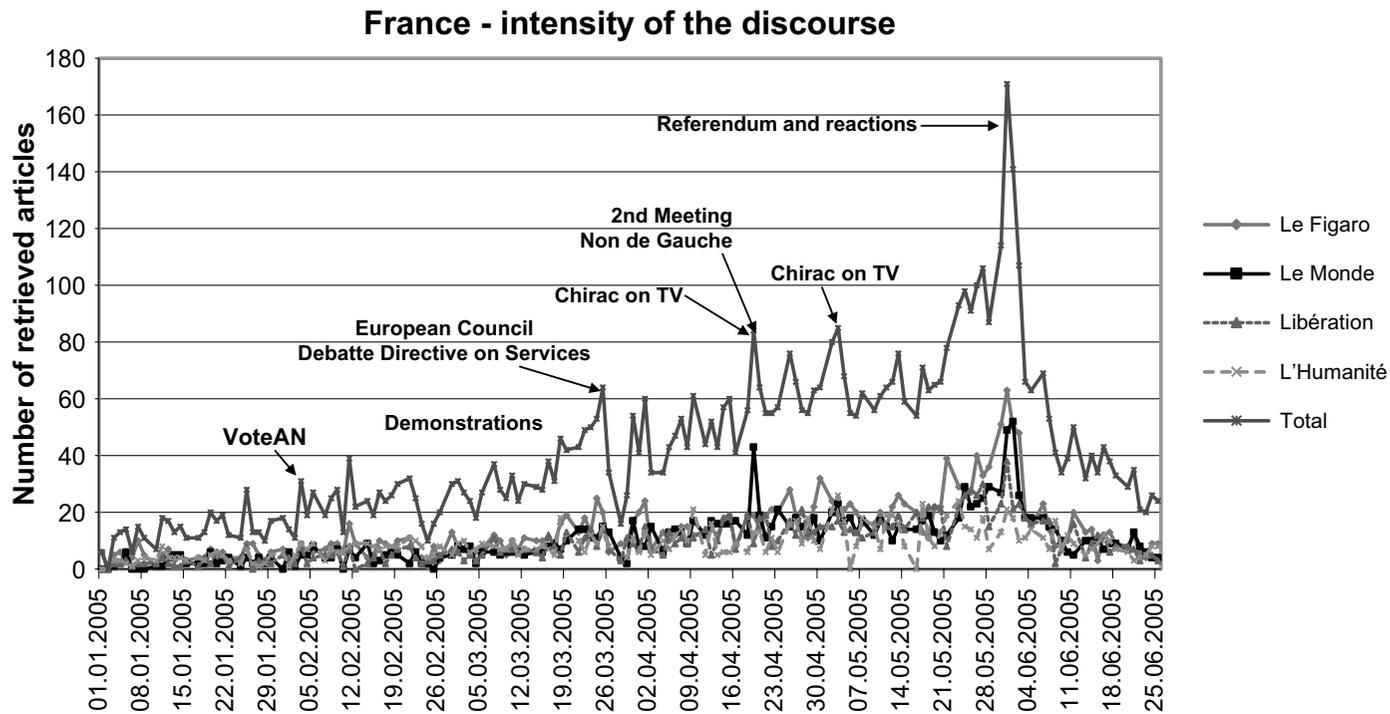


Figure 4.2 The intensity of the French discourse
 Source: Own Representation.

A change of government took place after the referendum: on 31 May, President Chirac appointed Dominique de Villepin as the new prime minister. In addition, he made his intra-party rival, UMP leader Nicolas Sarkozy, minister of the interior once again. Chirac thus certainly drew domestic political consequences from the defeat of the “Yes” camp in the referendum, but not for himself directly.

The Dutch referendum took place on 1 June and was also widely discussed in France. Two other events were also influential in June: on 16 June, another large *Non de Gauche* demonstration took place in Paris. Several thousand people marched to the Place de la Bastille, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Henri Emmanuelli, Marie-George Buffet, Georges Sarre, Francine Bavay, and Jacques Nikonoff, the president of ATTAC France, as well as trade union representatives (L 170605_4). Subsequently, on 17 June, a delegation led by Jacques Nikonoff, Francis Wurtz (leader of the Nordic Green/Left Group in the EP), Jean-Pierre Chevènement (MRC), and Marc Dolez travelled to Brussels, where they were received on behalf of the presidency of the Council by the Luxembourg Foreign Minister Nicolas Schmit, to whom they presented a list of demands. These included the organisation of a Europe-wide debate, official recognition of the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, and the withdrawal of all “ultra-liberal” directives. Schmit replied that it had become clear that the EU could no longer be shaped without citizen participation.

This appearance by the French opponents took place in parallel with the session of the European Council in Brussels on 16 and 17 June 2005, which dealt with negotiations on the EU budget as well as the further procedure on the Constitutional Treaty. Chirac appeared in a weakened role, but nevertheless tried to force an agreement on the EU budget dispute and to ensure that the TCE not be abandoned. He argued jointly with German Chancellor Schröder, who was also newly weakened by the announcement of new elections in Germany. Their efforts failed. A clear conflict also emerged between Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair and France’s President Chirac: not only had the UK suspended its planned referendum a few days after the Dutch “No”, but it was also above all Blair who blocked an agreement on the budget by stubbornly insisting on a severe cut in the agricultural subsidies, from which France particularly benefits.

Again, the *topics* that were prominent in the four newspapers in June were shaped by these events. All four discussed a common EU-related topic: the criticism of Tony Blair and the fear that the upcoming British EU presidency would bring a surge of market liberalism in the EU. Apart from that, the central topics in June show that the discourse remained very strongly domestically focused. All four newspapers focused on the domestic and strategic consequences of the referendum. Only the consequences and results of the referendum discourse were covered: *L’Humanité* celebrated the victory of the movement at length, discussed the question of how the left should now be strengthened, what the new goals were, and how the EU should be shaped in an alternative way. *Libération* focused on the situation of the left, while *Le Monde* highlighted the question of France’s role in the EU, as did *Le Figaro*. What is striking here is that the issues of the *Non de Gauche* were only marginal in *Libération* in June and all but disappeared from *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*. Another factor that is central to the question is also striking: the question of European identity, which was directly addressed in the German discourse in June, was a non-issue in France.

4.1.1.7 Overview of Topics and Intensity of Discourse

The overview of the topics shows how the topics set from the left – or, more concretely, on the part of the *Non de Gauche* – gradually spread to the centre and to the right.

To put it bluntly, the *Non de Gauche* set the topics and the “Yes” camp reacted to them. Topics set by the centre-right, on the other hand, did not spread to the left, as illustrated by the development of the issue of Turkey, which disappeared from March onwards.

L’Humanité thus almost solely discussed self-set topics and for a long time reacted little to issues raised by others. This only changed from March and April onwards, when the debate on the arguments of the supporters became stronger.

Libération stood between the poles of *Humanité* and *Figaro*: on the one hand, it pursued the standard topics of government and domestic politics, but on the other, it addressed the *Non de Gauche* early and intensively. It also focused on the conflicts in the PS.

Le Monde and *Le Figaro* clearly reacted to the protests and activities of the *Non de Gauche* from March onwards, but continued to pursue their standard topics. While these two changed the focus of their coverage, the same was not true for *L’Humanité*.

Table 4.3 summarises the development of the central themes of the discourse.

Finally, as described above, the intensity of the French discourse varied and increased from phase to phase. The development of the intensity of the discourse is shown in Figure 4.2:

The development of the *intensity of the discourse* shows that the number of articles published increased overall until the peak after the French referendum and then dropped off again relatively quickly. The events that were central to the content of the discourse also led to peaks in the discursive intensity (measured by the total number of articles published around an event).

4.1.1.8 The Polity Reference Levels of the Discourse: Dominant Domestic Politics and Distanced Multi-Level References

As discussed in Chapter 2, it is decisive for the analysis of construction processes of European identity to see which polity levels are referenced and addressed in the discourse. The overview of the French discourse also showed that it was strongly oriented towards the domestic reference level. A distinction must be made between the references itself and the way they are presented.

References: The *domestic political references* of the discourse were strongly influential and of central importance from the beginning. They can be subdivided into two

topic areas (see [Section 4.2](#)): *Development of the Discourse and Domestic Politics*. Both were essentially thematised as internal French affairs; here the *division of the parties/camps* and the relationships between *potential allies* were of central importance. *References to the EU and foreign countries* were secondary at first; however, their importance increased over time. The *EU level* was addressed when French interests were affected, such as in reactions to the *Non* and the debate about it, or in the debate about the Services Directive in March. Overall, however, the reference levels of the EU and Germany were recognisably less influential than in the German discourse.

Presentation: However, the presentation of the EU and foreign reference levels was consistently distanced. Other European countries and the EU level became points of reference more and more, but they were still presented as *foreign policy* and not as matters of domestic interest. Thus, the *reference to France* dominated. All in all, this means that even if the French discourse was not solely centred on domestic issues, the multi-level referencing was less self-evident and more distanced than in Germany.

The domestic political reference level initially dominated over references to other countries and to the EU level, but gradually the references to both became more balanced.

But this did not change the distanced way in which the EU and other countries were presented as foreign policy.

4.1.1.9 *Discourse Phases*

The weighting of the reference levels of domestic policy and foreign countries/EU shifted in several stages during the discourse. Until the beginning of March, most articles discussed the referendum mainly in terms of its domestic political role. The focus was on strategic questions of alignment or campaigning and their consequences or on power struggles within parties or camps. Until May, the reference level of *foreign countries* was thus addressed only marginally, after which stronger references arose on occasion, for example, via interventions by foreign politicians or through references to the Franco-German tandem.

In the *first phase*, accordingly, *domestic politics* was the most important reference level, with the EU and foreign countries secondary.

In the first phase of the discourse, most of the contributions were thus not yet primarily concerned with the question “how is Europe defined?”, but more with the domestic political question “what is connected with the referendum?” (strategies, power politics, organisational questions, etc.).

During this phase, also policy positions on the EU were aligned with domestic issues. Nicolas Sarkozy, then leader of the Gaullist main government party UMP, for instance, addressed the question of Turkey’s accession to the EU not primarily

as a European policy issue, but as one of many issues in which he made his distance to President Chirac explicit (LF 140105_3). In *L'Humanité*, too, the domestic political-strategic level of reference still dominated in January. However, it also already set central motifs of left criticism of the Constitutional Treaty, emphasising its market-liberal character (H 220105). Despite this strong domestic orientation, the references to *foreign countries* gradually increased in the first phase. In January, there were a few contributions on the ratification process of the TCE, the debate in the EP, and the preparations for the referendum in Spain; overall, the aforementioned detached and objective style of presentation was striking. In February, there were various comments and interventions on the Spanish referendum, as well as reactions to it. It was noticeable that the interventions of French politicians in Spain were always also directed at French citizens, and the French newspapers commented accordingly (LF 120205_6). *L'Humanité* criticised Chirac for his joint appearance with German Chancellor Schröder and Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, writing under the headline “small propaganda among friends” (H 110205_6). After the Spanish referendum, supporters, and opponents, of the TCE saw themselves vindicated by the result. Supporters from both the right and the left said Spain was showing the way (LM 220205_4; LM 220205_4). But the opponents of the TCE also saw themselves vindicated. *L'Humanité* and Henri Emmanuelli, for example, saw the low voter turnout as an indication of a lack of support for the EU among citizens (H 220205_4; H 220205_4).

4.1.1.10 Increasing Foreign and EU References

In the further course of the French discourse, the dominance of the domestic political reference level softened somewhat.

In the *second phase*, too, most of the articles had clear domestic references and actors, but now linked these more strongly with a focus on the EU and abroad, for example, by addressing the potential consequences of a particular development there for France's domestic policy. As both levels of reference were more strongly connected, there were more articles that, from the second phase of the discourse onwards, dealt with the questions “how is Europe defined?” and “how do domestic political actors position themselves in relation to it?”, whereby the domestic political situation was mostly explicitly addressed.

This shift in the weighting of references became clearly visible in March with the debate on the Services Directive and the European Council. It represents the first reference to the *EU level* that played a central role in the French discourse. The French discourse also unfolded repercussions on the EU level, which were then in turn thematised in France (and, as the German discourse shows, also there). The debate about the Services Directive took on a clear domestic character (LF 160305_8). Jacques Chirac then lobbied strongly against the directive draft at the European Council – and praised the participants in the large demonstration against the Services Directive in Brussels (LF 240305_17). Reactions at the EU level followed immediately,

such as the mocking remark by Jean-Claude Juncker, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg and President of the Council, who said he did not know France had a socialist government (L 240305_6). Nevertheless, a selective policy change followed in the European Council, decided by a majority, that the draft directive had to be revised. This was again assessed differently in France depending on the newspaper or camp. *Le Figaro* interpreted it rather positively (LF 240305_17). *L'Humanité*, on the other hand, criticised the decision as insufficient (H 240305_8).

The debate on the Services Directive continued at the EU level in April, partly because the EP continued its deliberations in the matter. As a result, the Commission made other concessions to France to positively influence the mood there: it granted additional aid in certain areas and put potentially controversial projects in France on hold.

From the *third phase* of the discourse and until the *end of the fourth*, the multi-level reference to *foreign countries* and the *EU* became even more important. The EU reference now often took the opposite direction, from the EU level to France. Representatives of the Commission, the Council, and the EP, as well as neighbouring states, increasingly perceived the mood in France, which was turning towards “No”, as a problem (and, as the German discourse shows, also discussed it in this way) and intervened in the French discourse.

This once again shifted the relationship between the reference levels. Ascriptions of meaning to the EU increased; domestic political questions continued to be important, but now the domestic political references to the EU level also came into focus, for example, by discussing the consequences of certain developments for France or by evaluating the *Non de Gauche* movement as a success for France’s left. The discourse now answered the questions “How is Europe to be assessed?” and “How do France and French actors position themselves in relation to it?”

In April, i.e., from the fourth phase onwards, the reference to *Germany* became systematically and continuously discernible for the first time; in France, the process of ratification, interventions by German politicians, and other events that met with particular interest were thematised. In comparison, it is noticeable (see [Section 6.1](#)) that these references in France were far less influential than those in Germany on the French discourse. In addition, German opposition figures and minority representatives, who were themselves marginalised in Germany, were strongly addressed in the French discourse (see [Section 5.1.2](#) on the *silencing strategy*).

The French referendum increasingly attracted the attention of the German government, which intervened in France. This was mainly seen as support for the “Yes” camp and Chirac (LF 270405_7). But in the reporting, differences in the political orientations of the French newspapers were visible, too, and also that they gave more room for German TCE critics than the German newspapers. *L'Humanité* did not report on the interventions by German government politicians, but instead granted Oskar Lafontaine, who was introduced as a former SPD leader in the process, a long interview in which Lafontaine explained why he would vote “No” if he could vote in France

(H 260405_17). Compared to the low resonance of the topic in Germany (cf. [Section 5.1.2](#)), *Figaro* reported intensively on the activities and role of Peter Gauweiler, the German Christian Social MP who criticised the TCE (see [Chapter 5](#); LF 220405_15).

In May, the focus was also on developments in Germany and their role for France. For example, in its report on the Bundestag vote, *Le Figaro* explicitly pointed to the significance of the vote for France and to an EU-critical mood among the German population, as well as to the fact that there had not been an intensive discourse around the vote in Germany as there had been in France (LF 130505_9). *L'Humanité* reported extensively – unlike the German press – on the demonstrators in front of the Bundestag on the day of the TCE vote, and on their hopes for the French *Non de Gauche* (H 130505_8). The SPD's electoral defeat in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia in May 2005 was also discussed in France – and interpreted by the *Non de Gauche* as a sign of a crisis in the economically liberal orientation of the Social Democrats (H 240505_8).

All in all, the development of the reference levels in the first four discourse phases can be summarised as such:

There was a continuous strengthening of the references to the EU and abroad, i.e., a substantive Europeanisation of the discourse.

However, the presentation of these reference levels remained distanced; they were presented as foreign countries.

4.1.1.11 Reactions to the *Non* and Their Role for France

After the French referendum on 29 May 2005, the reactions to the *Non* (again, Germany was particularly important) and later the Dutch *Nee* were the focus of reports from abroad. In each case, they were discussed regarding their effects or repercussions on and for France. *L'Humanité*, for example, emphasised the exemplary role of the French “No” (H 140605_7). Moreover, the Dutch referendum was compared to the French one – euphorically in *L'Humanité* (H 040605_6), and with arguments that seem rather contrived in view of the reasons that emerged in voter surveys for the *Nee* vote (Wiesner 2015). In the other newspapers, the reference to the Dutch *Nee* was more critically distanced, and here it was also emphasised that the similarities to France were limited (LF 020605_13).

After the French and Dutch referenda, an intensive debate began at the EU level, which was also reflected in the press in France. This principled debate was taken up very differently in France than in Germany. In France, the Commission's reaction to the two “No” votes was commented upon critically, namely, as if the Commission was not considering any consequences (LF 310505_29). In the German discourse, on the other hand, the helplessness of the EU institutions and the resulting question of necessary consequences were emphasised in a much stronger way. The fundamental debate on the political orientation of the EU, the role of the citizens, and European identity received little attention in France, in contrast to Germany (see [Chapter 5](#)). The budget debate at the EU level was reproduced in France as well, but here too the presentation focused on France's role in the budget dispute

and in the EU rather than on the perspectives of the EU as such (L 230605_5). One bogeyman was clearly recognisable in all the newspapers: Tony Blair and the Anglo-Saxon welfare state and economic model (L 020605_18; LM 070605_12).

This leads to the following conclusion for the reference levels during the fifth phase:

Overall, the EU level was an important reference level even after the “No” – but the way it was presented differed from the German discourse: the EU level was still presented in a distanced way as foreign countries and not as European domestic policy as in Germany. The EU level was discussed from the perspective of *France*, its role, and its interests. This is also reflected in the topics discussed (the budget dispute and France’s role in it), as well as those that are hardly mentioned (the fundamental question of the future of the EU).

4.1.1.12 *Interim Conclusions on Research Questions*

After the previous explanations, a first conclusion can be drawn on the guiding question and on research questions 4 and 7.

On the *main research question – In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?* – the following interim conclusion can be drawn:

The French discourse could potentially function as a means of European identity construction, not only because it was very intensive but also because the reference level of the EU gained importance in the course of the discourse. Even if European identity was not the direct topic, a substantial part of the discourse was about attributing content to the *black box* of the EU and discussing and evaluating the political role of the EU. Essential preconditions for the French discourse to function as a means for the construction of European identity were thus in place.

Regarding sub-question 1 of *research question 4 – What happens in the discourse, how does the discourse proceed, and why?* – an interim conclusion can be drawn:

The French EU discourse in 2005 was determined by the left. The topics set by the *Non de Gauche* gradually gained ground on the right because they were successfully discursively linked to the social protests and dissatisfaction with the government. After all, the “Yes” camp was internally weakened, showed numerous internal divisions, did not engage in cross-party or cross-camp alliances, and did not present its arguments convincingly.

Part 1 of research question 7 – Are the discourses studied open or closed? – and its sub-questions result in a different conclusion for openness to the outside and internally.

In the French case, openness to the outside world was relatively low, especially in the first phases. Initially, only a few references to other states and to the EU were discernible (especially in comparison to the German discourse); with few exceptions, these did not shape the discourse.

However, references to the EU and foreign reference levels increased over the course of the discourse, although both were mainly addressed when domestic political issues and actors raised them or when events at the EU level or abroad touched on French interests. Domestic political actors and domestic political issues thus determined these selective, occasional openings of the discourse. Actors from the EU level and other member states had a marginal role and could only break through this national orientation with difficulty.

However, the way in which the EU and foreign reference levels were presented remained unchanged. They were consistently classified as foreign policy in terms of their meaning for France, but not in terms of their effect on the EU as such.

A self-evident, consistent, and positive reference to the EU level, as was the case in Germany, was thus not discernible.

In this respect, the French discourse remained relatively closed to the outside world and constructed an image of France as “us” and Europe as “the other”.

Regarding sub-question 1 of question 7 – *To what extent did political and social structures, constellations of interests, or culturally specific contexts of meaning influence the course of the discourses?* – it can be concluded that

The French discourse was *very inwardly open*.

Not only did Chirac’s commitment to a referendum set a decisive framework, but the discourse was also recognisably and clearly shaped by two political and social structural features or constellations of interests: the social protests and the strategic interests of the politicians involved. [Chapter 7](#) shows that other domestic contextual factors had a central impact on the discourse.

4.1.2 Actors and Rules of the Discourse

The *central actors of the discourse*, as the description of the course and the overviews of the topics and events have already made clear, were for both camps French politicians and representatives of French interest and civil society groups, and hence domestic political actors. With the increasing importance of the EU as a reference level, the contributions of actors from the EU level and from other member states also increased.

In the process, French representatives of the EU level, such as then acting French EU Commissioner Jacques Barrot or the French MEPs, were also discursively quite clearly identified in this role (LF 220405_14). Purely domestic actors, on the other hand, were described by their domestic role, i.e., as president, party leader, MP, minister, or trade union member.

Two specific features of the constellation of actors, directly rooted in the characteristics of the French party system, essentially determined the course of the discourse: the internal party divisions and split-offs due to positions on European integration and the traditional enmity between left and right. However, internal divisions had an effect to very different degrees within the parties and organisations involved in the discourse, and the “Yes” and “No” camps used different strategies.

4.1.2.1 *The Impact of the Intra-Camp and Intra-Party Conflicts*

In the 2005 discourse, the effects of the changes within the French party system since the Maastricht referendum in 1992 became apparent (cf. Grunberg 2005). Officially, the UMP was largely unanimous in its support for President Chirac, who unlike in 1992 had clearly spoken out in favour of a “Yes” vote from the very beginning. However, Nicolas Sarkozy, as leader of the UMP, was initially reserved due to his intra-party opposition to Chirac and his goal to position himself well for the presidential candidacy in 2007. Moreover, he held different political views. Both led to Sarkozy and Chirac contradicting each other on a central point – the question of preserving the French social model. Chirac was in favour, Sarkozy against (L 130505_13). But Sarkozy defended the “Yes” throughout the whole campaign.

Within the UMP, however, opposition to the TCE came only from the sovereigntist groups *Débout la République* (DLR) around MP Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, who even launched a book against the Constitutional Treaty (Dupont-Aignan 2005), and *Forum des Républicains Sociaux* (FRS) around MP Christine Boutin. In total, seven UMP MPs abstained in the vote on the constitutional amendment in the *Assemblée Nationale*.

Some of the UMP’s internal opponents also publicly advocated the “No” vote. The party leadership did not take an official position on this. It simply stated that the party line was to vote in favour and that any statement to the contrary was personal. The main reason for this strategy was that the party had been split on the question of the Maastricht Treaty Referendum, with strong intra-party opponents (Chagnollaud 1993, 13; Criddle 1993, 229–230). Now the party leadership was so happy about the broad unity that it accepted the few existing conflicts. This official unity achieved since 1992 was due, on the one hand, to a change of direction in the Gaullists’ European policy and, on the other, to the fact that in 2005 the UMP governed with both a president and a parliamentary majority, which made opposition to the Constitutional Treaty difficult. By contrast, the RPR had been in opposition in 1992. Moreover, when the UMP was founded, many former members of the UDF and its sub-party *Démocratie Libérale*, who were traditionally pro-European, had joined. Compared to 1992 and with the change from RPR to UMP, the membership

had thus positioned itself more pro-European (Chiroux 2005, 436–438; Grunberg 2005, 132). There was therefore not even a hint of sanctions in 2005, even if individual UMP politicians who were in favour of the “Yes” vote repeatedly voiced criticism of the minority representatives. The sovereigntists in the UMP naturally welcomed this strategy and immediately emphasised the personal character of their statements (LM 070205_4).

The UDF, which had always been pro-European, campaigned aggressively for a “Yes” vote under its leader Francois Bayrou in 2005. Bayrou was one of the few to base his campaign on the text of the TCE – he wrote a book calling for a “Yes” vote (Bayrou and Laude 2005). However, Bayrou’s position was weakened insofar as he belonged neither to the UMP nor to the government and did not want to be associated with the government camp around President Chirac. Moreover, there were also minority representatives in the UDF, the most prominent being the AN deputy Jean-Christophe Lagarde, who wanted to vote “No” because he was against Turkey’s EU accession (L 200105_6). However, the UDF did not pursue sanctions, either. This was not necessary, though, as Lagarde did not join the “No” campaign.

The opponents to the right of the bourgeois centre were grouped, as in 1992, around the sovereigntist, traditionally conservative and UDF dissident Philippe de Villiers and his MPF, as well as around the *Front National* and Jean-Marie Le Pen. The small party CPNT was also in favour of a “No” vote, as was Charles Pasqua’s RPF, who was in poor health but also intervened in the campaign at certain points (cf. Chiroux 2005, 436–440; Grunberg 2005, 132; Martin 2005b, 703). These four right-wing formations were united within the party.

On the *left*, the scenario was much more complicated. As discussed above, Socialists (PS; see below) and the Greens (*Les Verts*) were openly at odds. The Greens, like the PS, had held an internal referendum in February, which went out in favour of the “Yes” vote, but there were still Green party members who were in favour of a “No” vote and openly campaigned in this sense. They justified their actions with their convictions (L 180305_4). The majority of the members of the *Parti Radical de Gauche* (PRG) had also decided in favour of “Yes”, but two of their deputies also openly advocated “No” (Chiroux 2005; Grunberg 2005, 132; Martin 2005b, 702–704).

Besides, a number of fringe left parties, trade unions, and the dissenters in PS and Greens united in the left *Non de Gauche* alliance, which appeared very much united. The communist PCF, which in 1992 had represented its opposition to the Maastricht Treaty rather moderately due to its coalition interests vis-à-vis the PS, now vehemently opposed the Constitutional Treaty. The Trotskyist LCR was one of the decisive forces. The other prominent representatives of the *Non de Gauche* were either not directly tied to party politics, such as José Bové or the representatives of ATTAC and the left trade unions, or they had explicitly opposed the official line of their party, such as Henri Emmanuelli, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and Francine Bavay (Chiroux 2005, 436–440; Grunberg 2005, 132).

In sum, the party-political positionings in France put the odds against the “Yes” camp.

Among the political parties and organisations, only the UMP and the UDF advocated “Yes” in a largely uniform way. In addition, there was no party that officially represented “Yes” that didn’t have voices advocating “No”, though there were varying degrees of internal party divisions.

The starting situation was thus not good for “Yes”: the parties opposing the Constitutional Treaty (PT, LCR, LO, PCF, MRC, CPNT, MNR, FN, MPF) had achieved 42.49% of the votes in the first round of the presidential elections in 2002 (Perrineau and Ysmal 2003, 380). Adding about 40% of the Socialist votes and a part of the Greens, it became apparent that “No” actually had a good starting position.

In addition, the majority of French trade unions were critical of the Constitutional Treaty in the course of the discourse, although most did not give a clear recommendation on how to vote. The trade unions SUD, FSU, FO, SNES, CGT, *Syndicats Solidaires*, *Confédération Paysanne*, and UNEF were critical or actively supported the “No” vote. Only the CFTC and CFE-CGC as well as the CFDT and UNSA, which were also divided, publicly supported a “Yes” (Grunberg 2005, 132; Martin 2005b, 703). There were also disputes between supporters and opponents among trade union representatives. During the Brussels demonstration against the services directive in March 2005, CFDT members showing signposts for the “Yes” were accused to be collaborators, “*collabos*” (L 210305). This was the French expression for supporters of the National Socialist occupiers in World War II.

As for the other intermediary and civil society organisations, “Yes” was represented by the churches as well as the two Catholic newspapers *La Croix* and *L’Evènement* and the employers’ association MEDEF. The umbrella organisation of Muslims in France also officially supported the “Yes” vote, as did the majority of independence organisations in Corsica and Brittany, and the far-right movement *Alsace d’Abord*. Gays and lesbians, as well as members of the social organisation *Emmaüs*, supported the “Yes” in the majority, but their organisations had no official position (cf. Martin 2005b, 703).

4.1.2.2 *The Substantive Policy Controversy and the Split in the PS*

The PS in 2005 was split on the question of how to decide in the referendum, as will now be discussed in detail. This split in the PS was – unlike that of the Greens or the PRG – strongly formative for the discourse because the PS showed by far the most intense internal party conflicts, and these overshadowed the substantive issues. The internal dispute massively limited the party’s ability to campaign. As discussed above, despite the internal party vote in favour of the Constitutional Treaty, first Jean-Luc Mélenchon and then also Henri Emmanuelli had decided to openly advocate “No” in the referendum discourse; later, Laurent Fabius also positioned himself more and more vehemently against the TCE. Only the left-wing intra-party current *Nouveau Parti Socialiste* (NPS) around MP Arnaud Montebourg followed the internal referendum and did not oppose the TCE.

The PS leadership, however, behaved ambiguously towards the party's internal opponents and did not sanction them. It first tried to call them to order by stressing that there was only one PS campaign and that it was for the "Yes" vote, as Francois Hollande declared in reaction to Jean Luc Mélenchon's campaign entry (LM 040205_2). He issued a thinly veiled threat of punishment to Laurent Fabius a little later (LM 220205). In fact, however, such declarations were and remained ineffective and inconsequential despite continuous internal party conflicts and sharpening attacks between the two intra-party camps. Sanctions were only imposed after the end of the PS campaign: on 4 June, the PS Party Council met and, after a crucial vote of 167 for, 122 against, and 18 abstentions (L 060605_9), stripped Laurent Fabius of his post as deputy party leader. This hit the most prominent but not the most active intra-party opponent – there were no sanctions against the far more active representatives of "No" such as Emmanuelli, Mélenchon, and Dolez.

But what was the background and what were the consequences of this internal split in the PS?

The internal dispute had both a strategic and a substantive component. The strategic component concerned the question of who the presidential candidate would be (see below), while the substantive component concerned the political orientation of the PS.

The substantive controversy in the PS became clear from the beginning of the referendum discourse. The opponents of the TCE, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who today leads *La France Insoumise* (LFI) in the left-wing NUPES coalition, stressed that their basic political convictions compelled them to oppose the party line (LM 040205_2). This conflict had a longer history: since Francois Mitterrand's turn in 1983, the policy of the PS had been consistently and steadily pro-integrationist, but the intra-party contradiction to this had never completely ceased. As described, this was already evident in the Maastricht referendum in 1992 and its aftermath, and then again in the PS internal referendum in 2004 and in the referendum discourse in 2005. The basis for this was an internal party conflict between reformists and orthodox leftists, more precisely between the *etatist*, Jacobin so-called "first left" (an internal party distinction coined by the modernisers) and the pragmatic "second left". This conflict is one reason why the PS never officially shifted towards reformism. Since Mitterrand's pragmatic turn in 1983, the "second left" had been able to assert itself within the party. The success of the *Non de Gauche* thus also appeared as a success of the "first left", or even its intra-party revenge (LF 280305_7). The substantive conflicts between the first and second left also explain why the minority representatives of the PS, as described in the following section, were welcomed so joyfully in the *Non de Gauche*: it was possible to present their left critique as a return to the roots of the political camp and of policy content. Mitterrand's turn in 1983 had largely been brought about by European integration, and now the positioning on European integration was presented as a central field on which the return to the true and correct positions was to take place (LM 010305_5). The rise of LFI and NUPES today can be considered a late victory of the "first left", as will be discussed in [Chapter 9](#).

The opponents of the treaty also argued that the PS would not be able to offer an economic policy alternative in the 2007 presidential election if it stood for the TCE – the third part, which contained the regulations of the treaties of Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Nice that were already in force, closed off this possibility (on this point, see the explanations on the anti-liberal motif below; see also Duseigneur 2005, 83–85; Martin 2005b, 703).

Instead, supporters in the PS stressed the need for the TCE and the improvements it would bring, but also the pioneering role of the PS and its opposition to the government (LF 070305_10). The official strategy of the PS party leadership was to support the social protests but still stand up for the TCE. However, this was difficult to sustain from the beginning as support for the TCE was seen by left opponents as another in a series of betrayals of left ideals. The snowball thrown at Francois Hollande at the demonstration in Guéret on 5 March illustrates this (LM 080305). While such physical attacks remained rare and the differences in substance were only marginally discussed, the personal attacks in the PS increased in severity in the course of the discourse. The greatest escalation was reached with mutual Le Pen and Pétain comparisons (L 120305_3; LF 280305).

Despite such escalations, the focus quickly shifted to reconciling the camps following the referendum, as the draft motion of the party leadership for the next PS party congress emphasised (LF 210605_5). In the substantive debate, the question now arose whether the PS should draw consequences from *Non*, which the opponents from the PS had demanded (LF 010605_21). The party leadership rejected a swing to the left, but made verbal concessions (LF 210605_5). So it was little wonder when Jean-Luc Mélenchon founded the *Parti de Gauche*, the French Left Party, a few years later.

4.1.2.3 *The Strategic Reasons for the Dispute in the PS*

The roles of the PS minority representatives in these disputes should be assessed differently: Mélenchon, Emmanuelli, and Dolez were recognised representatives of the “first left”, i.e., the left wing of the PS, which had always argued against pragmatic politics. Their resistance was thus somewhat predictable. The critical role of Laurent Fabius, on the other hand, was surprising in several respects. Fabius is a former minister, prime minister under Mitterrand, and was also a proponent of the “Yes” vote on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. In 2005, he was the second chair of the PS and again became French foreign minister. Fabius’ positioning against the Constitutional Treaty was therefore particularly important not only within the PS but also for the publicity factor: a former French prime minister, who was known as a pro-European and had to that point been regarded more as a representative of the party right, spoke out against the Constitutional Treaty. This weighed far more heavily than the opposition of the party left alone, which had been expected, and lent the opponents of the Constitutional Treaty strong additional legitimacy. The special role of Fabius in the discourse was thus based above all on the symbolic power of his turn, which was able to convince

voters who would previously have been more pragmatic to vote “No” (cf. Duseigneur 2005, 74–80; Grunberg 2005, 132; Martin 2005b, 702; Rozès 2005, 34). Fabius, who only began to speak out publicly late in the course of the referendum discourse, presented his rejection of the Constitutional Treaty as the result of a learning experience from the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, which he had supported (H 170505_16).

But the reasons for Fabius’ positioning were also strategic: like Francois Hollande, he had ambitions for the Socialists’ presidential candidacy in 2007. By standing up for “No”, he was able to distance himself from Hollande and make himself the voice of the left wing. The climate of opinion of the economic crisis and the fear of unemployment may also have supported Fabius’ positioning, as he suspected that “No” would win under those circumstances. In this respect, Fabius attempted to use the mood fuelled by the social protests strategically to his domestic political as well as internal party advantage (cf. Duseigneur 2005, 74–80; Grunberg 2005, 132; Martin 2005b, 702).

4.1.2.4 Factors Favouring the Split of the PS

But why was it possible that these differences in substance and strategy led to the socialists being so strongly and visibly divided? There are several possible explanations that are telling¹: first, the French parties are not very much formally structured and much more centred around currents, individuals, and clubs. They have hardly any institutionalised disciplinary mechanisms and can thus easily be marked by conflicts. Moreover, at least until the referendum discourse, the issue of European integration was only of secondary importance to voters in France, so it may also have seemed of only secondary electoral strategic importance to party leaders to resolve their conflicts on the issue of European integration. For the PS, four other aspects came together:

First, it showed an *unclear leadership structure*; in particular, the question of the next presidential candidacy remained to be decided.

Secondly, the smouldering *substantive political disagreement* described above played a role. It led to a discrepancy between a militant and socialist rhetoric and a pragmatic, free-market line in practical politics. This ambivalence provided an opening for minority voices within the party at a time when political leadership was contested and left issues were booming.

Thirdly, by advocating “No” it was possible to *combine personal and political goals*, namely, to direct left-wing protest against free-market-oriented policies, thereby appealing to a potential structural majority and – especially in case of a “No” victory – strengthening one’s own position in the process.

Fourth, the PS was in *opposition* at the time of the referendum, which made it easier for opponents to argue against the pragmatic policies that the PS itself had implemented in the 20-plus years prior.

All four factors can explain why Fabius took up his role:

In an unclear leadership position, he took advantage of the intra-party division and the political situation. There was a market for his argumentation; he picked up on a mood. Fabius also speculated that he could become a presidential candidate in the event of a “No” vote. He also took advantage of the PS’s situation in the opposition: if the PS had been in government, he would not have been able to act in this way. (Incidentally, this consideration applies in reverse to the RPR in 1992, which could also only represent its opposition to the Maastricht Treaty from the opposition.)

It is therefore revealing that in 2006, during the PS internal primaries for the presidential candidacy, the question of referendum positions hardly played a role. Laurent Fabius did run as a candidate in the primaries, but only achieved 18.6% of the internal party vote, compared to 20.6% for Dominique Strauss-Kahn and 60.6% for Segolène Royal (LCI 2010), who then entered the race against Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007 and lost. Segolène Royal also had numerous representatives of “No” behind her (such as Arnaud Montebourg) and aggressively announced that she stood for “Yes” as well as for “No”.

Based on these considerations, general conclusions can be drawn about the course of the discourse:

One explanation for the strongly domestic orientation of the discourse in its first phase is that the EU has traditionally had only a subordinate importance in France – the central issues are traditionally national and domestic.

The weakness of the supporters can thus also be explained by their having underestimated the clout of the EU issue and failing to recognise its mobilisation potential as well as the need for unity. In doing so, however, the supporters misjudged the situation: it is possible that the issue of European integration would not have been as strong a mobilising force on its own, though it had such an effect in the context of the social protests.

The representatives of the *Non de Gauche* recognised this potential and seized on the negative mood as well as the specific EU criticism among the population that had existed since the 1990s. Strategic considerations certainly played a role – their “No” campaign enabled the smaller left parties to make a broad and united stand for their positions and to carry them to the centre, and it offered them strategic advantages.

4.1.2.5 *The Effects of Camp Enmity*

The traditional French left-right hostility was a major factor in the left opponents forming a broad, cross-party alliance, but not the supporters. There were only a few voices in the supporters’ camp calling for such an alliance, such as the then Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and the UDF leader Francois Bayrou. The

latter called for joint campaign appearances as late as March, but this was clearly rejected by the PS and UMP (LM 260305_7). In this respect, there was hardly any cooperation in the “Yes” camp. The most prominent exception was Daniel Cohn-Bendit (German-French Green MEP) and Francois Bayrou, who appeared together a few times and repeatedly attacked the hard camp divide.

PS and Greens repeatedly emphasised that they were running an independent campaign. *Les Verts* initially even tried to prohibit any cooperation with representatives of other parties, both for party lines and minority representatives (L 140305). However, this line was not sustainable. The party’s internal opponents such as Francine Bavay regularly appeared at *Non de Gauche* events, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, as described, even with Francois Bayrou of the UDF. While Bavay was not sanctioned, Cohn-Bendit was officially excluded from the Greens’ campaign, even though the ban on cooperation was lifted on 26 April.

The PS leadership also vehemently ruled out joint appearances or statements with other supporters, especially those from the right-wing camp. These appearances would have played into the hands of the party’s internal left opponents (L 120105_2). The reactions within the party to the joint photo of Hollande and Sarkozy (see [Section 4.1.1](#)) make it clear that the concern about reactions of intra-party opponents was justified. They also show how clearly the left within the PS was structured according to a camp logic and the conflict potential that real or apparent, even occasional, cooperation with the other camp had. They were interpreted as a change of camp, as a swing to the right. Thus, Laurent Fabius criticised the cover of *Paris Match* in May, saying that people who wanted to unite the Left should also address the left, rather than Nicolas Sarkozy (LM 180505).

The representatives of the parties in the “Yes” camp also attacked each other in various constellations throughout the campaign. For example, PS representatives repeatedly made it clear that the UMP and UDF were also in favour of the “Yes” vote, but were nevertheless to be criticised across the board (LF 150205_2). The representatives of the UDF and UMP emphasised their differences. Francois Bayrou, for example, attributed the rise of the “No” vote in March to dissatisfaction with the government (LF 303005_2). There was also a continuous conflict between former President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, who had been chairman of the Constitutional Convention and was also active in the “Yes” campaign, and Jacques Chirac. In April, Giscard, during a conversation with another politician, which was inadvertently heard by journalists, said that Chirac was not credible (LM 160405_9).

The “Yes” camp thus showed itself to be weakened overall in a variety of ways:

The PS and the Greens were internally divided, the right was not united, the “Yes” representatives of the different parties did not appear together, and they even attacked each other regularly.

It is important to note that the 2005 referendum debate indicated severe signs of a crisis of trust and credibility, as well as a lack of capacity to campaign, of the French political centre and its representants. These symptoms of a crisis of political representation

in France have been amplified since then. As will be discussed in [Chapter 9](#), frequent electoral successes of right-wing extremist and/or populist parties and politicians, regular protest movements including the notorious “*Gilets Jaunes*”, an overall downturn of formerly mainstream parties on the moderate left and the moderate right, and a generally low level of trust into government are both indicators of and outcome of this crisis. The 2022 presidential election with its more than 30% of the votes going to right-wing extremist candidates in the first round and barely 40% of the votes for mainstream candidates (Ministère de l’Intérieur 2022) underlines these arguments.

4.1.2.6 *The Cross-Party Unity of the Opponents*

In the camp of the TCE opponents, an opposite scenario emerged:

The dynamics of the *Non de Gauche* movement were based precisely on the fact that actors who had previously not cooperated and belonged to different parties appeared together, even celebrating their new unity in the *movement motif* intensively in public.

In this way, the rediscovered unity of the left in the *Non de Gauche* movement could be invoked and combined with a demarcation from the traditional opponent, the right (LM 160405_3). However, not all parties of the extreme left participated in the alliance. Representatives of the PT cooperated only selectively, and LO had decided not to campaign with former ministers of the PS (L 140505_7). But all in all, the obvious unity and *joie des alliances* of the *Non de Gauche* successfully masked strategic differences for the time of the referendum discourse. That the PCF, unlike other organisations, was still paying attention to the potential perspective of government participation was discernible (LM 140305_5). ATTAC, on the other hand, saw the PS primarily as an opponent (LF 080305_4). After the referendum, the PCF approached the PS again. However, it called on the latter to implement the *Non de Gauche* line in the future (L 160605_3).

Among the *left- and right-wing sovereigntists*, there was selective cooperation across the camps. These were made possible by the UMP’s line, described above, of not sanctioning minority voices. As a result, Dupont-Aignan and others appeared at times with left sovereigntists from the MRC and PCF (LM 070205_4).

Finally, the role of the *far-right “No”* is interesting. The term is merely an attribution here because there was no official alliance. The actors of the MPF, the FN, the RPF around Charles Pasqua, and the FN splinter group MNR around Bruno Gollnisch, however, represented in large parts similarly oriented motifs of criticism of the treaty, as will be shown in [Section 4.2](#) (The right-wing protest party CPNT, which advocated the “No” vote, was largely invisible in the referendum discourse.) Yet in the 2005 referendum discourse, de Villiers held the leading role for the far-right “No” in the first two phases, as Le Pen and Pasqua were both weakened by illness. The boundaries of the far-right “No” to the parties of the centre were fluid, as de Villiers cooperated loosely with the Gaullist sovereigntists (LM 170305_2).

The various currents of the “No” camp were thus clearly more united and capable of campaigning than those of the “Yes” camp:

The *Non de Gauche* actively acted as a symbolically charged cross-party alliance, left and right sovereigntists cooperated at times, although they belonged to different political camps, and far-right actors also cooperated across party lines.

Le Figaro comments in summary that the “No’s” were well compatible, while the centre-left and centre-right camps were at odds (LF 170505_8).

4.1.2.7 *Different Strategies and Actors among Opponents and Supporters*

The campaign strategies of the two camps also differed. The *supporters* mainly used the classic means of election campaigning such as press talks and television and radio appearances (LF 250505_26) and organised numerous campaign events (L 130505_13). The various joint appearances of French politicians with representatives of other European parties and governments were also mostly conducted as large-scale events or performances in front of an audience (L 190505_22).

The representatives of the “No” also used these campaign formats, but supplemented and varied them. For example, the major events were not held with foreign political celebrities, but with foreign activists who explained why they hoped for a French “No” (H 020505_15). In addition, the opponents of the treaty also worked with the classic methods of protest movements: they organised demonstrations or made “No” the theme of demonstrations on other occasions (LM 020505_13). Finally, the opponents of the treaty also used signature drives and smaller discussion events (L 270405_6).

In the *Non de Gauche*, civil society actors without leading functions in left parties and organisations also had a central role: as citizens and activists who drove the discourse forward. The *Non de Gauche* can therefore rightly be called a movement, using the means of classical grassroots activism and mobilisation (L 250405_13; L 250405_13). In this way, actors who had not previously pursued any political activity also became important in the referendum discourse, such as the teacher Etienne Chouard, who posted a paper against the Constitutional Treaty online that generated a great deal of interest (H 090405_11).

To sum up:

The “Yes” camp was largely party political and the “No” camp largely a movement.

While the supporters used traditional campaign strategies, the left opponents from the *Non de Gauche* were also organised as a grassroots protest movement.

4.1.2.8 *Media as Actors in the Discourse*

The media were of course also actors in the discourse. As described, these included newspapers, television, and radio, as well as – important especially for the *Non de Gauche* – the internet, leaflets, and public events. All these media did not act as neutral reporters; rather, they were also discursive actors, and they became a

major discursive motif of the TCE opponents, who criticised the major media (see [Section 4.2](#)) for giving a preponderance to the “Yes” contributions.

As described, evaluations of television and radio broadcasts show that this is true; the media regulator CSA warned media outlets on several occasions (LM 050505_9; Maler and Schwartz 2005: 17). The imbalance was particularly evident in the major information-oriented radio broadcasters. From 1 March to 28 April, the *France Inter* interview programme “Question directe” featured 23 “Yes” campaigners, but only four “No” campaigners. On political journalist Jean-Pierre Elkabbach’s programmes on *Europe 1*, there were 45 supporters but only 12 opponents between 7 March and 27 May. On the programme “L’invité de RTL” on the radio station of the same name, 40 supporters and 22 opponents appeared between 1 February and 27 May (Maler and Schwartz 2005, 18).

The positioning of the press, however, was for the most part less clearly discernible, not least because the editorial offices were often internally divided. Although the opponents of the treaty accused the entire press of a unanimous campaign for “Yes” (Maler and Schwartz 2005, 19), the results of the discourse analysis reveal a much more differentiated picture:

Of the newspapers studied, only *L’Humanité* actually took an official line – and it was for the “No” vote.

Regularly and explicitly defined by the editorial board as well as its journalists, the role of *L’Humanité* was to promote the *Non de Gauche*. Thus, there were consistently only a few, short and critical reports on actors in the government and the supporters camp, but very extensive reporting on the *Non de Gauche* movement. The PCF and its role were strongly brought to the fore, and ATTAC was hardly mentioned for a long time. Only at the very end of the discourse, in May, did ATTAC chair Jacques Nikonoff appear in a prominent role as guest editor.

The theoretical saturation was already abundantly clear in *L’Humanité* in March: all articles on the referendum or the Constitutional Treaty showed at least a critical tendency towards the TCE, if not clearly arguing against it. They were often polemical or attacked the proponents (see [Section 4.2](#)), and almost all ended with a call to vote “No”. The critical comments of the minority representatives of the centre parties were readily and extensively printed, while they were less frequent in the other three newspapers, but when *L’Humanité* presented arguments of supporters, it was usually done in an extremely curt manner. *L’Humanité* praised itself in June for the successful completion of its mission (H 040605_4).

All in all, the findings for the newspapers studied are very different:

The other newspapers studied did not act clearly in favour of one camp as *L’Humanité* did; although more or less strong tendencies of support for “Yes” were recognisable in all of them, an official line never existed. This was especially true for *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.

In *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, the numerous reports on the government and the major parties created a preponderance of actors who supported the “Yes” vote. The factual and opinion pieces in both newspapers often argued in favour of the TCE; however, quite a few of them also reflected a “yes, but” tendency by analysing the weaknesses of the Constitutional Treaty and calling it a compromise, or by “Yes” representatives attacking each other. Thus, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* also reflected the argumentative and strategic weaknesses of the “Yes” camp (see also [Section 4.2](#)). Strategies of official positioning, on the other hand, failed: the editor-in-chief of *Le Figaro* had tried to force its journalists to collect signatures for “Yes” from politicians and celebrities and then publish them in *Le Figaro*; this order was withdrawn after protests from journalists and trade unions.

Libération was noticeably caught between the two camps: coming from a left-wing tradition, the newspaper targeted precisely those voters who had a key role in the outcome of the referendum – rather well-educated people from the centre-left. The newspaper traced their divisions. There were several critical articles, the newspaper reported on the internal conflicts of the PS, and it placed an early focus on the activities of the opponents. Internal controversies in the editorial office also became apparent at times, for example, when journalists took opposing positions on the same issues.

Libération was thus more ambiguous than *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*. Overall, however, the majority of reports and opinion pieces were supportive of the Constitutional Treaty.

4.1.2.9 Conclusion on Rules and Directions of the Discourse, Supporting Groups of European Identity Formation

The rules of the French discourse were thus, on the one hand, those that shape political events and political discourses in France as a whole:

- 1 The political conjuncture influenced the course of the discourse: Which topics were of interest at the moment, which motifs could therefore be used successfully, and which elections and strategy issues were pending?
- 2 In this context, the individual strategic and political interests of the discursive actors served as shaping factors.
- 3 Nothing was unsayable – on the contrary, as will be shown in detail in [Section 4.2](#), escalation was a rule of the discourse. Conflicts were carried out very aggressively (see above all the internal PS debate).
- 4 The camp conflict between right and left and the “social question” acted as formative rules and reference discourses.

On the other hand, there were factors specific to the referendum discourse:

- 5 The referendum had a domestic strategic significance in relation to which all contributions and contributors to the discourse always also positioned themselves.
- 6 The EU and the positioning towards it acted as issues with high conflict potential, potential divisive effect, and strategic mobilisation power.
- 7 The social protests developed into the main topic of reference during the spring, in relation to which the discourse was oriented.
- 8 In statements on both the EU and the social protests, the traditional camp enmity between left and right was activated as a strong reference.
- 9 Most major media outlets gave more opportunities for “Yes” contributors to express themselves, while also mirroring the weaknesses of the “Yes” camp.
- 10 The two-week official campaign also had formal rules.

Regarding the *supporting groups* that shaped the discourse, it emerged that

Domestic representatives of the legislative and executive (less so of the judiciary) shaped decisive portions of the referendum discourse: they debated and decided the legal-formal procedure at the beginning, and they responded to the developing discourse and tried to set impulses. EU elites and member state elites played only a small role in the discourse as a whole, even if their importance increased as it progressed.

The *motives for action and strategies* of the domestic political elites were recognisably and strongly determined by their political roles, conflicts, and goals – the positioning on the EU and the Constitutional Treaty played only a marginal role, if any. Statements were made in order to distinguish oneself, in the belief that this would improve one’s own position, to weaken internal party or other opponents, or to defend oneself.

Only a few representatives of the legislature supported the “No”. This was primarily due to the French majority voting system, which hardly allows smaller parties critical of the EU to be represented in the AN. “No” was therefore strongly influenced by the extra-parliamentary opposition. The government function also had a disciplining effect in that members of a governing party expressed themselves less frequently and, when they did, then often more moderately critical of the EU.

In addition to (party) political actors, the discourse was also shaped by the associations and trade unions as well as NGOs and their respective representatives – this also includes the activists involved in the numerous committees and civic organisations of the *Non de Gauche*.

The *dynamics of the discourse* were essentially determined by the social protests and the *Non de Gauche* movement, despite the activities of the political elites.

Thus, left-wing parties and organisations were more influential than representatives from the government camp; and citizens who were not represented in the leadership of parties and organisations helped shape the discourse. This is because (unlike in Germany) they were consulted on the issue at all, i.e., they were recipients of an election campaign, actors in a protest campaign, and decision-makers in the matter.

The French case thus supports the assumption that citizens take a greater part in European policy opinion-forming when they are specifically given the opportunity to participate.

Regarding the processes of *social penetration in the discourses and the question of whether these had top-down dynamics and bottom-up dynamics*, results so far underline that

There are clear *indicators for a penetration by the left arguments*, in this case *from the bottom up*: the critique of liberalism and the EU formulated by the TCE opponents and protesters became so dominant in the discourse that all other participants had to position themselves in relation to it. This also led to a penetration – not with European identity-forming attributions, but with EU-critical, negative, and delimiting ones.

The political elites who advocated the “Yes” vote were not able to prevail. This was partly due to the successful role of the protest activists, but another major cause was the weakness of the “Yes” camp and its internal conflicts, which prevented a convincing and unambiguous argumentation by the TCE supporters from emerging.

With a view to the *formation of an EU demos*, a positive interim conclusion can initially be drawn here:

There were *numerous references to the role of citizens* in the French discourse (see [Section 4.2](#)). The fact that citizens debated intensively and also protested – even if they mostly constructed a demarcation from the EU and not positive references – meant that they were also *politically active in an EU-related way*; i.e., the French discourse clearly also contributed to the *formation of EU-related democratic practice*.

4.2 Motifs, Arguments, and References of the Discourse

In the following, I will first present an overview of the typical arguments and motifs of the French discourse that shaped attributions of meaning to the EU. The French discourse, as will become visible, was decisively shaped by an opposition between the “Yes” and “No” arguments. In addition, as was already said above, reference to the European Union only appeared in a distanced way, so the discourse was marked by the *distanced multi-level reference (EU and foreign countries)* already and the importance of *domestic references and implications of the discourse*, which have already been addressed in [Section 4.1](#). These were recognisable in an often overly clear theoretical saturation and related to three topic areas:

The arguments of the French discourse were strongly shaped by the central opposition between representatives of the “Yes” and the “No” in the referendum. They were often polemically oriented and/or referred to the opposing camp. Politically substantive arguments were used much less frequently.

[Table 4.4](#) presents an overview of the motifs and topic areas of the French discourse. They will be explained in detail afterwards.

Table 4.4 Overview of motifs and topic areas of the French discourse

Distanced multi-level reference

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Foreign countries | Medium importance, distancing representation
Key theme: <i>France as an example and battleground</i> |
| 2 | EU level | Important topic area – when French interests are touched
More distancing representation |

Domestic references and implications of the discourse

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Domestic policy | Central topic area, structuring for discourse
Sub-areas of <i>government, role of the president, division of parties/camps, perspectives of allies</i> |
| 2 | Development of the discourse | Central topic area; presented as an internal French matter
Sub-areas <i>Opinion polls/election analyses, commentaries, central actors, strategic considerations, analysis of discourse, reactions</i> |

“Yes” motifs

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Opponent reference | Central motif of “Yes”, differentiated into (1) <i>weakening the opponents</i> , (2) <i>dealing with arguments of the opponents</i> |
| 2 | Yes, but | Important motif for the “Yes” camp, differentiated into <i>criticism of the government, Turkey’s accession, Services Directive, other</i> |
| 3 | Internal debates in the “Yes” camp | Important role
Structuring element |
| 4 | Responsibility motif | Important “Yes” motif
Differentiated into an appeal to the <i>responsibility of the individual</i> , a reference to the <i>importance of the referendum</i> , and, occasionally, <i>threats</i> |
-

(Continued)

Table 4.4 (Continued)

5 Pragmatism motif	Medium importance Emphasises <i>the lack of alternatives to the treaty and increased efficiency of the EU</i>
6 France's role in the EU	Important "Yes" motif Differentiated into <i>strengthening France in the case of "Yes", weakening France in the case of "No", and reference to France's historical role</i>
7 Europe Puissance	Important "Yes" motif Emphasises the <i>EU's global political role and potential strengthening through the TCE</i>
8 Normative Europe	Central "Yes" motif Differentiated into <i>Social Europe, Political/Democratic Europe, Europe as guarantor of peace, Europe as guarantor of freedom and human rights</i>
<i>"No" motifs</i>	
1 Opponent reference	Central "No" motif, differentiated into (1) <i>weakening the opponents</i> , (2) <i>dealing with arguments of the opponents</i>
2 Populist motif	Central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> : <i>division between elites and people</i> , differentiated into <i>"everyone is in cahoots", "debate is not democratic/the people are being cheated", "slap on the wrist"</i> Supplementary: <i>arrogance of the elites, criticism of pensée unique, good against bad, right against left, workers against bosses</i>
3 Left alliance/movement motif	Central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> Topic areas: primarily <i>resistance as a democratic responsibility and dynamics of the "No"/movement</i> , and secondarily <i>concrete goals/mission</i>
4 Criticism of enlargement/closedness	Marginal motif throughout Criticism of <i>Turkey's accession</i>
5 Criticism of TCE	Important substantive motif of the opponents, from May onwards, these were differentiated into <i>Criticism of the content and text of the treaty</i>
6 National-republican/sovereigntist motif	Medium importance to marginal role Topics <i>Republic, Nation, La France/Etat Nation, National Sovereignty/Loss, French Social Model</i>
7 Anti-liberal motif	Central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> Topic areas <i>Social/ labour market deterioration due to the TCE, harmful effects of the EU, délocalisations, ultra-, neo-, social- ... libéralisme of the EU, criticism of neoliberal government decisions, globalisation</i>
8 Another Europe is possible	Motif of <i>Non de Gauche</i> , medium importance to a marginal role Topics <i>Social Europe, More Democracy, Another treaty</i>

Source: Own Representation.

4.2.1 *France and Its European Mission: Distanced Multi-Level Reference*

The topic areas of (1) *foreign countries* and (2) the *EU* as described in [Section 4.1](#) were presented in a distanced way as “the other”. A central motif was *France as an example and battleground*. France was constructed as Europe’s model and Europe’s leader. In different argumentations, politicians of all camps attributed a pioneering role to the French discourse within the EU. Adopting a classic motif of previous French discourses on Europe, it emphasised the *exception française*, the exceptional role of France, and its leading role in civilisational, democratic, and political terms. Beginning in March, and intensifying in May, the leading role of the French referendum and the French discourse for the rest of the EU was thus emphasised – especially by representatives of the *Non de Gauche*, because it claimed to lead the EU-wide opposition against the TCE, but also by supporters of the treaty and representatives of the major parties who officially advocated the “Yes” vote.

The representatives of the *Non de Gauche* ascribed to themselves a mission not only for France but also for the whole of Europe. Henri Emmanuelli and Marie-George Buffet – recognisably taking up the revolutionary symbolism – summed up the *Non de Gauche*’s “revival mission” for the rest of Europe succinctly. Emmanuelli emphasised that “Europe moves when France protests”, and Marie-George Buffet said that “peoples would rise after a ‘No’ to claim that enough is enough” (H 250305_12). Jacques Nikonoff from ATTAC also spoke about the European political “revival mission” of the “No” campaign (L 230305_4). Jean-Pierre Chevènement described the consequences of a “No” as the event that would change the EU away from market liberalism (LF 220305_18).

The supporters of the TCE dealt differently with the motif of France’s pioneering role. Nicolas Sarkozy took the motif and tried to turn it around, arguing that a French “yes of the people” would carry more weight than a German parliamentary ratification (L 120505_14). Some other TCE supporters stressed that a “No” vote would not make France a pioneer, but isolate it (L 230305_11). One of the interpretative battles in the discourse flared up around this question. The representatives of the *Non de Gauche* in turn responded to the criticism with examples in which France had successfully been a pioneer (L 230305_11). The revolution was also explicitly cited (L 230305_11).

Quite apparently, despite the “No” victory, none of the predicted effects followed. On the contrary: after the start of the financial crisis in 2008, the EU experienced almost a decade of economic austerity that in return fuelled populism all over the EU (see in detail Macchiarelli et al. 2020; Wiesner 2021 and [Chapter 9](#)).

4.2.2 *...but “No” to the Government: The Domestic Role of the Referendum and the Discourse*

The domestic references and effects of the discourse were strongly influential, as described in [Section 4.1](#). They can be subdivided into two topic areas and typical arguments and motifs. (1) The thematic area of *domestic politics* dealt with the sub-areas of *government*, *the role of the president*, *the division of the parties/camps*, and *potential allies*. All these sub-fields were essentially presented as domestic or

internal French affairs. (2) The topic area of *development of the discourse* is divided into arguments and motifs reporting on the status of *opinion polls or election analyses*, *direct comments* on the course of the discourse, statements about *central actors* and their *strategic considerations*, opinion contributions on the *analysis of the discourse*, and finally *reactions to the Non*.

- 1 In the area of *domestic policy*, several factors were already apparent in January that shaped and structured the discourse in the following months. They have already been discussed in [Section 4.1](#): the internal debates in the “Yes” camp, the conflicts in the political camps on the right and left, the weakened role of the president and the government (the president tried to be presidential and non-partisan, but was dependent on a “Yes” vote, as was the entire government). The fact that these developments were commented on again and again (nervously or with delight, depending on the camp of the commentators) reinforced their impact on the discourse in the following chain of arguments and effects: *there are problems and demonstrations in the country – the government is unpopular – Raffarin is attacked from within his own party – there are intra-party power struggles in the UMP – falling opinion polls for the government and the “Yes” symbolise and intensify the weakness of the government*. Overall, neither the president nor his government was able to shape the referendum discourse or turn it in their favour.
- 2 The *development of the referendum discourse* and the commentaries on and analyses of it were also already a central topic area from January onwards. Even when the discourse itself had barely got going, the potential for conflict in its further course was already evident in the commentaries and strategic considerations, analyses, and opinion polls. At the beginning of the year, great pessimism and social fears were recognisable in the French population, and their possible entanglement with the referendum was also already being discussed (LM 190105). The strategic reflections of both President Chirac and PS opposition leader Hollande in January also already showed a clear awareness of their specific problems (L 120105_2; L 080105).

In February and March, such comments played out similarly, with popular discontent and protests continuing to be commented on – though the tone changed in March as opinion polls showed the rapid and striking rise of the “No” (LM 230305_8). The shift in opinion was linked by pollsters to the demonstrations (LF 210305_8). The opponents of the TCE cheered the first poll that saw the “No” leading, especially as the poll was released in time for the first major event of the *Non de Gauche*. In contrast, supporters either tried to downplay that poll or interpreted it as a wake-up call (L 190305_10).

However, as described in [Section 4.1](#), while the TCE opponents were already very active and committed in their arguments in March, the supporters were still very much occupied with their strategic considerations (these also make up a substantial part of the material in quantitative terms in March) and the comments. For many “Yes” representatives, the meta-discourse seemed to be even more important than the discourse itself – although they emphasised that they now had to really get

going (LF 310305_9). There were also many contributions in quantitative terms to the development of the discourse in *April*, with analyses and comments discussing the reasons for the rise of the “No” vote in the opinion polls (LM 240505).

In fact, unemployment was above average in spring 2005. Many analysts pointed out that people with voting intentions for the “No” also associated the TCE and the EU with various fears of social decline and worries about the future (L 290405), arguing that the TCE referendum would precisely be marked by the effect of these fears (LM 190405_43). Moreover, dissatisfaction with President Chirac had reached a record high in April, with only 44% of respondents in a CSA poll still trusting him (L 280405_7).

In *May* and *June*, the number of such commentaries on and analyses of the discourse increased even more; after the *Non*, there was a focus on finding the reasons, on election analyses, commentaries, and reactions.

The *debate on the discourse* was thus a central part of the discourse in France, and sometimes a substitute for a debate on the substantive issues.

The *opinion polls* played a central role in this. They were continuously communicated and commented on – and this in turn drove the discourse. By discussing the motives for the development of voter intentions, these were reinforced in the discourse. Opinion polls were therefore regularly reported on in a targeted way to support certain interests.

4.2.3 *Abstract, Meta, But: Variants of “Yes”*

Many of the arguments and motifs of the proponents were abstract, and only a few were substantive. “Yes” motifs thus often had no direct reference to the substantive issue of the referendum, but were either related to the course of the discourse or domestic politics or appealed to the argumentative meta-level. A striking overall conclusion can be drawn:

Many “Yes” arguments were either formulated negatively, in the sense of “yes, to prevent...”, or they had a strong “yes, but” connotation. Finally, they often had a strong pedagogical or even arrogant/patronising feel.

The meta-arguments and the “yes, but” arguments rarely constructed an independently positive image of the TCE or the EU, i.e., independent of the “No” arguments.

The “Yes” motifs can be subdivided into eight different motifs:

- 1 A central motif of the proponents of the TCE was the *reference to the opponents*, i.e., the “No” camp, which was differentiated into two areas: with the increasing

- duration of the discourse, there were increasing motifs of *weakening the opponents*, which were conflictual, polemical, and partly defamatory. In addition, however, there was also a more factual way of *addressing the arguments of the opponents*.
- 2 The supporters used various “yes, but” motifs, each of which emphasised the need to vote “Yes” in the referendum despite domestic political problems or criticism of the EU or the TCE. A distinction could be made between *criticism of the government*, *criticism of the potential accession of Turkey*, *criticism of the Services Directive*, and various individual aspects (*other*).
 - 3 The *internal debates in the “Yes” camp* also played an important role in the discourse. As described, the supporters attacked each other throughout the discourse, which weakened the argumentative position of the “Yes” camp.
 - 4 The *responsibility motif* abstractly emphasised the importance of the referendum and the responsibility of the voters. It was differentiated into appeals to the *responsibility of the individual* and references to the *importance of the referendum* as well as, occasionally, *threats*, i.e., warnings of harmful or catastrophic consequences of a negative outcome.
 - 5 The *pragmatism motif* was of medium importance. It emphasised the *lack of alternatives* to the TCE and the *increase in efficiency of the EU* as a result of it.

Beyond these rather abstract motifs, there were only three predominantly substantive “Yes” motifs:

- 6 The *role of France in the EU* was differentiated into the potential *strengthening of France* through a “Yes” vote, its *weakening through a “No” vote*, and the reference to *France’s historical role* in European integration.
- 7 *Europe Puissance* emphasised the global political role of the EU and its potential strengthening through the TCE.
- 8 *Normative Europe* was the central substantive motif of the supporters. It emphasised the improvements in certain policy contents and the basic political-democratic orientations associated with the TCE and can be differentiated into the motifs *Social Europe*, *Political and Democratic Europe*, *Europe as Guarantor of Peace*, and *Europe as Guarantor of Freedom and Human Rights*.

The distribution of arguments changed over the course of the discourse. In January, pragmatic and meta-arguments dominated; in February, the supporters hardly used their own arguments, but concentrated on comments on the strategy and the discourse. From March onwards, the discourse intensified, and so did the supporters’ substantive arguments. In April, the substantive arguments of “Yes” and “No” were basically balanced for the first time – there were more factual and fewer meta-arguments. As a result, there were also more reactions to the arguments of the supporters among the opponents of the treaty. In May, this changed again, with “No” putting forward more substantive arguments against the TCE. Immediately after the referendum, the substantive arguments on the part of the supporters ended abruptly, while the opponents still tried to spread their arguments for a while.

4.2.3.1 *Meta-Arguments and Pragmatism Motif*

The *meta-arguments* (1 to 5 above) discussed the EU or the TCE only indirectly; they appealed to the responsibility of the individual, emphasised the importance of the referendum, or threatened with the negative consequences of a “No” vote, but without giving political or substantive reasons. President Chirac used the meta-arguments very much, as did Prime Minister Raffarin later. Both argued as statesmen and tried to assess the referendum positively. Chirac, when the cabinet approved the ratification law, said he wanted the referendum to be a source of an intensive democratic debate and a decisive moment for the future of France and Europe (LF 100305_7). Prime Minister Raffarin also used his role as a statesman in one of his first statements in the discourse, dedicating the referendum to “those kids that today are ten years old” because their future was at stake (LF 310305_11).

Nicolas Sarkozy – who was out of government in the spring of 2005 – also began the discourse in an emphatically statesmen-like manner, saying that the referendum was not about politics, but about France (H 070305). Chirac’s TV discussion with young people on 14 April showed, however, that the meta-arguments were not convincing in the face of very concrete, mostly domestically related questions – especially since Chirac refused to discuss the domestic issues there (L 150405_16). At the end of the discussion, he had to admit his lack of understanding (LM 160405_13).

Similar in structure to the meta-arguments were motifs that invoked the need for a *pragmatic approach* and emphasised that “Yes” was without alternative because there was no chance of improving the treaty and/or because it could not be renegotiated, as Jacques Chirac emphasised (H 180505_18). The *pro-European Yes* argued that whoever was in favour of Europe had to vote “Yes” (L 130505_10).

4.2.3.2 *“Yes, but” Motifs*

A conspicuous number of the supporters used “*yes, but*” motifs, which often explicitly picked up on the criticism of the opponents. The “yes, but” motifs thus showed numerous relativisations and the “Yes” camp’s lack of enthusiasm. In this context, the “but” could have various reference points. The potential accession of Turkey, the Services Directive, government criticism, and even a fundamental criticism of the EU were repeatedly addressed.

- a The sub-motif *Yes, but opposition to Turkey’s accession* argued that those who were against Turkey’s accession had to vote “Yes” because only the TCE and the regulations associated with the French ratification law would be able to prevent it (LM 210305_4). Nicolas Sarkozy took up several “No” arguments in a keynote speech to the UMP presidium – these were, in addition to opposition to Turkey’s accession, fear of *délocalisations* and a reform of EU agricultural policy (L 070305_2).
- b The sub-motif *Yes, but opposition to the Services Directive* argued that those who were against the Services Directive had to vote “Yes” because the TCE would give the EU a better social foundation (LF 240305_18).
- c The sub-motif *Yes, despite opposition to the government and the bad mood in the country* argued that even if the government should be voted out or criticised,

one should vote “Yes” (because the two questions were not connected). This “yes, but” argument thus took up the motif of the “slap on the wrist” and confirmed the displeasure against the government as justified, while calling for it to be expressed in voting behaviour only in a national election. The mayor of Lille and future PS leader Martine Aubry said succinctly that it was in 2007 (the year of the next elections) when one should say “No” (L 250405_14).

- d Finally, a particularly complicated “yes, but” argument stated that *whoever wanted a better Europe would first have to vote “Yes”* because this goal would not be achievable with the Nice Treaty. The socialist “yes, but” even argued that one must first vote “Yes” and then, on the basis of the TCE, the EU could be changed (LM 260505_11).

4.2.3.3 *The Role of France and the Strength of Europe*

France’s role in the EU was one of the most important political-substantive “Yes” motifs. On the one hand, it used a historically justified “Yes”: *France has been driving European integration for over 50 years – with the TCE, the EU would be even more in line with France’s interests – therefore one has to vote “Yes”*. Jacques Chirac repeatedly emphasised this motif (LF 100305_7). In his second television intervention, he became even dramatic, saying that the TCE was the “daughter of 1789” (i.e., the French revolution) and took on all of France’s values (LF 040505_13). However, France’s role was also addressed in functional terms, namely, in connection with France’s interests – in a positive variant, the argument was: *By approving the referendum, France can only benefit; therefore, one must vote “Yes”* (LF 270405_7). The negative variant of the motif of French interests was: *France will lose by voting “No”; therefore, one must vote “Yes”* (LF 270505_24). Especially from the Gaullist side, the motif of strengthening France was increasingly combined with the classic Gaullist motif of a Europe of sovereign nation states towards the end of the discourse (LM 280505_27).

In connection with the strength of France, the motif *Europe Puissance* was also regularly emphasised: the TCE would bring the strong, independent, efficient Europe that France aspires to. It would be able to play a more important role in the world and not least be a counterpart to the United States (LF 140405_3).

4.2.3.4 *A Better, More Social, and More Democratic EU: Europe as a Normative Authority*

Finally, the supporters constructed various normatively charged, substantive political attributions: *the TCE will bring a better, more social, and more democratic EU, and therefore one must vote “Yes”*.

The few positive attributions to the EU that were independent of the “No” motifs were politically substantive or normative in the sense of “more democracy”, “more social welfare”, etc.

The motif of *normative Europe* became more important over the course of the discourse and was particularly significant in April. It can be differentiated into four sub-motifs, which, however, were often related or linked.

- a The most important sub-motif of *Social Europe* often tried to turn the anti-liberal motif into a positive one. Chirac, for instance, argued that the TCE would bring social harmonisation, an end of social dumping, and a record level of social protection. Without the TCE, Europe would give in to market liberalism (LM 270405_13). Regarding the motif of a social Europe, there was a difference in the argumentation of the right-wing and left-wing supporters. The right-wingers argued that the TCE would bring social improvements and the left-wingers that it would create the basis for them – unlike the Treaty of Nice, which prevented them (L 190405_4). This argument dominated among the Socialists: *something has to change, Europe has to become more social – (a) this is only possible if it becomes more democratic and different, or – (b) the treaty brings such changes, thus one has to vote “Yes” to make Europe more social* (L 210305_4).
- b Another central sub-motif was that of a *democratic or political Europe*, arguing that the TCE would bring a return of politics and democracy (LF 260405_4). Raymond Barre, former prime minister, listed the improvements associated with the TCE – a charter of fundamental rights, more efficient EU institutions, a permanent Council president, a High Representative of Foreign and Security Policy, a strengthened EP, and a strengthening of the national parliaments (LF 250405_18).
- c The *Europe of freedom and human rights* sub-motif is similar, emphasising the fundamental rights fixed in the charter and the TCE (LF 060405_2).
- d The sub-motif *Europe as guarantor of peace* was the least significant of the four. It referenced either the past or the future, linking peace with economic prosperity (LM 200405_4; LF 220405_6).

Overall, the substantive arguments of the TCE supporters followed a strategy that was opposite to that of the TCE opponents:

The supporters did not construct oppositions in their substantive arguments, but *compatibilities* – the TCE did not create problems for France and French achievements, was the core message, but an EU that was better adapted to French interests.

In doing so, the supporters tried to *reframe the arguments of the opponents*: “there is no opposition between France and the EU”, or “you cannot be pro-European and against the treaty”.

The aim of the supporters was to refute all the alleged oppositions of the “self” and the “other” that the opponents had constructed. They constructed the *TCE as a means to extend the French “self” to the rest of the EU* or to make the European “self” more French. Overall, they wanted to show that the EU was a “self” that was bigger than France alone.

4.2.4 Jointly against the Treaty and against the Elites: The “No” Motifs

The “No” motifs were of a different character. Three important “No” motifs did not rely on a direct reference to the question of the referendum and the evaluation of the TCE. Instead, they used established motifs of French political culture.

- 1 The motif of the *opponent reference*, just as for the “Yes” camp, was also important to the “No” representatives. However, its importance in the discourse varied depending on the intensity of the arguments of the supporters – when they were very active in the discourse, as in April, there were clearly more references to opponents on the part of the “No” representatives. When the supporters were less active, the references to opponents also decreased. Here, too, the reference to opponents was differentiated into more critical, polemical, or defamatory *weakening of the opponents* and more factual *addressing the arguments of the opponents*.
- 2 The centrally important *populist motif* used various constructions of opposition. By far the most significant of these was the construction of a *division between political and economic elites and the people*, differentiated into the attribution that the elites were “*all in cahoots*” and the criticism that the *debate was not democratic* or that the *people were being deliberately deceived by the contributions of the supporters*. These individual motifs were usually combined with a call to *vote for a referendum*: voting “No” would mean giving the elites the necessary comeuppance for permanently deceiving the people. In addition, the *arrogance of the elites* was deplored and something named *pensée unique* was criticised, i.e., a kind of there-is-no-alternative-speech that the TCE proponents were accused of. With *good against bad*, *right against left*, and *workers against bosses*, the populist motif also used other oppositions.
- 3 The *movement motif* was also a central motif of the *Non de Gauche* from the beginning of the discourse: it emphasised or even invoked the role of the *Non de Gauche* alliance and can be differentiated into the individual motifs of *resistance as a democratic responsibility* and *the dynamics of the “No” movement*, which are particularly important. Of lesser importance was to provide substance to the *goals* or the *mission of the Non de Gauche*.

The “No” representatives also used different substantive motifs, which, however, were of varying importance:

- 4 *Criticism of enlargement* had a consistently marginal role: *criticism of Turkey’s accession* was only rarely voiced, and it was particularly surprising that the motif of the *plombier polonais*, which became known far beyond France, hardly appeared in the discourse and certainly did not shape it.
- 5 An important substantive motif of the opponents, which however only gained its full significance from May onwards, was *criticism of the TCE*, its *contents*, and its *text*.
- 6 The *national-republican motif*, which was differentiated into the areas of *republic* (and its contents), *nation*, *La France/Etat Nation*, *national sovereignty* and its loss, as well as the *French social model*, had a varying importance, but was consistently present and thus formed a constant side current of the right and left republican and/or nationalist-oriented opponents.

- 7 The central substantive motif of the *Non de Gauche* was the *anti-liberal motif*. The term “anti-liberal” was taken directly from the language used by the organisations concerned. In translation, it would mean “anti-market liberal”, as the anti-liberal movement is directed against unrestrained economic liberalism, which was also called “ultra-liberalism”. This motif in various differentiations criticised the EU, the TCE, and – less importantly – the French government for its “*ultra-liberal*” or economically liberal policies. It emphasised the *potential deterioration of social and labour market policies via the TCE*, described the *harmful effects of the EU*, warned against *délocalisations*, i.e., company relocations intensified by the TCE, criticised *economically liberal government decisions*, and – less importantly – *globalisation*.
- 8 The motif “*Another Europe is possible*”, on the other hand, was at most of the medium importance for the *Non de Gauche* and played only a marginal role in large parts of the discourse. This is surprising, as this motif described the central political arguments of the opponents on the question of how the EU should be shaped differently in the future: it was differentiated into the areas of *Social Europe*, *More Democracy*, and a *different Constitutional Treaty*.

The most important motifs of the “No” Camp will now be discussed in more detail.

4.2.4.1 *Against the “corrupt Elites”: The Populist Motif*

The *populist motif* used the traditional French construction of an opposition between the hard-working population and arrogant or even corrupt political elites. This motif was fuelled by a general crisis of French political culture and distrust in the political elites that will be further discussed in [Chapter 9](#). It was usually combined with criticism of government and/or criticism of the major parties, criticism of the course of discourse, and the call for a “slap on the wrist” vote, but also sometimes with the right-left dichotomy or other oppositions. This resulted in a binary logic of argumentation: a “Yes” to the TCE was presented as a “Yes” to right-wing government and “ultra-liberalism”, a “No” to the TCE as a protest against social cuts, the right, government, economic liberalism, and a technocratic Europe (H 170105; H 290105_2). Strategically, the populist motif was used by the *Non de Gauche* by linking it to the social protests in the following argumentation: *a wave of protests is rising in the country: the citizens have had enough of social cuts, of “ultra-liberalism”, of the domination of the bosses – there were protests in cities A, B, C – and the “No” was present everywhere – this is also logical, must be so, because the EU is to blame – the EU is the stronghold of “ultra-liberalism” – therefore vote “No” to finally stop the social cuts* (H 300305_7).

The populist motif also often used a construction of “they are all in cahoots” – i.e., the French government, the EU and its actors, the major political parties, and the business community all working together to impose “ultra-liberalism” on France (H 090405_2). This became a “slap on the wrist motif”. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, for instance, said the “No” was the only message that could be sent to elites being deaf and blind (LM 120505_4).

ATTAC also used the populist motif in a conspicuous way. The organisation made the Paris Match cover picture of Hollande and Sarkozy the title of one of its two books against the Constitutional Treaty – with the caption “*Ils se sont dits oui*” (they said “Yes” to each other; ATTAC France 2005). Jacques Nikonoff even sharpened the motif into an explicit conspiracy theory and spoke of a “*coup monté*”, i.e., a plot underlying the TCE (H 100505). The populist motif also stressed that the referendum discourse was not democratic (LF 300405_10). In the process, the media and/or “those up there” were also accused of lying (H 230305_9).

Again, the argument was at least partly at odds with how the discourse actually went: it was clearly shaped by the left, as described, even if there were fewer media appearances by opponents – and in fact it was also the opponents who made more serious misstatements (see below). Last but not least, the populist motif was also advocated by the far right – but without the explicitly left-wing rhetoric (LF 260505_14).

4.2.4.2 *Attacking Jointly: The Movement Motif*

The *movement motif* built in many ways on the populist motif and, as already outlined in Section 4.1, emphasised in various chains of reasoning the rediscovered unity of the left alliance of the *Non de Gauche* in the struggle against common opponents: the “arrogant and mendacious elites” and “ultra-liberalism”. The concrete goals of the movement were secondary in these arguments because an emphatically invoked *mission* was ascribed to it – to carry hope and the will to battle (H 230305_9). At the end of the discourse, this positive mood, even euphoria among the TCE opponents, contrasted even more strongly with the fear of the proponents.

It is already clear that the “No” motifs were strongly characterised by negative and delimiting arguments – be it against “the elites” or against the EU or Europe and the TCE. “No” therefore primarily led a discourse around the question, “What kind of Europe do we *not* want?” but not around a concept of Europe, however positively formulated.

The chains of reasoning mostly started from versions of the populist motif.

- a The first variant was: *the elites are all in cahoots – the discourse is not democratic – resistance is needed as a democratic duty* (H 080305_4).
- b The second variant was: *the left movement must inform the people (because the discourse is not democratic) – it has a mission: for the workers/the people/ the truth and against the bosses/the lying elites/the lie/“ultra-liberalism”/the government – and (more rarely) for another Europe* (H 230305_9).
- c A third variant, directed against the left-wing supporters, was: *the left-wing “Yes” is against the goals of the movement – it is in cahoots with the right – and is wrong* (H 010305_9).

- d In combination with the social protests, the argumentation went as such: *there is a wave of protests rising in the country – the citizens are fed up with social cuts, with “ultra-liberalism”, with the domination of the bosses – the movement is growing, getting stronger – it was about time this happened, the left is now united – except for the left “Yes”, but its proponents are (a) the bad guys who make common cause with the right or (b) the ignorant who have not yet understood – the movement is strong and will win – and this will in turn strengthen its cause* (H 303005_7).

4.2.4.3 *Against Market Liberalism: The Anti-Liberal Motif*

The substantive criticism of the *Non de Gauche* focused predominantly on the *anti-liberal* motif. All in all, the anti-liberal motif can be summarised as follows:

The anti-liberal motif attributed *negative meanings* to the EU: it was constructed – by more friendly contributors, only in its current form, otherwise in principle – as an “ultra-liberal” project, a project of the bosses, a project against the *services publiques*, and a project of corrupt elites. “Ultraliberalism” was stylised as a spectre, as the great, dark “other” against which one must defend oneself with all means; the “No” in the referendum thus appeared as a “No” to “ultraliberalism”.

The anti-liberal motif was at the core of the *Non de Gauche*’s argument:

The guiding chain of reasoning of the *Non de Gauche* was: vote “No” in the referendum (i.e., vote against the Constitutional Treaty) in order to send a signal against “ultra-liberalism” (as embodied by the EU). Even if only the first and third parts of the argumentation were sometimes expressed, it only gained its meaning in the partially explicit, but always resonating linkage with the second and fourth parts.

This chain of reasoning used *established motifs of the French left republican discourse*: for the *services publiques* (and the French achievements, thus more for France) and therefore against neoliberalism and for a “No” in the referendum (against the Constitutional Treaty, which expresses the harmful policies the EU is carrying out) as well as against the EU, in case of doubt.

In this way, the anti-liberal motif built up an explicit *opposition anti-liberalism/Constitutional Treaty* – and it implied an *opposition between good and important French achievements and the EU* by contrasting social achievements that were clearly recognisable as French and traditionally defined accordingly, such as the *services publiques*, with a nameless ultra-liberalism and the EU.

In addition, the *Non de Gauche* used two other motifs that are firmly anchored in French political culture: the still central right-left dichotomy and the opposition between the people and allegedly arrogant or even corrupt political elites. This was sometimes discursively charged with a connotation of the difference between good and evil: the opponents of the treaty were the opponents of the arrogant elites and thus were fighting for the only good and just thing, namely, the cause of the people.

The anti-liberal motif ultimately sharpened the criticism of the EU to the point of demarcation:

At its core, the anti-liberal motif constructed not just criticism of the EU, but a *distinction from the EU as a polity in its current character*:

The left opponents of the TCE constructed *France and its republican and social values as “the self”* that had to be defended against “*the other*” in the shape of nameless “*ultra-liberals*” based somewhere in Brussels and supported by (right-wing) French politicians.

In more detail, the anti-liberal motif also used various chains of argumentation. It centred around the claim that the TCE was bringing an extreme version of market liberalism.

- a The first version simply argued that the EU and the TCE were “ultra-liberal” (H 230505_11). Or as the left opponents Francine Bavay, Marc Dolez, Elisabeth Gauthier (director of the left think tank *Espaces Marx*), and Claude Debons (CGT) wrote, the EU was opposing economic liberalisation and social cohesion (L 160505_2).
- b Other sub-motifs of the anti-liberal argumentation were: *the EU since Maastricht has been responsible for privatisation and the dismantling of the services publiques – it (or the ECB) acts in the interest of the financial markets – the Constitutional Treaty will support their hegemony – and the French right-wing government and French entrepreneurs supported them in this*. A report on the decision of the PCF of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region in early January 2005 to campaign against the TCE summarises that the TCE would bring privatisations, the breakdown of public services, the tyranny of the ECB, and the hegemony of financialised capitalism (H 110105_5).
- c The EU would also facilitate the oft-cited company *relocations abroad (délocalisations)* (H 030305_5). Criticism of the *délocalisations* was also taken up by the far right, e.g., by Philippe de Villiers (LF 260105).
- d Laurent Fabius, in particular, coined the sub-motif of *entrenchment*: the TCE could not be changed for 50 years, and it was tied to an “ultra-liberal” model (L 030505_8).

The anti-liberal argumentation was finally sharpened and personalised in the *criticism of the Services Directive*, which was also called the “Bolkestein Directive” after the former Competition Commissioner Frits Bolkestein. The spectre of “ultra-liberalism” was thus stereotyped in the name of Bolkestein and very often directly linked to the Constitutional Treaty. Henri Emmanuelli, for example, said “Bolkestein, délocalisations, TCE: it is the same logic” (H 170205_6). The opponents actively used Bolkestein as a bogeyman – at the large demonstration in Brussels in March 2005, there were placards saying “Bolkestein = Frankenstein” (LM 220305_12). A peak in the dispute was reached when activists from the CGT union, working for the French electricity company EDF, cut off Frits Bolkestein’s electricity (LM 150405_5).

4.2.4.4 *This Is Not a Constitution: Criticism of the TCE*

Criticism of *the text of the TCE* was also used by the left opponents, but only from March onwards. The text was analysed in detail to underpin the critical motifs. As described above, this was done primarily in relation to economic liberalism, but also to other issues. In doing so, the opponents of the TCE often argued in a polemicising manner, or even with false assertions or insinuations. For example, some emphasised that the TCE – through the right to a life defined in Article 62 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights – endangered the *right to abortion* (H 110305_5).

Article 69 was alleged to jeopardise the *right to divorce* because it fixes the right to marriage and to starting a family – but not the right to divorce (H 110305_5). Finally, Article 52 was said to endanger the separation of church and state, *laïcité* (H 110305_5). Finally, the TCE was called *anti-democratic* because it would leave no room for democratic decision-making in economic, social, and financial policy (L 160505_2).

Overall, there was a great deal of coherence in the arguments of the left opponents of the TCE:

The arguments and motifs of the *Non de Gauche* were related to each other and linked in the most diverse constellations – the theoretical saturation was clearly recognisable:

Again and again, the “*Bolkestein Directive*” was criticised and used as an example; it was emphasised that the referendum discourse was *undemocratic*, that *elites and employers* were conspiring against the people and/or with each other, that the TCE was “*ultra-liberal*” and endangered the *services publiques*, and that resistance against all this was a democratic duty.

However, these arguments had an effect that the left opponents may not have intended. The French government, Chirac and Raffarin, appeared exonerated the

more the EU and the potentially harmful effects of the TCE were portrayed as overpowering. Thus, the EU alone appeared synonymous with “ultra-liberalism” and almost became an evil that threatened France.

4.2.4.5 *The EU against the Nation: The National-Republican/ Sovereigntist Motif*

The *national-republican or sovereigntist motif* represented only a continuous side-current of the discourse but was also the background for implicit references to other motifs, such as the threat to the *services publiques*. It was advocated both by members of the national-republican current close to the PS, such as Jean Luc Mélenchon and Jean-Pierre Chevènement, and by the remaining intra-party opponents of the bourgeois right, such as Philippe Dupont-Aignan, and finally the extreme right. They all opposed the Constitutional Treaty with classical motifs of French national identity: it contradicted the ideal of the unified and *indivisible* nation (*la nation une et indivisible*), which is the heart of the republic as well as the indivisible sovereign.

The national-republican motif thus constructed *France, its nation, and its republican values as “the self”*, while *the EU was “the other”*, which – in the harshest variant of the argument – contradicted everything that defined “the self”.

Right-wing extremists and nationalists as well as (left-wing) republicans all used this motif, but usually combined it differently. Moreover, the left-wing and the extreme right-wing arguments diametrically opposed each other in some other respects. In this way, the national-republican or sovereigntist motif can be found in different variants.

On the part of the FN, the *national-republican or sovereigntist motif* was argued in a right-wing nationalist way and combined with the motif of a “slap on the wrist” vote. The FN used other motifs of the left, such as criticism of the Services Directive, supplemented by other right-wing (such as opposition to Turkey’s accession) and extreme right-wing motifs. The FN also argued xenophobically, appealed to the role of the nation in a nationalist sense and to Joan of Arc, whom it chose as its symbolic figure, claiming to fight with “*Jeanne, who said No*” (LF 290405_7).

The Gaullist minority representatives emphasised the tradition of de Gaulle, their opposition to Turkey’s accession, and a Europe of nation states (LM 110305).

Finally, the left-sovereigntists such as Jean-Pierre Chevènement tended to emphasise a republican “No” and central elements of the French concept of the republic, as well as central motifs of the *Non de Gauche* (LF 220305_18). Chevènement was controversial in the *Non de Gauche* as a result of such arguments (L 070305_5). However, this opposition between Chevènement and the rest of the

Non de Gauche seems partly constructed, because the anti-liberal argumentation of the left, as described, was recognisably based on classic left republican motifs. The *services publiques*, the right to abortion, and *laïcité* were vehemently defended and assumed to be universally valid, or they were not relativised with a view to the fact that other states in the EU might have different political cultures. Even when the representatives of the *Non de Gauche* emphatically appealed to “*le peuple*”, when they invoked the republican concept of democracy and emphasised France’s pioneering role – this time in the fight against “ultra-liberal” Brussels – they appealed to classical republican motifs.

4.2.5 *Shared Motifs, Arguments, and References – What Did Both Sides Do?*

Various arguments and motifs were ultimately used by opponents as well as supporters of the TCE. These included, on the one hand, the defence of certain core elements of the French concept of the republic, as expressed in the cross-party and cross-camp opposition to the Services Directive, and, on the other hand, attacks on opponents within the discourse.

4.2.5.1 *Defence of the Concept of the Republic*

The *services publiques* or protection against wage dumping were addressed across party lines, with France emphasised as being on the right side of the conflict between economic liberalism and social protection. Jacques Chirac often recurred to this argument (LF 240305_17).

Criticism of the Services Directive, however, was presented by opponents and supporters of the TCE in different or opposing lines of argument. The supporters of the TCE argued: *the draft Services Directive is unacceptable from the French point of view – that is why France must take action against it – the Commission has put it on hold or held out the prospect of revisions – that is a success – and (a) those who do not want the Services Directive, (b) those who want Social Europe, and (c) those who want more say for the member states must vote for the TCE*. The arguments were again differentiated according to the political camps. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, for example, emphasised parts (a) and (b) of the argument (L 160305_12). Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, former French President and Chair of the EU Constitutional Convention, like most representatives of the government camp emphasised part (c) (LF 250305_11).

The “No” side’s argumentation against this was combined with a criticism of the supporters of the TCE and read: *the Services Directive and the TCE are two sides of the same coin – even worse: behind the Services Directive is the TCE – the “Yes” camp has jumped on the bandwagon of the protests for purely opportunistic reasons – as is well known, they are all in cahoots – Brussels is only putting the Services Directive on hold until after the referendum – nothing will be changed – and Chirac and his allies from the PS know this too* (H 030305_3). The right-wing sovereigntist opponents of the TCE used the same chain of arguments as the left-wing opponents (LF 160305_6).

The debate on the Services Directive thus shows the strength and successful strategy of the anti-liberal argumentation and, at the same time, a central weakness of the proponents:

- 1 Central motifs of the opponents of the TCE were regularly and explicitly taken up by the supporters in a differentiating manner – opposition to the project of the Services Directive and to an “ultra-liberalism” of the EU.
- 2 This, and also the fact that Chirac wanted to stop the directive in the European Council, strengthened the opponents of the TCE, because it appeared as a confirmation of their argumentation.
- 3 The opponents of the TCE had so successfully established the link between the TCE – “ultra-liberalism” – and “*directive Bolkestein*” that the supporters had no chance of changing the argument with their defensive strategy.
- 4 The opponents of the TCE were able to successfully present the EC’s retreat as an (insufficient) concession that showed just how justified their fight against the TCE and the “ultra-liberal” EU was.
- 5 It contributed to the assertion of the left arguments that the TCE proponents often argued in purely defensive terms.
- 6 The unity in opposition to the Services Directive is an indicator of the broad consensus on a state-interventionist French social model and the republican idea of the state – which the left opponents were able to exploit for themselves because they had managed to combine opposition to the Services Directive with the issues of the *Non de Gauche*.

Overall, the debate on the Services Directive thus highlighted a dilemma for the proponents, particularly on the part of the PS:

The supporters followed the motifs of the *Non de Gauche* in parts, but spoke against it in others. But since all camps agreed that the Services Directive was to be rejected, and since the arguments also referred to left republican traditions, the other critical arguments of the *Non de Gauche* now sounded more convincing.

4.2.5.2 Attacks on the Opponents in the Discourse

Another motif used by both TCE supporters and opponents was the targeted *addressing of the opponents’ arguments* and, above all, the targeted *weakening of the respective opponents*.

The former was usually very factual. Both defenders and opponents posited that certain arguments were wrong, and this was followed by a justification (LF 290405_13; H 110405_5). The targeted attacks on the respective opponents, on the other hand, were much more aggressive and polemical (LM 130405_15). Representatives of the “Yes” camp also often personally attacked opponents or disqualified them politically. The fact that extreme left and extreme right opponents were united in their rejection of the TCE often played a role (LM 010405_7). While the “No” advocates described the representatives of the major parties as arrogant or even corrupt, the latter conversely accused the opponents of being liars, such as Nicolas Sarkozy who plainly claimed that “ATTAC lies” (LF 050505_17). The attacks reached their zenith when the opponents compared each other to right-wing extremists or Nazi collaborators (L 090405_10). The government camp also used Le Pen comparisons (LF 070405_9; LM 270405_6). The left-wing opponents reacted to this by accusing the supporters’ camp of valorising Le Pen (H 290405_7).

Proponents and opponents of the TCE finally appealed to the voters. The supporters of the TCE – both from the government camp and from the PS – argued that the *French know the importance of the event – (a) they will therefore decide correctly – (b) they will therefore not make a historical mistake* (LF 180505_8; LF 040505_11).

The “No” camp argued as follows: *people have understood the importance of the question – they see how important it is to say “No” now – because enough is enough – they will do what is necessary*. This argument came from both the far left and the far right (LF 110405_3; H 310105_6).

4.2.5.3 *Why Did the “No” Arguments Prevail?*

Overall, in terms of the course of the discourse as well as the development of motifs and arguments, the adversary references of both camps should be evaluated differently.

In the “Yes” camp, they mainly revealed its weakness: there were many reactions to the opponents, and their issues and motifs were taken up, while their own arguments remained weak. These were signs of the agenda-setting function of the “No” camp. Only in April, the one month in which the “Yes” camp asserted its own arguments to any appreciable extent, were there also just as many reactions in the “No” camp. The intensity of the reactions to each opponent obviously varied depending on the strength of the respective opponents and their arguments.

Having said this, it can be concluded that the arguments of the opponents of the TCE were able to prevail in the discourse for various reasons:

- 1 They used the French tradition of *protesting* those in power or “those up there”.
- 2 With the *anti-liberal motif* and its link to the social protests, the left opponents were able to successfully occupy the issue that had proved to be decisive in almost all election campaigns of recent years: the social situation. In this way, the *Non de Gauche* succeeded in linking classic left-wing arguments, social protests, and the resistance to the Constitutional Treaty.
- 3 From March onwards, the opponents of the TCE had successfully established their chain of argumentation: *social ills and ultra-liberalism are caused by (a) the government, (b) the EU, and (c) all those who support the “Yes”*. This line of argumentation allowed for various reasons to advocate the “No” vote: out of opposition to neoliberalism, out of opposition to the EU in its current form, or to make the referendum a protest vote against the government. Once this argumentation was established, the message of the left supporters and the PS leadership, “*L’Europe sociale passe par le oui*” (Social Europe needs a “Yes”), was no longer convincing.
- 4 From March onwards, the *dynamics of the discourse* created in this way worked in favour of the opponents of the TCE. Every current social issue and every criticism of the government was now linked to the referendum – even from the right.
- 5 Added to this was the *weakness of the “Yes” camp*: it used few substantive arguments of its own, often only reacted to criticism, and was divided. Its contentless meta-arguments also tended to reinforce the impression of arrogance.
- 6 On top of all this, all the supporters, even the right-wing ones, took up the *topics of the “No” camp*, like Sarkozy and Bayrou with their opposition to Turkey’s accession. This showed an ambivalent attitude and no open or clear support. While the *Non de Gauche* message was clear and simple, the “Yes” camp had many different messages, all ambivalent.
- 7 It was striking that arguments on policy substance and political alternatives were apparently less decisive than *clear exaggerations*: the central goal of the “No” camp was not to present political alternatives, but to “be against” – to put it bluntly: it was about clear and simple opposition, not about complicated alternatives.

4.3 Concluding Considerations on the Case of France

4.3.1 Conclusion on the Research Questions

In the following, the conclusions on the main research question and on the further research questions are drawn for the French EU discourse in 2005.

Regarding the main research question – *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as media for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?* – it can be stated:

There was an *intensive discourse and numerous attributions of meaning* to the EU in France in 2005 – in this respect, the French discourse could have acted as a means for the construction of European identity.

However, the *demarcating attributions* that constructed an explicit or implicit opposition between France and the EU *as a polity* prevailed in the discourse.

Such a *demarcation from the EU as a polity* is to be distinguished from a politically substantive critique of certain policy decisions with fundamental support for belonging to the polity because it constructs *non-belonging*.

Thus, the French discourse as a whole contributed to the construction of a *dichotomy* in which France appeared as “the self” or “us” and the EU and other member states as “the other”.

In this way, it ultimately counteracted the construction of a European identity as a difference-affirming multi-level identity: in the discourse on Europe in 2005, a *competitive model of identities* prevailed, above all, with the help of the anti-liberal motif.

The French discourse is to be evaluated ambivalently regarding research question 2 on the construction of references to the self-definition of a European demos, i.e., different partial results emerge. With regard to sub-questions 2 and 3 – *Are references to the formation of EU-related democratic practice recognisable in the discourses? How are the discourses themselves to be evaluated with regard to this normative premise: Are they themselves democratic practice?* – the French case, as already stated in [Section 4.1](#), can be assessed very positively, on the one hand.

There were *references to the emergence of EU-related democratic practice*, and the intense debate on the TCE and the EU, the intensive civil society activities, the discussions, protests, information, and debate events can clearly be described as EU-related democratic practice.

The result is ambivalent in that the dominant contents of these civil society activities tended not to support an EU-related, positive self-definition of French citizens for two reasons:

The attributions to the EU and the associated references to the role of citizens tended to be of a negative and delimiting nature and thus implicitly or sometimes even explicitly constructed an opposition between the *French* demos and the EU.

The first sub-question of research question 2 – *In what respect and to what extent can national EU discourses contribute to generating such a self-definition of the demos?* – must therefore be answered ambivalently:

Although the national EU discourse brought about intense EU-related activities among citizens, the attributions that prevailed were more likely to prevent French citizens from identifying with the EU.

The situation was different with a potential horizontal identification, i.e., from French citizens to citizens of other member states. Here, recognisable positive references were constructed in the discourse, whereby the French activists, however, constructed themselves as champions for the citizens of other member states, thus in turn distinguishing themselves from them.

In research question 3, sub-question 1 was: *What references between different polity levels and aspects of identity, in particular between national and European identity, are constructed in the discourse?*

Basically, there was *no self-evident multi-level reference* in France as there was in Germany. Although the EU and its member states were increasingly referred to in the discourse, both were presented in a distanced manner as *foreign countries*. Only a few positive, many ambivalent, and above all delimiting references were constructed to the EU. This worked against the goal of a difference-affirming multi-level identity.

The further sub-questions were: 2. *Are there references to shared political-democratic meanings?* 3. *To what extent can national EU discourses contribute to citizens sharing them?* The following conclusion can be drawn:

There were numerous *references to political-democratic meanings* – not, however, to Europe-wide *meanings*, but to meanings that solely originated in French political culture. This, too, runs counter to the goal of a difference-affirming European identity as it constructs not a link to the EU, but to France.

However, the evaluation has produced numerous indications that *the discourse contributed to citizens sharing the disseminated substantive political attributions of meaning*. Potentially, therefore, a discourse that disseminates positive, EU-related substantive political attributions of meaning could also have this effect.

Furthermore, it has to be said that

The attributions of the meaning of the French discourse had a relatively clear effect on a competition model of European and national identity. But there were a number of indicators that support the context model, too. They indicate that the tendential demarcation between national and European identity that prevailed in the discourse was essentially due to context-specific factors.

Regarding question 4 – *what meanings are attributed to the EU in discourses, and what factors shape these attributions?* – it can be stated to the sub-questions 2 (*What meanings is the EU discursively loaded with and why does this happen?*) and 3 (*Which meanings prevail? Why?*).

In the French discourse, the EU was virtually overloaded by *opponents* with simple or exaggerated negative meanings.

On the part of the *supporters*, on the other hand, the attributions of meaning to the EU were rather complex and contradictory, as well as rather vague and abstract.

This constellation, as well as the successful linkage with the social protests and the left-right conflict, helped ensure that *the constructions of the TCE opponents were more likely to prevail in the discourse.*

Also, the ambivalences of the supporters, their disagreement, and their adoption of the critical arguments strengthened the “No” camp, which successfully used practices of protest movements.

In the end, the message of *Non de Gauche* was able to prevail so well because it succeeded in marginalising other issues and because positive or relativising arguments were ignored and defined away in the opponents’ arguments in favour of the treaty.

Regarding sub-question 4 – *Is there recourse to (1) specific historical and factual circumstances, (2) stereotypes, (3) discursive demarcations to the outside (and if so, what is the outside), (4) founding myths, (5) compatibility with central social codes, (6) fears and emotions, (7) certain media of penetration, (8) practices and symbols?* – it can be noted that the following elements played out in the attributions of meaning:

- 1 The *context areas* described were visibly mentioned with reference to specific historical circumstances, namely: the changes in the state apparatus induced by Europeanisation were explicitly and successfully addressed,

above all the (potential) weakening of the *services publiques*, but also the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. The discourse was also strongly shaped by successful motifs of previous *political campaigns (le social)* and the *divisions in the party system*. *Central motifs of national identity narratives* also had an impact – motifs and references stemming from left republicanism, in particular, played a significant role (*services publiques, laïcité, souveraineté nationale*).

- 2 *Stereotypes* from established left or protest-oriented discourses were mainly used for demarcation, such as *pensée unique, ultralibéralisme, délocalisations*, and the opposition people/elites. However, new stereotypes were also successfully formed, especially *Bolkestein = Frankenstein*, and also *EU = ultralibéralisme*.
- 3 *External demarcations* were also used extensively, both directly and indirectly. Thus, a contrast between the French social model and the EU or “ultra-liberalism” was constructed directly and indirectly. *Internal demarcations* such as the left-right dichotomy were systematically linked to external demarcations.
- 4 *EU founding myths* were actively addressed, especially by the proponents. However, this happened rather rarely, and the founding myths also proved to be much less effective than the conflictual constructions.
- 5 In the earlier French elite EU discourses, targeted attempts had been made to establish compatibility with central *societal codes*. In the 2005 referendum discourse, the proponents also tried to do this, but their constructions were too weak, too ambivalent, and too unassertive vis-à-vis the protest motifs to be successful.
- 6 *References to fears* were regularly made, in particular to the fear of social decline or social cuts – i.e., to the fear that most preoccupied the French at the beginning of 2005. At times, the supporters tried to defuse these fears or refute their reasons.
- 7 In terms of saturation via *media and written language*, a central role of alternative forms of dissemination (internet, leaflets, word of mouth) can be seen among the opponents.
- 8 The linking to effective *practices* (demonstrations, French “protest culture”) as well as to *symbols* or the creation of symbols (Bolkestein) recognisably contributed to certain discursive strands and motifs being effective.

Regarding research question 7 – *Are the discourses studied open or closed? Which contextual factors affect the discourses and how?* – it showed that in the French discourse, numerous references to national contextual factors were specifically activated, while other contextual factors had an implicit effect. The constructions of meaning were thus shaped by various contextual factors:

- 1 *Political system*: The changes in the state apparatus induced by Europeanisation, above all the (potential) weakening of the *services publiques*, and also the privatisation of state-owned enterprises and the introduction of the Euro were explicitly and successfully addressed.

The discourse was also strongly shaped by successful motifs of previous *political campaigns (le social)* and the *divisions in the party system* due to the positioning on European integration, as well as the strategic interests of the discursive actors in dealing with it. The classic right-left split in the party system also had a strong formative effect.

- 2 *The attitudes of citizens as recipients and (3) the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion*: Both contextual factors also had a strong formative effect – specifically through references to social protests, dissatisfaction with the government, criticism of liberalism, criticism of globalisation, as well as current topics of EU politics with a national reference.
- 3 *Central motifs of national identity narratives*: These also had an impact – motifs and references stemming from left republicanism in particular played a significant role (*services publiques, laïcité, souveraineté nationale*).
- 4 *References to previous discourses on Europe*: These were conspicuously less effective.

All in all, the EU was very clearly and recognisably used as a *black box* in the French discourse:

Various, often competing ascriptions of meaning were associated with it, and it was possible to successfully link a strongly negative and delimiting ascription – the EU as the embodiment of “ultra-liberalism” – with it.

4.3.2 *Concluding Considerations on the French Case*

In the concluding consideration of the French discourse on Europe in 2005, the following findings emerge. In the 2005 referendum discourse, opposing elite discourses whose conflicts had been latent found a space for enacting their conflicts.

In the French discourse, numerous conflicts and positions critical of the EU were activated that had not previously found an organised space for presentation; be it those of Jean-Pierre Chevènement, ATTAC, the PCF, or the

minority representatives within the PS and Greens, be it those of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Philippe de Villiers, or the criticisms of the majority representatives of the UMP and PS.

These conflicts, as described above, had a longer prehistory; in particular, the motif of extending France's mission to the EU, which was shaped by Mitterrand, and thus breaking with an opposition between France and the EU, could never fully assert itself among the political elite. In the 2005 referendum discourse, old conflicts came to the surface. The EU government discourse, largely hegemonic since the Maastricht discourse, was challenged by activating lines of conflict that had existed since the start of integration and by adding newer political developments and movements critical of the EU.

In the discourse, a contrast was constructed between national interests or French political culture and the current priorities of European integration in almost all contributions by right-wing and left-wing opponents of the referendum, and this had an impact on the referendum discourse and on voter decisions. It thus seems as if the opponents had taken advantage of the fact that, when in doubt, national patterns of identification take precedence over European patterns of integration when the two are set against each other.

However, the opposition between national and European interests appeared mainly implicitly in a wide variety of arguments: there was a whole range of motifs that referred to French political culture and France's national identity, and which were set against the EU in the discourse.

Moreover, it was visible that socio-economic conditions and the party-political conflict lines influenced the discourse as well as voting intentions as expressed in the polls. Several factors were at work:

1 *The disunity of the political elites and the major parties:*

The *internal division within the PS* can be seen as decisive for several reasons: with Laurent Fabius and Henri Emmanuelli, it had prominent opponents in its own ranks, the dispute with the party's own camp of supporters was fought out intensively in public, and in the end, it was the potential PS voters who produced the decisive votes for "No".

The role of the intra-party opponents in the PS and the Greens was only possible because the French party system was organised in a very

personal way. While in Germany a person like Laurent Fabius – a deputy national party leader who did not bow to a clear majority vote of the party, but openly opposed it – would have had to face the most severe sanctions, up to and including expulsion from the party, in France his opposition remained without internal party consequences. The strong right-left conflict in France further weakened the “Yes” camp.

- 2 The quotes and reflections above have made it clear that *the bad economic situation* played a role in the discourse and the outcome of the referendum.

However, it was not so much the poor economic situation as unemployment and social discontent that were discursively linked to the Constitutional Treaty and served as reasons for voting against it. The connection of the social situation with the referendum was made explicit in almost all comments and reports.

- 3 *Concrete fears* of the French population influenced the discourse and outcome of the referendum, as evidenced by the comments and quotations made earlier.
- 4 *The basic constellation of the political system and basic motifs of the political culture* shaped the discourse.

Not only did the divisions induced by positions on European integration have an impact on the party system, but the strategic interests of the political actors involved in the discourse also shaped the discourse. This discourse also referred to topics and motifs that had recurred in all election campaigns since 1995 and had often been decisive. Thus, in 2005, the motifs that decided the vote were very similar to those in 1995, 1997, and 2002: unemployment, social security, inequality, and education. This was one aspect in which the discourse referred to previous discourses – another was the reference to motifs and conflicts that had been shaped in the Maastricht discourse in 1992.

- 5 The *attitudes of the citizens as recipients* also played a role.

A discursive connection between the domestic political constellation, the course of the discourse, and the voting decision became visible: this was the dissatisfaction with the government, which reached a record high in the period before the referendum. It was a regular topic in the discourse and related to both the “slap on the wrist” motif and the motif of division between those in power and the people.

Last but not least, certain stereotypes in the sense of discursively constructed sets of meaning attributions played a role in the central argumentation figures of the referendum opponents and supporters. Attempts were made to fall back on – possibly older – auto- and heterostereotypes or on discursive patterns in which France’s autostereotype justified a distancing within the EEC/EC/EU.

While the supporters tried to make France and the EU appear as parts of a common autostereotype, or as “the self”, the opponents used explicit or implicit constructions of opposites. These not only juxtaposed France and the EU but also associated other classic oppositions of French political culture with them.

The *central opposition* in the referendum discourse was the one between a *just and social France* and its social achievements as the “self”, and “*ultra-liberalism*” and its multiple harmful and threatening effects, which was embodied by the EU and represented the “other”.

This is a new auto- and heterostereotype critical of economic liberalism: France versus EU/“ultra-liberalism”. More sovereigntist auto- and heterostereotypes used by the right had far less significance than in the Maastricht discourse.

Finally, it needs to be underlined that the level of information of the French population did not play decisive in the outcome of both referendum and discourse.

Not only was there a very broad and intensive discourse – 6358 articles in four national quality newspapers represent only a sample of a discourse that was also conducted on television, on the internet, in all the local dailies, in weekly newspapers and books, and last but not least in public meetings, demonstrations, and discussions, as well as in a wide variety of debates in the private sphere. The draft treaty was sent to all households, and non-fiction books on the subject were sold at record levels. Finally, a clear indicator of the intensity of the discourse is that within six months European integration, which had previously been a marginal issue for the French, became a central subject of debate (see [Section 8.2](#)).

Note

- 1 At this point, I owe insightful additions to my reflections on the French party system to an expert discussion with Florence Haegel from CEVIPOF in June 2007.

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5 Germany

The Discourse

The study of the German discourse also follows the three guiding questions of the discourse analysis: (1) *What* happens in the discourse? (contents), (2) *How* is meaning constructed in the discourse? (references), and (3) *Why*? (reasons). The following results are also based on the *eight analytical dimensions* of discourse: (1) *course* (the course of the discourse with regard to topics, number of contributions/intensity, essential events), (2) *actors* (persons or institutional actors who shape the discourse), (3) *rules* (structure the course of the discourse and the sayability of statements), (4) *reference levels* (political levels or substantive areas to which the discourse refers), (5) *topic areas* (topic areas referred to in the discourse), (6) *motifs* (typical attributions of meaning for properties and motives for action), (7) *arguments* (typical processes of meaning attribution, argumentation processes), and (8) *references* (relations between motifs, topic areas, reference levels, rules, actors, or contextual factors that are constructed in the discourse). The German case is analysed for these dimensions in two sections; [Section 5.1](#) deals with the *course*, *actors*, *topic areas*, *reference levels*, and *rules* of the discourse and [Section 5.2](#) the *motifs*, *arguments*, and *references* of the discourse. In [Section 5.3](#), a conclusion is drawn on the case of Germany.

The following explanations are based on the evaluation and analysis of the German text corpus of 1787 articles, as described in [Section 3.2.3](#). The results represent the main findings, and references to exemplary parts of the material are indicated. The four newspapers studied are abbreviated in the references: FAZ stands for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, SZ for the Süddeutsche Zeitung, taz for the taz, and ND for Neues Deutschland. In addition, the date of publication is given, and a numerical reference indicates which article of the day the citation is. This results in references of the following type: ND 230305_2.

5.1 Course, Actors, and Rules of the Discourse

The course, actors, and rules of the discourse concern all three of the aforementioned guiding questions of a discourse analysis – *What happened in the discourse? How was meaning constructed? And why did certain developments occur?* I will first discuss these aspects in the context of an overview of the discourse, focusing on course and topics. I will then once again separately consider the levels of reference as well as the actors and rules of the discourse.

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5.1.1 *Course of the Discourse, Development of Contributions, and Significant Events*

The German discourse was not continuous until May 2005, but rather consisted of various shorter individual discourses. These arose from occasional domestic debates and hardly spread through all four newspapers studied.

The German discourse during this period was shaped by its *openness to the outside world*, namely, reports on *France* and its discourse, the *EU*, and developments in *other EU member states*. The fact that other EU member states and especially neighbouring France were debating the Constitutional Treaty was reason enough to continuously follow these discourses.

Thus, the intensity of the German discourse was generally low; only 1787 articles on the topics of the Constitutional Treaty and the referendum appeared during the period of observation. Comparison to the French discourse with its 6358 articles documents a lower intensity.

The *low intensity* of the domestic German EU discourse is surprising according to the research assumptions and the explanations on the German elite consensus on European integration: these would have predicted that the pro-European German politicians actively supported and discussed the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, which, moreover, had been initiated by the incumbent Foreign Minister Fischer.

[Table 5.1](#) provides an overview of the important events in the German discourse. As the overview of the course of the German discourse will show, it followed the French discourse and its main events to a large extent. A discussion related to events in Germany proper was rare. Overall, the distribution of the topics in the German discourse is as follows:

The overview illustrates a turning point at the end of May regarding the newspapers' choice of topics.

Until May 2005, a common focus existed only in the topic areas related to the significant *openness and EU-relatedness* of the German discourse: *France, foreign countries* (though the discourse in France was followed much more closely and in more detail than that in the Netherlands), and *EU* in March.

It was only from May onwards that a clearly recognisable common focus developed, including in relation to German domestic events and issues,

which arose from the main events of the German ratification process, the *votes in the two parliamentary chambers Bundestag and Bundesrat*.

From the end of May 2005, a common focus emerged on two new EU-related issues: the *future of the EU* and *the role of citizens* in it. By June, it was accordingly apparent that these EU-related issues dominated over the other areas.

Table 5.1 Important events in the German discourse

6–8 January 2005	CSU retreat in Kreuth and internal CSU debate
12 January 2005	EP vote on TCE
18 February 2005	Start of the ratification procedure in the Federal Council
21 February 2005	Approving result of the TCE referendum in Spain
24 February 2005	First reading of the TCE Act in the Bundestag
16 March 2005	European Committee of the Bundestag discusses TCE
19 March 2005	Demonstration against the Services Directive in Brussels
22–23 March 2005	European Council, debate on draft Services Directive
28 March 2005	Easter marchers protest throughout Germany against the EU “military constitution”
21 April 2005	Peter Gauweiler announces emergency appeal to the Federal Constitutional Court (BVG)
28 April 2005	The Federal Constitutional Court rejects Gauweiler’s application
28 April 2005	Cessions by the Chancellor to the Bundesrat (Stoiber: not sufficient)
6 May 2005	Debate between Foreign Minister Fischer and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>
8 May 2005	Leadership of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group puts public pressure on minority representatives
12 May 2005	The Bundestag approves the ratification law for the Constitutional Treaty
13 May 2005	Gauweiler announces constitutional complaint if Bundesrat approves ratification
19 May 2005	Schröder, Kwasniekowski, and Chirac promote the TCE in Nancy
22 May 2005	The SPD loses the North-Rhine-Westphalia elections. Chancellor Schröder then announces new federal elections
24 May 2005	Dispute in the Schwerin State Cabinet over voting behaviour in the Bundesrat (chamber of federal states)
27 May 2005	The Bundesrat approves ratification
29 May 2005	French referendum results in a “No” vote
1 June 2005	Dutch referendum results in a “No” vote
3 June 2005	Edmund Stoiber blames Schröder’s Turkey policy for the failure of the referenda
4 June 2005	Meeting Schröder/Chirac
6 June 2005	The British government suspends preparations for a referendum
10 June 2005	Second meeting Schröder/Chirac
15 June 2005	Federal President Köhler does not want to sign the approval act until the BVG has made its decision
16–17 June 2005	European Council in Brussels

Source: Own Representation.

There were only two important events in *January*. The retreat of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) parliamentary group in Wildbad Kreuth from 6 to 8 January, and the European Parliament's vote on the Constitutional Treaty on 12 January. The EP vote was covered much more extensively in the German press than in the French, which already indicates that the German discourse was more Europeanised than the French.

In *January*, a total of only 128 articles appeared in the four newspapers studied.

In Kreuth, about 20 CSU members of the federal parliament (Bundestag) spoke out against the Constitutional Treaty and for more powers for the Bundestag in European affairs. They signed a declaration to this effect and a list of demands and threatened to vote "No" in the Bundestag vote on the TCE (see below). In addition, there was criticism from across the CSU of Turkey's potential accession to the EU. Subsequently, other politicians from the CSU and its sister party CDU (Christian Democrat Union) reacted with appeasement and downplayed the extent of the criticism. CDU and CSU traditionally form a joint parliamentary group in the Bundestag, with CSU representing only Bavaria and CDU the rest of Germany.

This strategy, hereafter referred to as the *silencing strategy*, is a central rule of German discourse and is considered in detail below.

The newspapers studied showed clear differences in their reporting on these topics. All four addressed the vote in the EP; the SZ, FAZ, and taz, however, had a positive tenor, while ND used the occasion to criticise the TCE, to criticise the EU, and to report on the activities of the opponents of the treaty. All newspapers except the ND, which already showed its special role here, also discussed the CSU demands in detail, as well as the preparation of the referendum and the ratification process in France. The ND and taz were the only ones to report in January on the central motif of German criticism of the Constitutional Treaty: the accusation that it would lead to a militarisation of the EU or even be a military constitution. The SZ and FAZ did not yet take up this topic.

In *February*, the central events were the Spanish EU referendum on 21 February and the first reading of the act approving the TCE in the federal state chamber, the Bundesrat, on 18 February and in the Bundestag on 24 February. The Spanish referendum was followed very closely in reporting as well as in commentaries and analyses. In Spain, German politicians also intervened personally for the first time. For example, Chancellor Schröder appeared with the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero. The start of the German ratification process, with the first reading in the Bundesrat on 18 February and in the Bundestag on 24 February, on the other hand, was dispassionate and factual (see below).

The newspapers studied continued to show different emphases in their reporting – the only uniform *topics* were the development of ratification and the discourse in France, which was covered more and more, the Spanish referendum, and the first reading of the law approving the TCE in the Bundestag and Bundesrat. The FAZ, SZ, and taz continued to report on the CSU demands; the taz, ND, and now also SZ reported on the question of militarisation. The SZ newly emphasised factual contributions and analyses on the TCE and its ratification. The ND continued to take a critical role and now covered the motifs of the *Non de Gauche*, especially on the issue of liberalism/neoliberalism/anti-liberalism. It also criticised the ratification process in Germany. In the ND, analyses and commentaries were almost exclusively by opponents.

In *February*, the discourse did not significantly increase in intensity: there were only 135 contributions in total in the four newspapers studied.

There were four important events in *March*. The deliberations on the TCE law in the European Committee of the Bundestag on 16 March, the Europe-wide demonstration against the EU Services Directive in Brussels on 19 March, the European Council in Brussels on 22 and 23 March, and the Easter marches on 28 March, when protests against “militarisation and military constitution of the EU” were held all over Germany.

The intensity of the German discourse now slowly increased: 157 articles were recorded for *March*.

In March, for the first time, several common topics appeared in the four newspapers. All reported on the Easter marches, the European Council, the debate on the Services Directive, developments in France, and developments in other European countries, although with different perspectives and questions depending on their orientation. There were also still differences in the choice of topics. The ND and taz focused on the incipient coalition dispute on the TCE between the PDS and SPD in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin (see below). Both also took up the issues of the *Non de Gauche*, but with different perspectives. The taz mostly criticised the arguments of the left-leaning French opponents, with the exception of the articles in the supplement *le monde diplomatique*, which were taken directly from France. In the taz, as in the SZ and FAZ, there was now a growing number of contributions from supporters and opponents of the treaty from Germany and the EU, while the ND emphasised opinion pieces solely from the treaty opponents. The SZ continued to publish numerous factual contributions and analyses.

In *April*, CSU member of the Bundestag Peter Gauweiler was the source of two central events of the discourse. On 21 April, he announced in a letter to Bundestag President Thierse that he would file an emergency motion before the Federal

Constitutional Court (BVG) to have it refuse to allow the Bundestag to approve the Constitutional Treaty, and on 28 April, the court rejected this motion. On 28 April, the concessions that Chancellor Schröder wanted to make to the federal states with regard to their European policy competences were also released.

In April, the newspapers continued to show similarities in their choice of topics. The discourse increasingly showed its proxy character. All four newspapers continued to report, with increasing intensity, on the development of the discourse and the ratification process in France, as well as on the ratification process in other European countries. All four also reported on Gauweiler's intervention and the reaction of the Federal Constitutional Court, but only in short articles (see below). Opinion pieces now also played a growing role in all the newspapers studied, although in the ND it was still almost exclusively opponents who had their say. Factual contributions on the treaty and the ratification process were now also found in all newspapers except the ND, with reports on the Red-Red coalition disputes in all except the FAZ. Beyond that, the differing emphases in reporting remained. The ND continued to focus on criticism of the treaty, the taz continued to critically address the issues of the *Non de Gauche*, and the SZ began to do so as well. The SZ and FAZ were the only ones to continue reporting on the CSU demands, and only the FAZ reported on the reactions of the financial markets to the ratification process.

The discourse noticeably increased in intensity for the first time in *April*: a total of 272 articles were collected.

In *May*, there was an accumulation of events important for the discourse. On 6 May, the SZ published an argument between Foreign Minister Fischer and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the French PS minority representative and protagonist of the *Non de Gauche*. From 8 May, the leadership of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group put pressure on the potential minority representatives in their own ranks in the press. On 12 May, the Bundestag approved the ratification law for the Constitutional Treaty by a large majority (23 “no” votes, 20 of which came from the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, two from the PDS, and one from the independent MP Martin Hohmann; Deutscher Bundestag 2005: 16386). Shortly before, the chancellor had agreed to further concessions to the opposition (the Bundestag received even more powers of participation). On 13 May, Peter Gauweiler announced a constitutional challenge to the TCE if the Bundesrat were also to approve ratification on 27 May. On 19 May, Chancellor Schröder, Polish Prime Minister Kwasniewski, and French President Chirac appeared together in Nantes to promote the TCE. On 22 May, the SPD lost the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia and Chancellor Schröder then announced new federal elections. On 24 May, the dispute escalated in the state cabinet in Schwerin; Minister-President Ringstorff threatened to approve the Constitutional Treaty in the Bundesrat, even against the will of the coalition partner PDS if necessary. On 27 May, the Bundesrat also approved ratification (with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ultimately abstaining), and on 29 May, the French

referendum resulted in a “No” vote. This event marks the quantitative peak of the German discourse.

May was also the month with the most articles in Germany. There was a significant quantitative jump to a total of 827 articles.

The convergence was now very clear in the choice of *topics* of the newspapers studied: all reported intensively on France and the French discourse, the Netherlands, interventions by German and foreign politicians, the debates and votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat, and Gauweiler’s lawsuit. All four now also emphasised opinion pieces and analyses on the TCE and the development of the discourse. However, the differing emphases remained visible: the ND concentrated on critical contributions, gave opponents a forum, and took up the criticism of the French *Non de Gauche*. It also reported intensively on the conflict between the PDS and the SPD in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where the PDS prevailed. The taz continued to critically discuss the arguments of the *Non de Gauche* and also reported on the conflicts between the PDS and SPD, but with a stronger focus on Berlin, where the PDS had conceded. The FAZ and SZ again reported on the negotiations on the CSU demands and, in this context, once again addressed – for the first time since February – the question of Turkey’s accession. The FAZ also continued to report on the reactions of the financial markets to the development of the ratification process.

There were significantly fewer defining events in *June* than in May: on 1 June, the Dutch referendum also delivered a “No” result. On 3 June, Edmund Stoiber for the first time blamed Schröder’s Turkey policy for the failure of the referenda. On 4 June and 10 June, Chancellor Schröder and French President Chirac met to discuss the consequences of the negative referenda and the preparation of the European Council on 16 and 17 June. On 6 June, the British Blair government suspended preparations for its referendum. On 15 June, Federal President Köhler announced that he would not issue the act approving the Constitutional Treaty until the Federal Constitutional Court had ruled on the main issue, Gauweiler’s lawsuit. Finally, the European Council met in Brussels on 16–17 June, temporarily suspending the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty, while also failing to reach an agreement on financing of the EU budget. Besides these events, the fundamental debate (“What kind of Europe do we want?”) at the EU level was formative.

The intensity of the German discourse barely abated in *June*. The four newspapers studied still published a total of 542 articles by 25 June.

Figure 5.1 shows the development of the intensity of the German discourse.

The distribution of topics in June illustrates that the German discourse remained intense because it continued to have a common focus. All four newspapers dealt not only with analyses of the French *Non* and the Dutch *Nee* but also with two new questions that arose in response to the negative referenda and the preparation and

Germany - intensity of the discourse

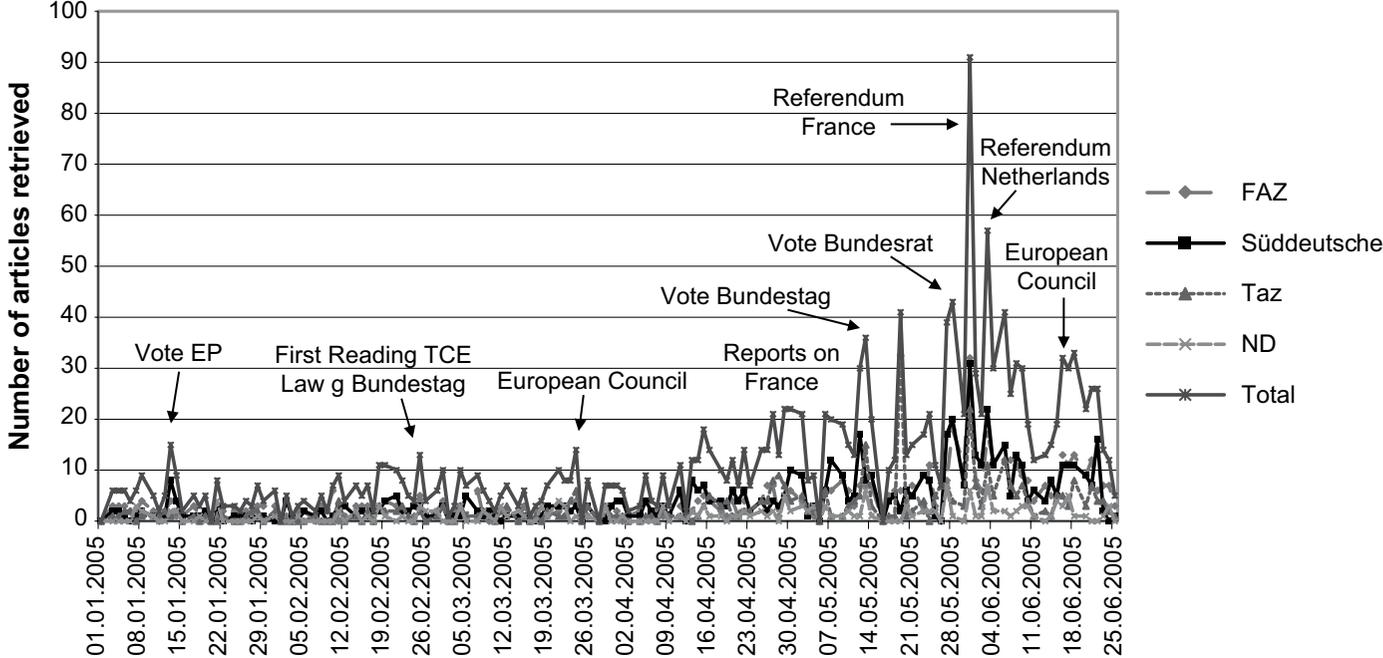


Figure 5.1 The intensity of the German discourse

Source: Own Representation.

debate around the European Council. Firstly, the question or issue of “What kind of Europe do we want?” and, secondly, with the role of citizens in the EU and the changes that were now demanded in this regard by politicians and journalists alike. In the SZ and FAZ, other central topics were Germany’s role in the EU and the debate on Turkey’s accession. The FAZ also continued to focus on the reaction of the financial markets to *Non* and *Nee*.

5.1.1.1 *France and Europe: The Reference Levels of the German Discourse*

The reference levels of the German discourse should be explicitly noted:

The *openness* of the German discourse and its *multi-level references* were decisively characteristic of it.

On the one hand, these were evident in the *references*. In the German discourse, the reference levels of Germany, the EU, and the EU member states were addressed with equal weight in the discursive contributions.

The German discourse was *very open to the outside world and strongly Europeanised*. The intense focus on developments in a special neighbouring country, *France*, was particularly striking. The French discourse acted as an *imported discourse* and *proxy discourse*.

This openness to the outside world contrasts with the largely *quiet internal situation*. Only around the time of the German ratification, in May, did the reference abroad and to the EU level briefly become somewhat less central, with the German votes taking centre stage, but this changed again immediately after the Bundesrat vote.

On the other hand, the openness and the multi-level references were also evident in the way they were presented. France, the other EU member states, and the EU level were presented as *European domestic policy*.

The German discourse was thus highly characterised by its *openness to the outside world*. This can be seen in the references of the important role of events in France and the EU, but also in the way these polities were presented.

From the beginning, *France, the EU, and the other EU member states* were at least equal or even superior to Germany and its domestic policy as reference levels in the German discourse.

The multi-level reference was also clearly recognisable in the style of the presentation. Events in France and at the EU level were received as *European domestic politics*. They were explicitly addressed as problems for Germany as well, or as matters that directly affected Germans, and they were described with a style in which they appeared as quasi-domestic affairs (see below).

Above all, the French discourse was a permanent topic of German discourse – in short: people discussed the TCE in Germany in part because it was being discussed in France and Germans wanted to understand why this was the case.

France was thus a central level of reference as well as a central topic area of the German discourse.

The reference to and reception of the French discourse had a strong formative and structuring function for the course and intensity of the German discourse. The French discourse was a *proxy discourse* for Germany until May, in which criticism of the Constitutional Treaty was received and discussed via the French debate.

The reference to France gradually intensified, in line with the intensification of the French discourse. In January there were hardly any reports, but already conspicuously sceptical analyses on France; in February the central themes of the reports were the demonstrations, the conflicts in the CGT and the PS; in March, the focus was on the effects, arguments, and interventions from France on the draft of the Services Directive – combined with an increasingly worried perspective in almost all newspapers except the ND that the referendum would end negatively (taz 240305_6). In addition, there were comments on French domestic politics (SZ 210305_3). In April, the discursive reference to France intensified once more. There were now many analyses and reports on the ground – people wanted to understand why the French were discussing the issue. The taz, for example, explained the motifs of the *Non de Gauche* (taz 160405_2). In addition, there were now also frequent interventions by German politicians in France (FAZ 130405_3). In May, these interventions by German politicians in the French discourse became more frequent. Some of the government representatives appeared again, in particular the chancellor (SZ 200505_3). However, representatives of the (future) opposition also intervened. The taz explicitly discussed an appearance by Oskar Lafontaine in France as a sign of the German proxy discourse – Lafontaine spoke against the Constitutional Treaty (taz 260505_7).

In May, the newspapers followed the French discourse particularly intensively and in detail. There were also many evaluations that showed indignation about the looming “No” and did not spare criticism of the real or attributed causes.

Sympathies and antipathies for the camps of the French discourse were clearly recognisable in the newspapers studied. They even took implicit or explicit positions on the French arguments, which can be seen as a further indication of the proxy character of the French discourse.

The SZ and FAZ focused on the domestic determinants of the French discourse and an (often editorial) critique of the arguments of the French opponents of the TCE (SZ 270505_6; FAZ 280505_12). The development in France appeared in the German discourse as a problem not only for German politics but also for German citizens (SZ 150405_3). The taz more vigorously discussed the “No” arguments and the protests, but it too commented critically on the *Non de Gauche* overall (taz 120505_2). It is striking that the ND reported very little on France compared to the others – but when it did, it was with obvious sympathies for the *Non de Gauche* and with clearly recognisable reference to its motifs in France (ND 080405_3).

A few German events had the opposite effect on the French discourse. More important than the positive votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat – deliberately planned as interventions – was the defeat of the SPD in North Rhine-Westphalia (SZ 240505_1). As laid out in [Chapter 4](#), the French *Non de Gauche* constructed it as a sign of the coming defeat of the “Yes” Camp.

5.1.1.2 *European Domestic Politics*

Events in other European countries (except France) were also presented as European domestic politics. The results confirm what the references to France already showed:

The German discourse until the end of May was an *imported discourse*. Discussion always rose when there was debate or controversy in other countries, and especially when there was a referendum.

In January and February, developments in Spain, where the first referendum on the TCE was held, were closely followed, and German politicians also intervened in the Spanish referendum debate – the first referendum on the TCE in the EU was clearly of great significance. Appearances abroad were recognisably important for the German discourse. German government representatives participated noticeably more intensively in debates in France, Spain, or at the EU level than in Germany. To put it polemically: until May, if one wanted to hear the opinion of Chancellor Schröder or Foreign Minister Fischer on the TCE, one had to listen to their appearances in other EU member states where there were referenda.

The *openness of German discourse to the outside world* stood in recognisable contrast here to the *silence domestically*.

A major reason for this was the activity of German politicians abroad and at the EU level, as opposed to their inactivity at home.

Chancellor Schröder, for example, did not speak during the first readings of the ratification law in the Bundestag and Bundesrat shortly before or after the Spanish referendum (FAZ 250205_2). In March and April, the reports on other countries contained different and selective references to various EU countries. It was not until May that a common focus was discernible again: the preparations for the Dutch EU referendum (taz 260505_3).

The result of the Dutch referendum was also discussed in the German discourse. Subsequently, there were various contributions on Luxembourg, where the last referendum on the Constitutional Treaty took place on 10 July. The openness of the German discourse and its orientation towards European domestic politics eventually went so far that contributions from other European countries on the referenda in France and the Netherlands were also discussed (SZ 060605_6).

5.1.1.3 *The EU Level and the Fundamental Debate “Which Europe Do We Want?”*

The reference to the *EU level* and EU policy also had a structuring function for the discourse.

Openness, Europeanisation, and close links between the reference levels Germany-EU were also evident here.

The EU level was also presented as *European domestic politics*. Debates and problems at the EU level were, of course, also described as problems of German policy and questions about Germany’s role in the EU and were closely and intensively followed.

In *June*, there was also an intensive debate at the EU level, i.e., among the governments of the Member States and the representatives of the EU institutions, on the future and priorities of European integration, which can be summarised under the guiding question “What kind of Europe do we want?”, the content of which is presented in [Section 5.2](#). This fundamental debate concerned current and future priorities of EU policy and came to a head around the European Council in the conflict between Schröder and Chirac on the one hand and Blair on the other. They engaged in a battle of interpretation over the political role and policy content of the EU at the EU level, which was intensively thematised and followed in Germany as a quasi-individual debate.

The fundamental policy debate was thus a debate at the EU level, which was widely reflected in Germany as European domestic policy and intensively shaped by German politicians. But it was also a German debate.

This resulted in a decisive change in the development of the German discourse:

Until the end of May 2005, the German discourse showed great openness and heavy references to the EU, but few attributions of meaning to the EU.

This changed significantly in June: since the EU was the self-evident reference level of German discourse, and the negative referenda had led to problems at the EU level, these in turn were also interpreted as German problems and debated as such. An intensive discourse about the EU ensued.

A differentiation in the presentation now became apparent: the EU remained the self-evident reference level but was now also partly evaluated in a delimiting way. However, it was mainly demarcations that were constructed, rather than opposites: the EU was only rarely explicitly contrasted with German interests.

In the fundamental debate, the classic motifs of the German EU narrative were also taken up to a significant extent for the first time in the period under study, for example, in the strong role of economic attributions to the EU (see [Section 5.2](#)). An essential part of the fundamental debate in June was also the question of the *role of citizens* in the EU. There were an increasing number of contributions from commentators and politicians in which they classified the development of the EU to that point as distant from the citizens or even as in opposition to the citizens and their preferences and problems. Again, this was only a matter of constructing demarcations, not opposites (an exception, which will be considered in more detail below, is Peter Gauweiler's argumentation; see [Section 5.1.2](#)).

Citizens, the EU demos, and demands for more citizen participation thus became central objects of the discourse from two interrelated directions: through criticism of the EU and through the debate on the future of the EU.

This turn of the discourse after *Non* and *Nee* also led to a double *importation of issues* from France and the Netherlands. First, by looking at the referenda, the media questioned why other EU member states held referenda but Germany did not. This question then sometimes resulted in a demand for a German referendum (see [Section 5.2](#)). Secondly, in reaction to the negative referenda (from within a state that had not held a referendum!), there were also calls for consequences: in Germany, citizens should be better involved in European integration in the future. All in all, the German discourse in June for the first time contained extensive material for one of the guiding questions of the present study – what attributions were made to the EU?

5.1.1.4 *Partial Conclusion on the Research Questions*

I can now make a first interim conclusion on several research questions based on the above. Regarding the main question – *in what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the construction of European identity and the democratisation of the EU* – I can claim:

The German discourse until the end of May 2005 could only have a limited effect of this kind. Until then, the EU was hardly loaded with any meaning in Germany.

The ratification of the TCE appeared in the German discourse almost as an administrative act; there were few substantive justifications for it (see also [Section 5.2](#)). Even Foreign Minister Fischer, who had provided a major impetus for the start of the constitutional process with his Humboldt speech in 2000, was largely silent or even showed open disinterest in the Bundestag. Gauweiler and the PDS, as well as the Easter marchers, were the only ones to break this silence.

Thus, until May, there was hardly any shared German domestic focus of the discourse, but rather selective, short, and limited partial discourses; topics and motifs varied greatly. Attributions of meaning to the EU could not be widely discussed or spread. French attributions were more present in the discourse but did not prevail.

May represents a first turning point in that several common themes and points of reference emerged, primarily around the votes of the Bundestag and Bundesrat. France and its discourse were still central, but the German discourse was now more strongly influenced by German events as well.

However, *Non* and *Nee* are even more interesting as turning points. For the first time in the period under study, a partial discourse developed on attributions of meaning to the EU, both at the EU level and in Germany, and with intensive references to both.

From the end of May, an intensive discursive search for the meaning of Europe and the will of the demos began, which could certainly have an identity-constructing effect.

Moreover, and this is already a partial conclusion on research question 3 – *Are there references to the ideal of a difference-affirming multi-level identity in the discourses? Which ones?* – it became visible that

The German discourse had yet another reference to the construction of European identity: the press and politics already made *de facto* reference to it. The fact that the EU, France, and the Netherlands were given so much importance in the discourse and reported on so naturally already presupposed an identification. They were not presented as “foreign countries” but as directly relevant benchmarks of German politics – as *European domestic politics*, and thus not as “the other” but as “the self”.

In this way, the German discourse actively referred to a *multi-level system of identification* in which recognisably positive references were constructed between the different levels of identity, i.e., a concordance model.

I can already draw a conclusion on research question 7 – *Are the discourses studied open or closed?* and its sub-questions 2: *To what extent did the discourses have a primarily national reference?* and 3: *Are there shared references or common contents of the two EU discourses?*

There was actually no primarily national discourse in Germany. The Federal Republic was constructed as part of a multi-level system, and the discourse was explicitly open to the EU and neighbouring states.

This openness was also evident in the import of topics and motifs from France and the Netherlands; there were thus clear references to other states and non-national codes.

Actors from other member states did not break through a primarily national orientation, but they were essential and also formative actors in the German discourse.

The debate in the Netherlands was followed far less closely than that in France. This can be interpreted as a sign that France was seen as a particularly important reference level due to the traditional European policy cooperation between the two states.

Inwardly, however, the German discourse was less open (*sub-question 1 of research question 7: To what extent did political and social structures, constellations of interests, or culturally specific contexts of meaning influence the respective course of the discourses?*).

It is true that political structures influenced the course of events by setting the framework and central events, while constellations of power and strategic interests also had an effect. But there were hardly any references to social structures.

Accordingly, as I will discuss in [Section 5.2](#), only a few other contextual factors influenced the discourse.

I can also make a conclusion about sub-question 1 of research question 4 – *What happens in the discourse, how does the discourse proceed, and why?*

The German discourse was *strongly characterised by its openness*: the French discourse and the developments at the EU level determined the topics and the course, and the central turning points were also determined by the EU level and by France and the Netherlands.

But why was there so little domestic debate and so little domestic influence on the discourse? There are three possible explanations here. The first is that the German elite consensus was so established that no questions remained open and

no debate was necessary. Supporting this thesis is the fact that domestic German sub-discourses were almost only initiated by EU critics. A second possible explanation is an anticipation of the *silencing strategy* (see below), i.e., the knowledge that whoever contradicts the elite consensus will be sanctioned. This could lead to politicians not criticising the EU unless, like Gauweiler or the PDS, they see something to gain by doing so (see the following sections). A third possible explanation is that while the elites were largely in agreement, the citizens and the elites were not and that a broad discourse was therefore deemed unnecessary or even harmful by the elites until some form of citizen opinion could be included. This leads back to the question of why there was no citizen protest against integration in Germany, or why German citizens silently tolerated this point of dissent with their elites: perhaps the *permissive consensus* is still relatively stable in Germany after all.

5.1.2 *Actors and Rules of the Discourse*

The *actors* of the German discourse correspond to its openness, its multi-level reference, and the proxy character of the French discourse.

Representatives of the German federal legislative and executive branches had a central role in shaping the German discourse. Through the Federal Constitutional Court, representatives of the judiciary also had a role. Representatives of EU institutions were also very important, as were foreign and especially French representatives of the legislative and executive branches. Overall, politicians from Germany, the EU member states, and the EU institutions dominated, i.e., the elite level.

The roles of representatives from the German, French, and EU levels were almost equally weighted; national and EU-related roles of actors interacted very closely.

But German politicians were highly active at the EU level and abroad, as described above, while hardly appearing in the German domestic discourse. Therefore, German politicians regularly expressed themselves in their EU roles or both roles were addressed side by side.

5.1.2.1 *The Marginal Role of Citizens*

A striking contrast to the French discourse emerged in the representation of citizens, civil society, and intermediary organisations:

Citizens, as well as representatives of civil society and intermediary organisations in Germany, were only marginally addressed – in contrast, French activists and TCE opponents were regularly addressed.

German citizens were only addressed during isolated protests or information events, or in equally isolated reports and interviews. One exception are the relatively numerous reports on the Easter marches. The ND, in particular, emphasised the importance of the political cause and reported seriously (ND 260305). In contrast, the only report in the FAZ was almost ironic and distanced (FAZ 290305). The few other and rather poorly attended protests against the TCE were hardly reflected in the press reports. For example, only the ND and taz reported on protests against the Bundestag vote on the ratification law (ND 130505_6). Often, reports were only found in the local sections of the national daily newspapers (SZ 090305_2). However, the lack of activity on the part of the citizens was certainly addressed as a shortcoming, included in isolated newspaper comments (taz 310505_3). The lack of citizen involvement was also criticised in letters to the editor, very many of which supported the French TCE opponents (SZ 120505_9). But the specifically German motifs of criticism were also taken up (SZ 120505_14). After the referenda in France and the Netherlands, most letters to the editor supplemented their critical perspective with positive references to the rejections (FAZ 130605_3).

5.1.2.2 *Media as Actors in the Discourse*

The media had different roles as discursive actors in the German discourse. The ND and the supplement of the taz, *le monde diplomatique*, functioned (like *L'Humanité* in France) as counter-publics. From the beginning, they supplied the most diverse types of criticism of the Constitutional Treaty and the ratification process, and they specifically took up French criticism, while many events and debates covered in the other newspapers were not even mentioned in the ND.

In complete contrast to France, however, this counter-publicity was not echoed or even disseminated in the other three newspapers, taz, SZ, or FAZ, during the entire course of the discourse.

The taz oscillated (similar to *Libération* in France) between its rather left-wing positioning, a critical perspective on the ratification process, and support for the TCE. It often printed critical articles on the opponents of the TCE from Germany or France and often gave them a forum. The ND and taz both reported more on the topics of citizens and demos than on the EU level, they had a stronger focus on left-wing German criticism, and they also imported much more left-wing criticism from France. The taz provided many opponents of the treaty in the Bundestag with a forum (Gauweiler, even if he is a right-wing proponent, and Scheer) and there were also critical comments from the editorial staff.

In contrast, the FAZ and SZ (like *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*) reported primarily on the government and the major opposition parties. In the course of the discourse, a central difference between the two then developed. In May, the SZ launched its own campaign in support of the Constitutional Treaty. The factual contributions and analyses had a celebratory tenor, and there were numerous positive comments and opinion pieces. The SZ had by far the most contributions on German ratification, and its articles became increasingly critical of TCE opponents of any nationality as the discourse progressed. The FAZ, on the other hand, increasingly gave a podium to opponents of the TCE, also and especially from abroad (such as the Czech President Vaclav Klaus) – this will be referred to below as *imported criticism* and considered in more detail in [Section 5.2](#). Criticism from the right was also more prevalent in the FAZ.

In this respect, the SZ was the only one of the four newspapers that clearly supported the Constitutional Treaty. The FAZ and taz, on the other hand, gave significant space to criticism and “yes, but” attitudes, and the ND was clearly opposed to the TCE.

5.1.2.3 Conclusion on Research Questions

The conclusion to research question 6 – *which groups are the central supporting groups of national EU discourses and thus shape European identity?* – can be drawn quite clearly from the results for the German discourse. Regarding sub-question 1 (*Which supporting groups shape the discourses, how do they do so, and what motives for action and strategies underlie this?*), I can claim:

German and foreign elites were the central actors in the German discourse, namely, domestic German representatives of the legislative, executive, and judiciary as well as representatives of other member states and EU institutions. Politicians from the EU level and from other member states were at least as influential for the discourse as Germans, in some cases even more influential. Thus, the motifs of their actions and strategies also entered the German discourse. German state-level politicians had a less central role.

Most German politicians were unanimous in their approval of the Constitutional Treaty – at the German elite level, selective debates only got underway when representatives of the legislature voiced dissenting opinions, such as the critical members of the CSU parliamentary group and Peter Gauweiler in particular.

The motives for action and strategies of German politicians were otherwise difficult to discern because there were so few direct statements on the EU.

In Germany, the *Federal Constitutional Court BVG* has a special role as part of the judiciary: through various rulings (*Solange I and II*, *Maastricht*, and after 2005 *Lisbon*), the BVG has repeatedly defined obstacles and limits to European integration and thus intervened in a structuring way in EU discourses. It was also active in this discourse in 2005.

Minority groups in the legislature, such as Peter Gauweiler, used this function for themselves and their own profile by appealing to the BVG and its potential veto power with great publicity.

Citizens had a primarily passive role in the German discourse: they were rarely mentioned as actors, and if they were, then only in a marginal role. If, as was the case from the end of May onwards, they came more strongly into the focus of the discourse, this was done in an attributive or advocatory manner (see [Section 5.2](#)).

The clear answer to sub-question 3 (*Are there only dynamics that ran from the top down, or also those that ran from the bottom up?*) is thus:

While the German discourse was open and relatively strongly Europeanised, it was also strongly shaped by elites. The dynamics of the German discourse thus ran *from top to bottom*.

On sub-question 2 (*Do the ideas of the elites prevail in the discourse or can indicators for processes of social penetration be identified in the discourses? Which ones?*), on the other hand, I can claim:

Until May, as long as there was no intensive discourse, the ideas of the elites could not prevail in the discourse either. However, the points of criticism from abroad and especially from France also gained importance in the German discourse. One cannot yet speak of penetration, but the reference to the French discourse and its *bottom-up dynamics* at least led to German citizens also taking up these motifs. From May onwards, there was an intensive discourse and recognisable references to it in letters to the editor.

The interim conclusion to research question 2 – *Are references to the formation of EU-related democratic practice recognisable in the discourses?* – is ambivalent after these explanations:

The German case appears until the end of May rather as a counterexample to the requirements for a self-definition of the demos. Hardly any references to it were constructed. Contributions and references to citizens' activities were very rare; citizens largely did not participate in the discourse. At least this was problematised in some analyses and in letters to the editor.

From the end of May onwards, there were numerous contributions and references to the definition of a European demos, which were, however, mainly of an attributive nature. The strong Europeanisation of the discourse and the clear mentions of the reference levels of the EU and member states can also be interpreted as references to a European demos.

5.1.3 *A Central Rule of the German Discourse – the Silencing Strategy*

I have thus far described various rules of the German discourse – it was Europeanised and open, the EU and member states were clearly recognisable and self-evident reference levels, and it was shaped primarily by elites or politicians from these levels and from Germany. Another central rule of the German discourse was revealed not only in the analysis of what was said but also in the analysis of what was not said – the *silencing strategy* already outlined. Overall, the *silencing strategy* can be summarised as follows:

The silencing strategy is used against minority voices within parties as well as against entire parties.

It has three steps:

- 1 Silencing and downplaying of EU criticism
- 2 Courting the involvement of critics
- 3 Threatening

It is based on a stable and long-standing German elite EU narrative (see also [Chapter 7](#)), as well as the corresponding elite consensus of most parties represented in the Bundestag in support of European integration. A systematic exception was the EU-critical party line of the PDS in 2005.

In the discourse in spring 2005, it became clear that the pro-European majority of the German political elite did not react predominantly in a delimiting manner, but above all in a *belittling and pejorative manner* to opinions that deviated from the elite discourse. Minority voices were silenced in the discourse by means of the *silencing strategy*.

At the same time, at least until the end of May, the core of the traditional German EU discourse itself was not even addressed.

Three different types of opinions deviating from the elite discourse and reactions to them can be distinguished:

- 1 Dissenting opinions from major parties that traditionally support the pro-integrationist consensus and where the party leadership continues to argue and act in a pro-integrationist way. This is exemplified by the CSU minority representatives.
- 2 The Gauweiler case must be distinguished from them, as he acted as an individual.
- 3 The special case of the PDS (or today the Left Party), which is the only party represented in the Bundestag that is critical of integration.

5.1.3.1 *Minority Voices in the Mainstream Parties*

The reaction to inner-party minority voices in pro-European parties can be illustrated above all by the way the CSU's internal critics of the TCE were dealt with. In examining it, it becomes apparent that there are *several stages of the silencing strategy*.

At the Kreuth retreat in January 2005, several CSU members of the Bundestag had voiced their criticism and announced that they would not vote for the TCE in the Bundestag unless certain demands, such as more powers for the Bundestag in European policy matters, were included in the accompanying law.

The *first stage* of the *silencing strategy* against such dissent is to downplay it.

In immediate reaction, party leader Stoiber and the chair of the CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag, Glos, made downplaying statements about the scope of the criticism – although the majorities in the parliamentary group were not yet clear and although no intra-group debate had taken place (SZ 070105).

Both Stoiber and Glos subsequently adopted the demands regarding the TCE and European policy from the ranks of the CSU parliamentary group and negotiated them with the government in the run-up to the Bundestag vote. The red-green federal government, which had at first largely kept quiet about the demands from the ranks of the CSU, eventually agreed to some of them. Before the Bundestag vote, however, it

became apparent that most of the potential minority voices wanted to keep their line anyway. The leadership of the CDU and CSU therefore adopted a combined strategy: they first tried to change the minority representatives' minds by courting them.

The second stage of the silencing strategy is inward courting.

Thus, at the preparatory parliamentary group meeting of the CDU and CSU MPs with a test vote, Edmund Stoiber and Angela Merkel made a plea for an integrated Europe and the Constitutional Treaty (SZ 120505_3). At the same time, the minority representatives received substantive offers – through statements and by emphasising concessions in the implementation of the CSU demands (SZ 120505_3). The partial discourse on the CSU demands before the Bundestag vote also illustrated the ambivalent behaviour of the CSU in European policy. Stoiber had initially tried to bring the minority voices in line, but then helped represent their demands to the government (SZ 150405_5).

Edmund Stoiber thus appeared in the European discourse in 2005 in changing roles. Sometimes he was the disciplinarian for the CSU politicians and sometimes the spokesman for the party's internal minority voices. This ambivalent role of Stoiber and other party leaders is very striking in view of the rules of German EU discourses:

Stoiber's ambivalent role supports the thesis that there is something to be gained politically from criticism of the EU on a selective basis and that it is therefore engaged in when opportune. It is a selective attack on the *silencing strategy* and the dominant elite discourse driven by the party leadership, which, however, does not prevent the party leadership from supporting the dominant discourse in principle and using the *silencing strategy* against internal critics if necessary.

After the first two stages of downplaying and courting had not achieved the desired success, stage 3 was introduced. Disciplinary strategies were used or threatened against dissenters (SZ 120505_3).

The third stage of the silencing strategy is *threatening*.

It became clear, however, that despite these efforts, a minority of the CSU parliamentary group would still vote "No", and the party leaders went *back to stages one and two*, i.e., downplaying and inward courting. The potential "No" votes were immediately downplayed in their significance again, for instance, by CDU leader

Angela Merkel (taz 100505_3). This downplaying strategy externally was combined with renewed offers internally (FAZ 110505). There were far fewer critics of the TCE in the then red-green government parties than in the opposition, but even there attempts were made to discipline them. In this, however, the SPD was quite dispassionate. The Greens had an intense debate, which involved reproaches against Hans-Christian Ströbele, the only critic (SZ 120505_3).

5.1.3.2 *Systematic and Personalised Criticism of Integration: Peter Gauweiler*

Peter Gauweiler's strategy was also a deliberate breaking of the *silencing strategy* with the help of the Federal Constitutional Court. Gauweiler, even if he was a CSU MP at the time, differs from other minority voices in the CSU in his systematic and continuous criticism of further integration. In the 2005 discourse, as described, he set off some important events with his complaints (see [Section 5.2](#) on the arguments). In dealing with his statements, the mechanisms of the *silencing strategy* were again evident: silence on the part of the government, downplaying and demeaning in his own party. Such reactions also followed the further events. Gauweiler, as a minority voice, was not given any parliamentary speaking time in the Bundestag, but made a personal statement after the debate. The press reports were also in line with the *silencing strategy*. All newspapers mentioned the threatened lawsuit, but only as a side note (except for the *taz*, which interviewed Gauweiler as well as SPD dissenter Hermann Scheer). Even when President Köhler temporarily stopped the ratification process in Germany in June to await the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court on the TCE first, the reactions of both the press and politicians remained extremely scant. This is surprising given the significance of the decision. After all, it was a *de facto* stop to German ratification, and this in the heated atmosphere following the negative referenda and the British ratification stop (FAZ 170605).

5.1.3.3 *The PDS/Left Party: Principled EU Criticism*

In the CSU and the governing parties, critics of the TCE were in the minority. The PDS, on the other hand, deliberately broke with the pro-integrationist German elite consensus as a whole party with a party conference resolution in 2005 (ND 080105). The PDS also pursued this line during the ratification process. However, it led to conflicts internally and with the coalition partners.

In the January vote in the EP, not all seven PDS members in the Nordic Green/Left group voted "No". PDS MEP Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann even voted in favour of the treaty. She was harshly criticised for her support of the TCE (ND 080105). Kaufmann, as described, later left the party because of their differences on European policy. In the Bundestag, however, the situation was clear: the two PDS MPs at the time, Gesine Löttsch and Petra Pau, announced at the first reading of the approval law that they intended to vote "No", which they then did in May (ND 130505_6).

However, as discussed above, the PDS in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern were in coalitions with the SPD, which caused problems with regard to the Bundesrat vote. Both SPD-led governments initially planned to approve the Constitutional Treaty. This would have meant the PDS deviating from its party line. In Berlin, however, the PDS state executive committee, supported by a party conference resolution, defused the conflict with the SPD. The committee emphasised the PDS' opposition to the TCE, but added that this should not endanger the coalition. The PDS therefore refrained from forcing the government to reject the TCE as agreed in the coalition agreement. This positioning had been preceded by considerable inner-party conflicts (ND 020505_3). The national executive committee objected to this motion with purely strategic arguments (ND 020505_3). In the end, the state executive committee's position received a narrow majority of 52 to 49 votes (ND 020505_3). Berlin was thus able to agree in the Bundesrat – but only after further protests within the party.

In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, on the other hand, the conflict came to a head shortly before the Bundesrat meeting. The lines of conflict were clear. SPD claimed a vote in favour of the Constitutional Treaty, and PDS threatened to end the coalition if Minister-President Ringstorff agreed (ND 230505_2; ND 270505). It is striking that the conflict in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was discussed much more intensively by the ND than the position of the Berlin PDS. In the end, Ringstorff, an avowed supporter of the TCE, gave in and abstained from voting in the Bundesrat. The reason was state political considerations and Gerhard Schröder's approval (SZ 280505_10). Ringstorff, however, immediately played down this vote (FAZ 280505_14; taz 280505). The overall strategy of the PDS should be noted:

The PDS deliberately and purposefully broke the German elite consensus in its party line – but its successes with this approach were only minor.

First of all, it was only able to maintain the strategy without problems where it had no government responsibility (as in the Bundestag) – where, on the other hand, it co-governed, it had considerable difficulties. Although the coalition partner SPD tacitly conceded to the PDS to actively break the *silencing strategy*, the PDS did not want to endanger its own strategic goals (such as co-governing in Berlin) by a fundamental dispute about EU critique, which the party itself classified to an extent as secondary.

Secondly, even the PDS was not immune to internal dissent, as the example of Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann shows.

Thirdly, the PDS's critique of the EU could not assert itself in the discourse. Its active breaking of the elite consensus was treated according to the rules of the *silencing strategy* and kept quiet or played down. Thus, the position of the PDS against the TCE was simply hushed up by the other parties in the whole discourse, and there were no reactions at the federal level to the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern vote either. FAZ and SZ reported little on the disputes in the SPD-PDS coalitions, similar to the Gauweiler lawsuits.

5.1.3.4 *Why Different Strategies?*

But why were there different types of strategies to contradict the elite consensus or to explicitly break it? It has thus far been assumed that only politicians and parties who see something to gain for themselves criticise the EU. This thesis holds for each of the three examples. The CSU minority voices stated that they were primarily critical of the content of the Constitutional Treaty and its potential consequences, such as the lack of reference to God and the lack of powers of the Bundestag. In fact, this seems largely credible; there was no strategic or internal party gain in store for them. One motive could also be that the respective electorate expected or at least supported this positioning. This also applies to Gauweiler, who, however, actively broke with the elite consensus. Gauweiler draws a large part of his notoriety from this kind of opposition to the EU. In this respect, it can be assumed that Gauweiler also expected personal gain from his action; it strengthened his profile as an EU critic, which the German government also had to reckon with.

In the case of the PDS, too, substantive and strategic reasons are likely. No other party in the Federal Republic of Germany had addressed the points of criticism of the treaty. In France and various other EU states, however, there was a significant voter potential for this criticism; in this respect, it can be assumed that the PDS wanted to siphon this off for Germany. In this context, it is striking that the PDS combined a specifically German and the central French motif in its criticism, namely, the German Easter march movement's criticism of the alleged EU military constitution and the criticism of the EU's economic liberalism.

5.1.3.5 *Conclusions on Research Questions*

The conclusion to *research question 5 – What rules shape the discourse? – is:*

The characteristics of the German discourse also functioned as its *rules*. On the one hand, the German discourse was Europeanised and open. It was shaped primarily by elites or politicians of the EU, its member states, and Germany; citizens had only a marginal role.

On the other hand, the German discourse was determined by a *silencing strategy*, which led to statements critical of the EU either not being made at all or being immediately played down in the discourse. The examples illustrate that and how, in the German discourse, minority voices were disciplined by the elite consensus with the *silencing strategy*, or, where discipline was not possible, played down. The *silencing strategy* was implemented by the leading politicians of the major parties outside the PDS/Left Party, with broad support from the press.

This is also an interim conclusion to part 2 of the *research question 7 (Which contextual factors affect discourses and how?)*:

This strategy apparently worked through an implicit reference to the stable, established, self-evident, and dominant elite EU narrative. It was not explicitly addressed, but its effect could be seen in the fact that anyone who contradicted was silenced. In the German discourse, there was much that could not be said or could only be said with difficulty.

The dominant EU narrative thus emerged in a paradoxical role. It was referred to in a disciplining way – but it was hardly activated. It thus acted as a kind of reason-free justification for the *silencing strategy*, which was also supported by parts of the press.

The consequence, however, was that there was no continuous discourse until the end of May. Partial discourses, as described, only flared up briefly and occasionally.

The dominant EU narrative did show itself through its disciplining effect – but it was not strengthened by the fact that it was not spoken about, but rather latently weakened and vulnerable. Where there was no continuous, interrelated discourse, no attribution of meaning could take place within it. Thus, neither new attributions of meaning could be made nor existing ones actively confirmed. Thus it was precisely not the ideas of the elites that prevailed in discourse, but rather that the elites, with implicit reference to the discourse, merely determined the very strict rules for utterances.

This means that

Although there was a stable, established, self-evident, and dominant EU elite narrative in Germany, it was not actively referred to until May. This also contributed to it not being able to be activated or renewed.

The intensive discourse from the end of May was then initiated from outside, by *Non* and *Nee*. It was thus initiated via the EU level, not by internal questioning of the dominant EU discourse, and was therefore apparently better accepted.

5.2 Motifs, Arguments, and Reference Levels of the Discourse

The following first presents an overview of the typical arguments and motifs of the German discourse that shaped the attributions of meaning to the EU. They are related to three topic areas: *openness* and the *multi-level reference* of the German discourse; *references to the EU demos*, and *formative motifs, rules, and topic areas of the German EU discourse in 2005*.

Most of the substantive arguments in the German discourse emphasised the *efficiency, lack of alternatives, and compromise character of the TCE*. In addition, there was often constructive and selective criticism, while fundamental criticism of the EU was rare.

There were very few “No” arguments and rather critical variations on the unquestioned “Yes”.

Thus, until the negative referenda in 2005, the German EU discourse made far less reference to political content and normative goals than the classical German justifications for European integration.

The central motifs and topic areas of the German discourse are presented in detail in the next section. [Table 5.2](#) provides an overview.

5.2.1 *European Domestic Politics: Openness of the Discourse and Multi-Level References*

The openness and multi-level reference of the German discourse is highlighted by strong references to (1) *France* and (2) *foreign countries*. In part, these references were interwoven with domestic political references and interests. This is particularly evident in the German reactions after the French “No”: the various parties and actors used the event as an opportunity to articulate their own European policy positions and to position themselves domestically, but not to understand the French “No” and its causes. The opposition parties CDU-CSU and FDP blamed Schröder and Chirac for the negative outcomes of the referenda.

The openness of the German discourse also led to (3) *imported criticism*; i.e., motifs of EU criticism, especially from France, but also from other European countries, were taken up, presented, and discussed in Germany. Imported criticism was a topic area of medium importance. These arguments became reference points for direct reactions by German actors in the German discourse, which once again underlines the proxy character of reports from abroad and the role that French arguments in particular had as points of reference in the German discourse. But critics from other EU states also found podiums – for example, the EU-critical Czech President Vaclav Klaus was interviewed by the FAZ (FAZ 150305_2).

As described above, references to (4) *the EU level* also characterised several motifs and topic areas of the German discourse. Topic areas connected to the EU level concerned among others the *discussion of the development and contents of the TCE*, which held a medium importance and can be subdivided into the areas of *contents* (presentation and evaluation) *of the TCE, ratification process*, and “What if ratification fails?”

(5) *The discussion and evaluation of the TCE and its ratification* were of medium importance and were discussed with varying intensity throughout the discourse. In January – during the debate in the EP – there were more positive assessments of the TCE, while in February came the first sceptical assessments of the chances of the ratification process. In March, the ND then dealt critically with the contents of the TCE in a series. In April, there were few articles on the TCE, apart from the brief reactions to Gauweiler’s announcement that he intended to take legal action

Table 5.2 Overview of motifs and topic areas of the German discourse

<i>Openness of the discourse/multi-level reference</i>	
1 France	Central thematic field, presentation: European domestic policy Reference to French discourse formative and structuring, until May: proxy discourse
2 Foreign countries	Central thematic field, presentation: European domestic policy
3 Imported criticism	Medium importance Consequence of the proxy discourse: motifs of EU criticism, especially in France
4 EU level	Central thematic field, presentation: European domestic policy Reference to EU level and EU policy shaping and structuring From the end of May: <i>policy debate</i> "What kind of Europe do we want?"
5 Development and contents of the TCE	Medium importance Topic areas: <i>contents of TCE, ratification process + its failure</i>
6 What next for European integration?	Marginal topic, continuous, presented as European domestic policy <i>Analyses and commentaries, possible ways out after the "no" vote</i>
<i>References to European identity and the self-definition of an EU demos</i>	
1 Citizens/demos	Central theme after <i>Non</i> , representation: European domestic policy Topic areas: debate on <i>referenda, citizens versus elites, lack of citizen involvement/involving citizens, prospects for an EU demos, "Citizens want"</i> (attributions)
2 European identity	Important topic after <i>Non</i> , representation: European domestic policy
3 Development of the discourse	Marginal topic, but continuous How should the debate in Germany and the EU be conducted and what should it be criticised for?
<i>Formative motifs of the German EU discourse 2005</i>	
1 Silencing strategy	Central motif, but only barely thematised: shows through effect Has a strong structuring effect
2 Demands on EU policy	Central motif, constructive EU criticism, and domestic policy instrument Topic areas: <i>more powers for Bundestag and Bundesrat, no accession of Turkey, more democracy, other issues</i>
3 New motifs of support	Medium importance Topics: <i>relativisation, efficiency, no alternatives, necessity, EU as a peace power, Social Europe, value orientation, more democracy</i>
4 EU criticism	Medium importance Topic areas: <i>militarisation, democratic deficit, loss of competence for Bundestag, technocracy, resistance/movement, another Europe is possible, environmental protection, national sovereignty/national competences, Euro</i>
5 Reaction to criticism	Less important, secondary strand Reaction to <i>domestic criticism</i> and to <i>imported criticism</i>
6 Classic motifs of the German EU narrative	Marginal until May (only interpretation conflicts), from the end of May more important Topics: <i>Germany's new role, integration as a German task, dissociation from National Socialism, economy, project, process, unification, unity, peace</i>
7 Domestic policy	Marginal topic, occasional references to domestic issues
8 EU enlargement	Occasional, substantive political and domestic function Topic areas: <i>enlargement</i> in general, accession of <i>Turkey</i> (analysis, pro, con)

Source: Own Representation.

before the BVG. In May, various aspects were discussed more intensively: the “No” in France was anticipated, but so was the German approval, and the TCE was now discussed and evaluated more for its contents and potential consequences.

It is striking that many assessments of the TCE were very cautious or relativising, and the newspapers continued to pursue their different roles. The ND remained critical throughout and the taz addressed many left-wing points of criticism, but was more balanced overall. It ran critical opinion pieces on the question of neoliberalism, as well as positive ones on the democratising effect of the TCE. The articles in the SZ argued in a relativising way, but more positively. The FAZ was again much more critical.

5.2.1.1 *The Fundamental Debate: “Which Europe Do We Want?”*

(6) The topic area “What next for European integration?” until May played only a marginal role and contained mostly essayistic or more fundamental analyses and comments on European integration, mostly by journalists or academics. In June, this changed. There was a clear shift in emphasis, switching to the fundamental debate “What kind of Europe do we want?” The German discourse no longer focused on the previously dominant topics and motifs of France, the *silencing strategy*, assessing the TCE, EU criticism, or new or traditional motifs of support for European integration.

The discourse in June was mainly shaped by the *reception and shaping of the policy debate at the EU level*.

All in all, the negative referendum outcomes triggered a thought process and a debate at the EU level in which German politicians played a leading role (taz 210605_3). It became clear that the member state governments had very different positions on the further development of the EU; the debate was thus about the question “What kind of Europe do we want?” Gerhard Schröder even formulated this explicitly (SZ 220605_14). The fundamental debate was reproduced and continued in great detail in the German press; almost exclusively, however, in the SZ and FAZ. There were only a few articles on it in the taz and none at all in the ND.

The new fundamental debate had been opened via the EU level. As a result, actors in Germany also voiced their conflicting European policy positions and addressed previously unspoken conflicts.

European domestic policy thus once again shaped the German discourse – by opening a new partial debate that also provided space for fundamental questions that had not been discussed before.

The fundamental debate on the tasks of the EU touched on the *EU budget*, which was unsuccessfully negotiated at the European Council on 16 and 17 June.

Here, the German and French governments as well as the Luxembourg Council Presidency had a conflict with Blair because he wanted to make drastic cuts. In the end, no agreement was reached on the budget (SZ 200605_7). Another topic of the policy debate was the *further handling of the TCE*. There were conflicts here, too, as reactions varied widely across the EU (FAZ 160605_15; FAZ 110605_4). Ultimately, the European Council decided to suspend the ratification process of the TCE. The conflicts continued to extend to the *positions on enlargement*, which differed less by state than by political camp and by institution. While German Foreign Minister Fischer and EU Enlargement Commissioner Rehn argued for a continuation of enlargement, conservative politicians spoke against it, even some in the EP (SZ 210605_3; SZ 210605_1; SZ 090605_6).

5.2.2 *Demos, Citizens, and Identity-Formation*

Another central topic area of the German discourse emerged from the turn after the French *Non* and the Dutch *Nee*: (1) references to the *self-definition of a European demos* and (2) to *European identity*. The two were often mixed.

(1) The field of *citizens/demos* included the question of how citizens were to be included in European integration, as well as attributions to citizens. It was differentiated into a discussion of the role of *referenda*, criticism of the *EU's remoteness from citizens*, and the motifs of *citizens versus elites*, *lack of inclusion of citizens* or *demands for inclusion of citizens*, *attributions to citizens* ("The citizens want..."), and finally contributions on the *prospects for an EU demos*. Regarding the *role of EU citizens*, there were two connotations. In the debate within Germany, the topic was primarily characterised by *attributions to the citizens*, i.e., claims made on behalf of the citizens without having asked them themselves. This was used as a vehicle for the domestic and European political debate. At the EU level, the *factual and substantive question of necessary citizen participation* was actually in the foreground.

In the German domestic connotation, the *EU's remoteness from the citizens* was grounded using five motifs. First, from the left, and illustrated above all in the taz and ND, it was linked to *criticism of the EU's lack of a social component* (ND 180605_3). This criticism recognisably took up the French motifs of the *Non de Gauche*. Second, politicians and commentators of the centre continued to address economic and social issues by presenting the *EU and the TCE as paths to a social Europe* (FAZ 030605_11). Third, representatives of the CDU/CSU and FDP, but also of the SPD, justified the EU's remoteness from the citizens by arguing that the previous *enlargement policy* had overtaxed the people (taz 170605_3; SZ 030605_15). A fourth, but less frequent motif was a *criticism of EU bureaucracy* (taz 170605_3). Fifthly, the opposition criticised that there had been *no referendum* in Germany, or demanded one (SZ 160605_7).

Opinion pieces, especially from editorial offices, also discussed the question of whether referenda in general and on European integration in particular make sense. The formative referenda elsewhere in Europe obviously challenged people to take a position on referenda in Germany as well. However, the assessment tended to be sceptical or divided (taz 310505_8). The domestic reference to EU citizens and an EU demos was overall primarily advocacy:

From the end of May onwards, citizens were intensively thematised in the German domestic discourse. However, contributions to this discussion were mostly passive in character: it was not citizens who expressed themselves, but journalists or politicians who attributed things to them that they allegedly wanted, demanded, or thought for the EU – usually without substantiating or justifying this in more detail. Most statements simply consisted of attributions, which were often recognisably the priorities of the politicians concerned (an example here is the opposition of the CDU/CSU to Turkey’s accession). Politicians and journalists were also the actors in the partial discourse on the role of citizens in the EU.

The *EU level* debate – with significant German participation and strong reception in Germany – criticised the small role of citizens in EU policy with a strong factual-content orientation, demanded improved citizen participation, and discussed possibilities for doing so (taz 030605_7). Demands for concrete measures also arose very quickly (SZ 170605_3). Thus, the attributions to EU citizens differ at the EU level and in the debate within Germany:

At the EU level, the debate on the role of EU citizens was indeed largely open, though it, too, included attributions that performed a specific advocacy function.

(2) A small debate on the prospects for and possible contents of a *European Identity* arose in Germany in connection with the fundamental debate on the role of the EU. It was conducted less by politicians than in opinion pieces and feature articles; diagnoses of problems dominated, but there were also proposals for solutions (ND 030605_7; taz 100605_2; taz 080605).

(3) The *development of the discourse on the TCE* was continuously addressed from the beginning, though it was only a marginal topic.

5.2.3 *Continuity and Change in the German EU Narrative*

Until the end of May 2005, the following motifs, rules, and topic areas marked the German discourse: (1) the *silencing strategy*, already described in [Section 5.1](#), was central and had a strong structuring effect, in that it was not addressed at all or only briefly. It will not be discussed here again. In addition, (2) *demands on EU policy*, (3) *new motifs of EU support*, and (4) *EU criticism* were motifs in the discourse. This latter motif was sometimes linked to (5) *reactions to criticism*. They were complemented by (6) *the classic motifs of the German EU narrative*. (7) German *domestic policy* was a marginal topic in the discourse on the TCE; there were only selective and occasional references to domestic issues, such as the CSU demands on EU policy or the vote in the Bundesrat. (8) *Enlargement* also was a marginal topic. The most relevant motifs, rules, and topic areas will now be discussed in detail. Two of them were of medium importance.

(5) The *reactions to criticism* reflected the development of the German discourse. From February onwards, one could see from them that a discourse was beginning, but that it was limited to certain groups of actors. Thus, the reactions to criticism in March were particularly intense in the *taz*. There was obviously a strong need to clarify its position in the face of increasing left-wing criticism, including from abroad. However, the *SZ* and *FAZ* also took up the topic. In May it was strong again, this time especially in the *SZ*, before dying down. *Reactions to criticism* often referred directly to the imported criticism, which was then no longer labelled as such. Criticism was discussed as criticism, regardless of whether it had been brought into the German discourse by the German peace movement or by borrowing from the motifs of the French *Non de Gauche*.

As previously mentioned, (6) the *classical motifs* of the traditional German EU narrative, different from what could have been expected, had surprisingly little influence in 2005. They played only a marginal role in the discourse until May, as they were only discussed in the form of interpretive conflicts in which the question was whether Germany's role in the EU should be reinterpreted and, if so, how. Moreover, they were implicitly addressed via the *silencing strategy*. They were only activated from June onwards, but never achieved the expected central role. By far the most important motif was *European integration as a German task*; however, the motifs of *peace, economy/social issues, Europe as a project/process, unification/unity*, and a *dissociation from National Socialism* were also discussed.

To what extent can the discourse in 2005 be seen in a line of continuity? Or does it stand for a change in the German EU narrative? To answer this question, three formative motifs of the 2005 EU discourse will now be regarded in more detail: the *demands on EU policy, EU criticism, and new motifs of support*. In addition, the references to the *classical motifs* will be taken into account.

5.2.3.1 For a Better European and Germany's Interests: Demands on EU Policy

(2) The *demands on EU policy* were an important topic area, though they were only addressed when domestic political windows of opportunity arose. They included constructive EU criticism and concrete European policy demands in terms of *more European policy powers for the Bundestag and Bundesrat, more democracy, and no accession for Turkey*. The *discussion on enlargement* (enlargements in general, as well as the Turkish question), which was repeatedly taken up on occasion and was of medium importance, is closely related to the demands.

The *demands on EU policy* were only addressed in the domestic policy windows of opportunity in January and February (CSU retreat in Kreuth and ensuing discussion) and in April and especially May (preparation for the Bundestag vote). They also functioned as domestic policy instruments and can be subdivided into two central motifs.

(a) *More powers for the Bundestag*. This motif argued: *more and more competences of the Bundestag were being shifted to Brussels – there must therefore be more control by the national parliaments in the future – they must be involved more often and on important issues (especially on enlargements)*.

The partial discourse on more rights for the Bundestag showed that its loss of competence through Europeanisation was thus certainly addressed in the German

EU discourse, though primarily by dissenting voices within parties, which then initially became targets of the *silencing strategy*. However, the period before the Bundestag vote, during which Schröder was forced to respond to the demands of the CSU and of the federal states, was also a window of opportunity for strategically voiced EU criticism, that was used among others by Edmund Stoiber (SZ 250405_4), as has been described above. His EU criticism was recognisable as having primarily a domestic political character: selective, more or less factual criticism of the EU is put forward in order to strengthen one's own domestic political position. Shortly before the Bundestag vote, Stoiber then showed another strategic turn in this sense, saying that European integration would become a major topic of conflict with the Red-Green government (SZ 090505_5).

(b) *No accession of Turkey to the EU*. This motif was advocated by CSU and CDU politicians and used the following arguments: *Turkey must not/never become an EU member because: (a) Turkey is not a European country, (b) the EU is currently not receptive, (c) the TCE does not create the necessary conditions for Turkey to be admitted, (d) Turkey has a different system, (e) Turkey must be offered a privileged partnership, (f) Europe must also have a defined end.*

The demand that Turkey should not become a member of the EU was brought up as the occasion allowed – in January around the CSU Kreuth retreat, in May around the Bundestag vote, and in June after *Non* and *Nee*. The central line of conflict was between the Red-Green government and the CDU/CSU opposition. The Union argued in principle against Turkey's accession (SZ 130505_7). In contrast, the Red-Green government took the position that accession would have to take place if Turkey fulfilled the accession conditions (SZ 060505_6; FAZ 270505).

The *enlargement discussion* came to a head in the June policy debate. The arguments were no longer only against Turkey's accession, but also against enlargement as a whole, and both were often polemically sharpened against the respective political opponents. On the part of the right-wing German opposition from the CDU/CSU and FDP, fundamental criticism of enlargement dominated (SZ 220605_14). The federal government reacted with substantive counterarguments as well as counter-attacks (SZ 220605_14).

5.2.3.2 *The EU as a More Efficient and More Social Peace Power: New Motifs of Support*

(3) *Support for the TCE*, as already mentioned, was until May not motivated by the classical motifs, but primarily by *new ones*. These can be divided into two types. The first emphasised *political content* associated with the TCE – the *EU as a force for peace, Social Europe, more democracy*, and a *value orientation*. The second type of arguments was *pragmatic* and emphasised the *increase in efficiency* that would be achieved by the TCE and its *lack of alternatives*. Both types were often linked to *relativisations* of the TCE and its quality.

The *new motifs of support* were of medium importance in the discourse. Nevertheless, until the end of May, they were the main substantive motifs of the supporters of the TCE. They argued that the TCE would *improve the efficiency* of the EU, that there was *no alternative* and that it was *necessary*, they presented the EU as a *peace power*, they emphasised the strengthening of *Social Europe* and the *value orientation*

of the TCE, and that it would bring more democracy. Often, however, the supporting motifs also contained *relativisations* similar to the French “yes, but” motifs.

In detail, the arguments were as follows: *the EU as a peace power* (corresponds roughly in content to the French motif of *Europe Puissance*): *the EU can only make a difference if it acts as one – the EU states must therefore be united – this is achieved through the TCE – it brings a greater ability for the EU to act in foreign policy – (in part) the EU is strengthened vis-à-vis the USA/(in part) the EU must cooperate closely with the USA in this – the aim must be to guarantee security and to counter terrorism.*

The motif was used by all political camps. For example, Chancellor Schröder said in the Bundestag debate on the third reading of the TCE law that the TCE would unify Europe (FAZ 130505_7). Wolfgang Schäuble, then deputy leader of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag, linked the motif of the EU as a peace power with the formation of a European identity (FAZ 280105_2). It was striking that numerous contributions on this motif also contained reactions to criticism of the militarisation of the EU (taz 270505_5).

Social Europe. This motif was partly a demand and partly emphasised the potential contribution of the TCE. It came mainly from the Red-Green government and the trade unions. It argued thus: *the TCE strengthens Social Europe and the European Social Model – it brings far more than we have so far, there are clear improvements – the TCE is thus “democratic, grounded in solidarity, and social” – (partly) but this is not quite enough, more needs to happen here in the future.* This is how the European Trade Union Confederation and the DGB saw the TCE as a clear improvement for the working population (ND 210105_3). The SPD stated in an official announcement shortly before the Bundestag vote that the TCE would make Europe democratic, solidaric, and social (FAZ 100505).

The TCE brings more democracy. This motif argued: *the TCE brings more democracy – the EU becomes “more democratic and closer to the citizens” – there will be citizens’ petitions – there is more say for national parliaments – municipalities, regions, citizens also have more weight – the Charter of Fundamental Rights is anchored in the TCE – there is a delimitation of competences between EU and member states – subsidiarity is strengthened – there is more control of the EP, including in the area of CFSP, as the co-decision procedure is now anchored almost everywhere – the Council of Ministers meets in public when it adopts laws.* The motif has usually been strongly argued from the right in functionalist terms and with reference to institutional changes (FAZ 120105_2).

From the left, on the other hand, the changes were presented more emphatically and with reference to the role of the citizens, among others by MEP Jo Leinen (ND 110205_3). While detailed justifications came from German MEPs, contributions to the Bundestag debate on the third reading of the TCE only briefly addressed the motif and did not justify it in more detail (SZ 130505_7). For example, CDU chairwoman Merkel praised the positive effects on democracy and efficiency in the EU system (FAZ 130505_7).

The TCE brings a value orientation to the EU. This motif argued: *the Charter of Fundamental Rights will for the first time bind the EU institutions to a common set of values.* Again, the references in the Bundestag and Bundesrat were scarce (ND 130505_6; FAZ 280505_14). And again, the MEPs’ justifications were more detailed (ND 210105_3).

The TCE brings more efficiency to the European institutional system. This pragmatic motif emphasised the clearer division of competences by the TCE (SZ 250205_2; FAZ 250205). The motif was often used in combination with another:

The TCE has no alternative. This motif argued: *the TCE must not fail, because – the Treaty of Nice is worse/the TCE is better than Nice – something better is not conceivable – the TCE is not perfect, a compromise, but necessary and without alternative, it is a rational decision – the Eurosceptics have won otherwise* (SZ 120505_11). For example, Foreign Minister Fischer emphasised the Constitutional Treaty was the best possible compromise (FAZ 150405), stating that the alternative would have been the Nice Treaty (taz 130505_14). The pragmatic new motifs of support for the TCE were thus regularly combined with *support devoid of content* (SZ 190205_3; SZ 060505_1).

Finally, there were numerous *relativisations* in contributions supporting the TCE. Corresponding arguments emphasised the following aspects: *a warning against over-regulation – the TCE is “only man’s work” – a clear reference to God would have been nicer – the TCE is not a left-wing constitution – there has been no public debate on the constitutional process – No pathos, no enthusiasm – people vote “yes” despite “stomach aches” or “grave concerns” – there should have been a referendum.* This is what Chancellor Schröder said, for example (Schröder SZ 130505_7), and also Angela Merkel (SZ 130505_7). Depending on the political and strategic background, the relativisations were weaker or stronger. Edmund Stoiber, for example, argued rather critically during the third reading of the approval act in the Bundestag (SZ 130505_2).

Through the end of May, the *classic motifs of German European policy* were sometimes addressed in analyses or opinion pieces, but only rarely by politicians (but see SZ 190205_3).

In an opinion piece in the FAZ, Wolfgang Schäuble emphasised *Europe as a project and process* and the classic CDU goal of political union (FAZ 280105_2). At the start of the ratification process in the Bundesrat, a Christian Democrat Minister-President, Erwin Teufel, addressed the motif of *Europe as a guarantor of peace* (FAZ 250205). In the Bundestag debate on the third reading of the ratification law, the references to the classical motifs were already stronger. The motifs of *prosperity* and *dissociation from National Socialism and nationalism* were also mentioned (FAZ 130505_7; ND 130505_6). In the Bundesrat debate at the end of May, Fischer also emphasised the *necessity of unifying Europe* (FAZ 280505_14). In the fundamental debate on the future of the EU in June, the references to the classical motifs were clearly recognisable. The emphasis on *German responsibility* was in the foreground (SZ 170605_6).

On the whole, the classical motifs of the German EU narrative had a surprisingly marginal role in the discourse, while the proxy orientation to the French discourse was much more important.

5.2.3.3 A Neoliberal, Militarist, Undemocratic EU? EU Criticism

(4) *Criticism of the EU*, which unlike the demands on EU policy was often of a fundamental nature, was of medium importance in the discourse. It was often

interwoven with criticism of the TCE and mainly concerned with the topics of *criticism of liberalism, militarisation, democratic deficit, loss of competence of the Bundestag, national sovereignty, and national competences*. Less important were the *Euro*, the EU as a *technocracy*, the lack of *environmental protection*, the goal of *resistance*, and the motif “another Europe is possible”. The critiques sometimes drew *reactions to criticism* that had a less important role. They referred to *criticism voiced within Germany* and *imported criticism* and consisted mainly of a confrontation with the arguments of the critics, as well as (sometimes polemicising) attacks against them. In all this, arguments from the French discourse played a decisive role.

The field of *criticism of the EU* also developed in response to specific events. As early as January, on the occasion of the discussion of the TCE in the EP, the accusation of militarisation crystallised as a central motif, followed by the discussion of the *democratic deficit*. From February, and even more so in March, when the debate on the Services Directive was underway at the EU level, the *critique of liberalism* became more important and was linked to the critique of militarisation. However, both points of criticism lost significant importance in April after the Easter marches and the EU debate on the Services Directive. Instead, in the wake of Peter Gauweiler’s complaints, the motif of *national sovereignty* became more significant. In May, around the time of the Bundestag debate, all four points of criticism were addressed in roughly equal measure. In addition, some contributions criticised the lack of a reference to God in the TCE.

The criticism of the *militarisation of the EU* used the following arguments: *the TCE is a “military constitution” – the EU is changing from a civilian power to a war power – the TCE contains a duty to rearm/a compulsion to an arms race – it creates intervention troops for international combat operations – the possibility and the ability to wage wars of aggression are created – further consequences are militarisation and a claim to great power status by Germany*. These arguments were mainly put forward by the PDS and ND as well as the peace movement (ND 110305_2; taz 290305_2).

Criticism of the liberalism/neoliberalism of the EU was also found above all in the taz and ND. This criticism, as described, clearly took up the French arguments and motifs of the *Non de Gauche* and often linked them with the criticism of militarisation in the following argumentation: *the TCE is neoliberal (and militaristic) – see the example of the Services Directive – the TCE shows this in the following places (quotes from the TCE)*. Such arguments were often taken directly from the *Non de Gauche* (ND 040305; ND 140305_2).

The motif of the *EU democratic deficit* came up during preparations for the Bundestag vote and was surprisingly more strongly addressed from the left than from the centre or the right in the discourse in 2005. It is not possible to identify specific lines of argument, but rather only certain points of criticism such as a lack of transparency, lack of citizens’ rights, and a lack of competences of the EP (ND 150405).

The motif of a *threat to national sovereignty* and the role of the Basic Law was specifically put forward by Peter Gauweiler from April onwards (taz 220405).

5.3 Concluding Considerations on the Case of Germany

The following summarises the results for research questions for the German case and discusses the results. I already drew an ambivalent interim conclusion on research question 2 after self-references to a European demos, which was confirmed by the further results:

Through the end of May, the German case appears rather as a counterexample for the construction of a demos, since hardly any references to the self-definition of the demos were made and citizens were not active in the discourse – but there were numerous attributive references to it from the end of May. The strong Europeanisation of the discourse can also be interpreted as a reference to a European demos.

Thus, the conclusion to the sub-questions of research question 2 is different. Sub-question 2 (*Are references to the development of EU-related democratic practice recognisable in the discourses?*) can be answered with “yes”. However, these references were passive or attributive and did not result from citizens’ activities. Sub-question 3 (*Are the discourses themselves democratic practice?*) can largely be answered in the negative. The answer to sub-question 1 (*In what respect and to what extent can national EU discourses contribute to generating such a self-definition of the demos?*) is open. With regard to the normative criterion formulated in [Section 2.2.1](#) that a European demos should identify itself as such, the passive attributions are still insufficient, but can nevertheless be interpreted as a possible first step. It remains to be seen whether this advocatory debate had practical consequences and/or was taken up by the citizens.

Regarding references between different identity levels, it can be said that

Self-evident references to a European multi-level identity were discernible throughout the discourse: speeches and reports by politicians and the press clearly referred to an existing multi-level identification.

Through the end of May, only a few ascriptions of meaning to the EU were constructed and thus hardly any active or explicit references to the political-democratic meaning of a difference-affirming multi-level identity. Surprisingly, the corresponding motifs from the German EU narrative were not activated. And the new motifs of support, some of which associated political content with the EU and the TCE, were also only of medium importance in the discourse.

From the end of May, however, numerous explicit references to the political-democratic meaning of the EU were constructed in the fundamental debate on European policy.

Regarding research question 4, *What meanings are attributed to the EU in discourses, and what factors shape these attributions?* and its sub-questions 2 (*What meaning is the EU discursively loaded with and why does this happen?*) and 3 (*Which attributions of meaning prevail? Why?*), I can claim:

In the German discourse up until May, only a few, but different (positive, relativising, or critical) meanings were attributed to the EU. Among the supporters, they were strongly pragmatic and emphasised the efficiency, lack of alternatives, and compromise character of the TCE. Criticism was often constructive and selective; fundamental criticism was rare. Political content and normative goals were less important.

After the negative votes in France and the Netherlands, the focus was then also on the *political content* of the EU and the role of the European demos.

Regarding sub-question 4 (*Is there recourse to (1) specific historical and factual circumstances, (2) stereotypes, (3) discursive demarcations to the outside, (4) founding myths, (5) central social codes, (6) fears and emotions, (7) certain media of penetration, (8) practices and symbols?*), I can establish that, in the German discourse, various factors emerged that determined the attribution of meaning – although how they interact can vary.

The attribution of meanings to the EU is, according to the results in Germany:

(1) *Nationally coloured*: There were some specifically German themes in the discourse, such as the Gauweiler complaint, the question of the militarisation of the EU, and the emphasis on European integration as a German task. These were also influenced by the following:

– *Current EU policy topics*. In March, for example, the Services Directive was discussed, and in June the EU fundamental debate on “What kind of Europe do we want?”

– *Interests of the discourse actors*. The PDS and Gauweiler obviously aimed to specifically attack the dominant European narrative to make their political mark, and the opposition also used selective criticism in the fundamental debate on the future of the EU for this purpose.

– *Current political cycles*, i.e., by the fact that certain topics and questions were nationally topical, such as the Easter marches and the French discourse, as well as *Non* and *Nee* and the reactions to them from the end of May onwards.

(2) and (6) The meanings attributed to the EU were only slightly characterised by *stereotypes* and *references to fears*: stereotypes played only a marginal role in Germany. Although the left critique tried to import stereotypes of the *Non de Gauche*, this showed little discursive success because the leftist French motifs referred in many ways to central French contextual

factors and too little to specifically German contextual factors and codes. The CSU or Gauweiler adapted their criticism better to German codes and were therefore more successful. However, the left-wing French stereotypes underline the degree of Europeanisation of the discourse. References were not only made to neighbouring states per se, but also to the *peer groups* there, i.e., the German left recognisably copied what and why the French left debated, and the very fact that they did so.

(3) External *demarcations* were also not of central importance. They were only made where it was disputed how far the EU's "self" went, especially in the debate on Turkey. Discursive demarcations were also constructed vis-à-vis the EU, for example, in the case of the accusation of militarisation. Demarcations from other regions of the world, especially the USA, hardly ever occurred; here, there were instead rather positive references.

(4) and (5) The meanings attributed to the EU were indirectly determined by *founding myths* and *central social codes*. Founding myths were rarely activated and only when they were argumentatively helpful. They were usually only addressed with one or two keywords. They were often also used as a hook for the *silencing strategy*. Social codes shaped the discourse but were also rarely explicitly activated. They were mainly recognisable by the fact that certain motifs and arguments prevailed or became more widespread and others did not.

(5) The meanings attributed to the EU were *characterised by references to central national codes* (albeit less frequently than expected), and various classic motifs of the German EU narrative and the German *raison d'état* were thematised.

With regard to media (7) and practices (8) of dissemination, no specific influencing factors were discernible.

In response to research question 7 on the contextual factors affecting the discourses, it should be noted that the German case provides numerous indications for effects of the discourse contexts:

The course of the discourse essentially corresponded – with the decisive exception of the lack of reference to the classical motifs – to what could have been assumed according to the German context: the discourse was dominated by German elites, citizens largely did not participate, there was little explicit criticism of the EU, changes in the political system were hardly addressed, the political elites and also the parties were largely united in their support.

However, the contextual factors do not explain the complete course of the discourse:

In Germany, there was a striking *contrast between discursive openness towards the outside and discursive silence towards the inside*. There was hardly any active engagement by the political elites for the TCE. The German ratification process was decidedly dispassionate and lacked debate; instead, German government representatives intervened in Spain and France. Given Germany's European policy tradition and the fact that European integration is an official reason of the state in Germany, more domestic discourse activity would have been expected.

In this discursive calm, the few attributions of meaning that constructed critical or even negative references to the EU were striking: Gauweiler opposed European integration with German sovereignty and the importance of the Basic Law; the criticism from the left was recognisably influenced by the French *Non de Gauche*.

Overall, significantly fewer positive references and attributions of meaning were constructed in the German EU discourse than would have been expected, given the notorious pro-EU positioning of Germany's political elites. This is an indication that contexts can only explain parts of the discourse. Attributions of meaning to the EU are apparently partly, but not entirely, determined by national contexts.

Possible reasons for the extensive discursive silence were already discussed in the question on the background of the *silencing strategy*. The stable and dominant EU discourse apparently acted as a disciplining point of reference, even if it was no longer explicitly mentioned. In view of the recognisable lack of passion for the TCE among German politicians, another possible explanation seems to be that they were so unconvinced by the content of the TCE and its necessity that references to the classical – often very emphatically charged – motifs were deliberately omitted. The extensive silence might thus have resulted from a tendency towards a critical attitude, which was, however, only actively expressed by a few dissenting voices. Finally, another possible explanation is that the German European policy mission was interpreted to mean intervening in the states with referenda, i.e., externally, not internally.

It was noticeable that there were only a few explicit references to national contextual factors, although, as described in [Chapter 7](#), there would have been enough changes due to Europeanisation that could have been addressed. Only the issues of social welfare/Hartz IV, the Euro, the Maastricht ruling, and the loss of competence of the Bundestag were addressed selectively, but critically. The latter illustrates the handling of the potentially effective contextual factors in the discourse: the loss of competence of the Bundestag was addressed in the context of the CSU demands, but they were not given central importance, not least because of the *silencing strategy*. From the end of May, the contextual factor of the potentially EU-critical attitudes of parts of the German citizens was also explicitly addressed, in that the dissatisfaction of citizens and their alienation from the EU were addressed in an advocacy and attributive manner. But this too had little effect on the discourse.

In sum, contextual factors of the discourse were only activated if they could justify support for the TCE and EU, otherwise they were not addressed.

Contextual factors that justified support (classic motifs of the German EU narrative) were addressed when the opportunity arose. However, contextual factors that could justify EU criticism were also addressed by minority voices (loss of competence of the Bundestag). Overall, however, the contextual factors had a more indirect role than had been assumed: they influenced the course of the discourse, but only a small amount of its content.

All in all, these developments support the thesis that – as already explained with regard to the *silencing strategy* – contextual factors potentially in conflict with the EU are only activated discursively if there is something to be gained for the actors concerned in terms of political strategy.

In Germany, there is a dominant EU narrative, but this has rarely been actively addressed, discussed, or criticised on some points.

The fact that the EU narrative was rarely actively addressed also made it more vulnerable and easier to change because a discursive void was created.

The conflicts of interpretation, the selective EU criticism, and the new motifs of support in the EU discourse in 2005 show that the EU narrative was not widely questioned; critics continued to be disciplined. But new motifs were added that further developed the EU narrative and in places made it potentially more critical of the EU.

These developments in the 2005 discourse point to potential shifts or at least additions to the German EU narrative: the emphatic and normatively charged motif of *Europe as guarantor of peace* was supplemented by an active and *realpolitik* component, arguing that the *EU as a peace power* that can actively intervene worldwide with a common foreign and security policy that is also backed up militarily. The motif of a *political Europe* was developed into the motif of a *democratic, subsidiary, and value-oriented Europe*. In the conflicts of interpretation over the German role and the Germans' willingness to pay, another classic motif was given a different weighting: European integration is a German task, but it is not necessarily based on a special German obligation to pay. The criticism of the EU's remoteness from the citizens and the Bundestag's loss of competence was obviously strategically motivated on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it also signalled Germany's claim to shape the EU and to play an active role in the debate on the EU's future.

In sum, this means that in Germany, traditional positive references between the EU and Germany that had been established for 50 years were barely constructed or activated in the EU discourse in 2005 – except via the *silencing strategy* that built on the established elite consensus and activated these motifs in order to silence TCE criticism. However, the political elites were largely united in their support for the TCE.

With the exception of the PDS and the CSU minority voices, there was a large majority in support of the TCE, which was reflected in a corresponding majority in the Bundestag. The fact that there was selective criticism or relativisation did not change the fundamental support.

Overall, the findings just summarised do not support a context model of identification (see [Section 2.2.2](#)) for the German case:

In line with the pro-integrationist German context and the corresponding elite consensus, a higher identification of citizens with the EU would have been expected in Germany than in France. But this is not the case.

To what extent, then, is the German EU discourse in 2005 suitable as a means for constructing European identity? In this regard, I already established in [Section 5.1](#) that the discourse can be divided into a period “before the end of May” and “after the end of May”.

Before the end of May, the German discourse was only able to construct identity to a limited extent, because the EU was only slightly charged with German domestic meanings, and French attributions did not prevail.

After *Non* and *Nee*, however, a debate developed about attributions of meaning to the EU; a discursive search for the meaning of Europe and the will of the demos began. This debate was intense and broad and could thus certainly have an identity-constructing effect.

Overall, however, the German discourse made active reference throughout to a multi-level system of identification in which recognisable positive references between the different levels of identity were also constructed, i.e., a concordance model.

Thus, the result for the period up to the end of May is ambivalent – the multi-level reference was able to construct identity, the missing attributions less so.

For the period from the end of May onwards, however, the findings are different: both the multi-level reference and the intensive debate about substantive political attributions to the EU could have a constructive effect on identity.

Reference

Deutscher Bundestag. 2005. “Plenarprotokoll 15/175.” Accessed December 21, 2023. <https://dservet.bundestag.de/btp/15/15175.pdf>.

6 The Discourses in Comparison

In this chapter, the main results of the study are examined comparatively and discussed with a view to forming further considerations and theses. By way of introduction, it should be noted that the two EU discourses differ fundamentally.

The French discourse can be characterised as a *national EU discourse*.
The German one is an *EU discourse with national anchoring*.

A comparative look at the discourses provides detailed evidence of this finding.

6.1 Course, Actors, Rules, Reference Levels, Topics, Motifs, Arguments, and References of the Discourses in Comparison

The eight analytical dimensions of the discourses that formed the basis of the analysis in [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#) will now be considered comparatively: *course, actors, rules, reference levels, topic areas/topics, motifs, arguments, and references*. The second part of the section then compares the results of the research questions for the two cases.

6.1.1 Course of the Discourses

The courses of the two discourses already differ regarding the *triggers*: in France, the announcement of the referendum by President Jacques Chirac in his New Year's speech on 1 January 2005 marked the start of the discourse. In Germany, there were various triggers – the development of the discourse in France, events in other member states, and the development of the ratification process. In that, the German steps towards ratification were only short-lived triggers – except for the third reading in the Bundestag and the votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat, which were debated for days or weeks.

Furthermore, the *intensity* of the discourses was very different. The discourse in France was very intensive, as the press response makes clear: in the four daily

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newspapers studied, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, and *L'Humanité* alone, a total of 6358 articles relevant to the question appeared in the period from 1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005. However, these only reflect a portion of the discourse, which also took place in all other media, as well as in public discussion events, publications, leaflets, appeals, and demonstrations throughout the country.

The German discourse was considerably less broad in all respects. In the four daily newspapers studied, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *taz*, and *Neues Deutschland*, there were a total of 1787 relevant articles in the period from 1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005. Moreover, the discourse in Germany did not spread much beyond the circles of media professionals, politicians, and academics.

The intensity of the discourses also developed differently in both cases. In France, it rose continuously until 29 May, only to drop off again significantly. In Germany, the discourse hardly intensified until May and then showed spikes around the votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat; later, the French referendum on 29 May provided a further impetus.

It is striking that the coverage of the French referendum marks the quantitative peak of the German discourse with 91 contributions on 31 May – instead of the Bundestag vote on the TCE with 36 contributions on 13 May 2005.

In this respect, the referendum announcement and the French key events influenced the intensity of the discourse in France, whereas in Germany, the French discourse and the votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat until the end of May influenced the intensity of the discourse. The German discourse thus followed the French discourse until the end of May.

All in all, the French discourse was the major trigger for debate in both countries.

From June onwards and in particular around the European Council on 16 and 17 June, both discourses diverged again, and an independent German debate emerged. It was strongly related to the possible formation of an EU demos and the question “*What kind of Europe do we want?*” The quantitative intensity of the two discourses reflects that. The German discourse in June did not subside nearly as much as the French. With 542 relevant articles in Germany, June was almost as rich in contributions as May with 553 articles. In each of the two months, just under a third of the total relevant articles appeared in Germany. In the previous four months, there were only 692 articles in total. In France, on the other hand, May was clearly the month with the most contributions, with 2043 relevant articles (about a third of the total relevant articles), followed by April with 1423. Only then did June follow with 1038 articles (just under a sixth of the total), and this figure was only just larger than that for March with 948 articles (Figure 6.1).

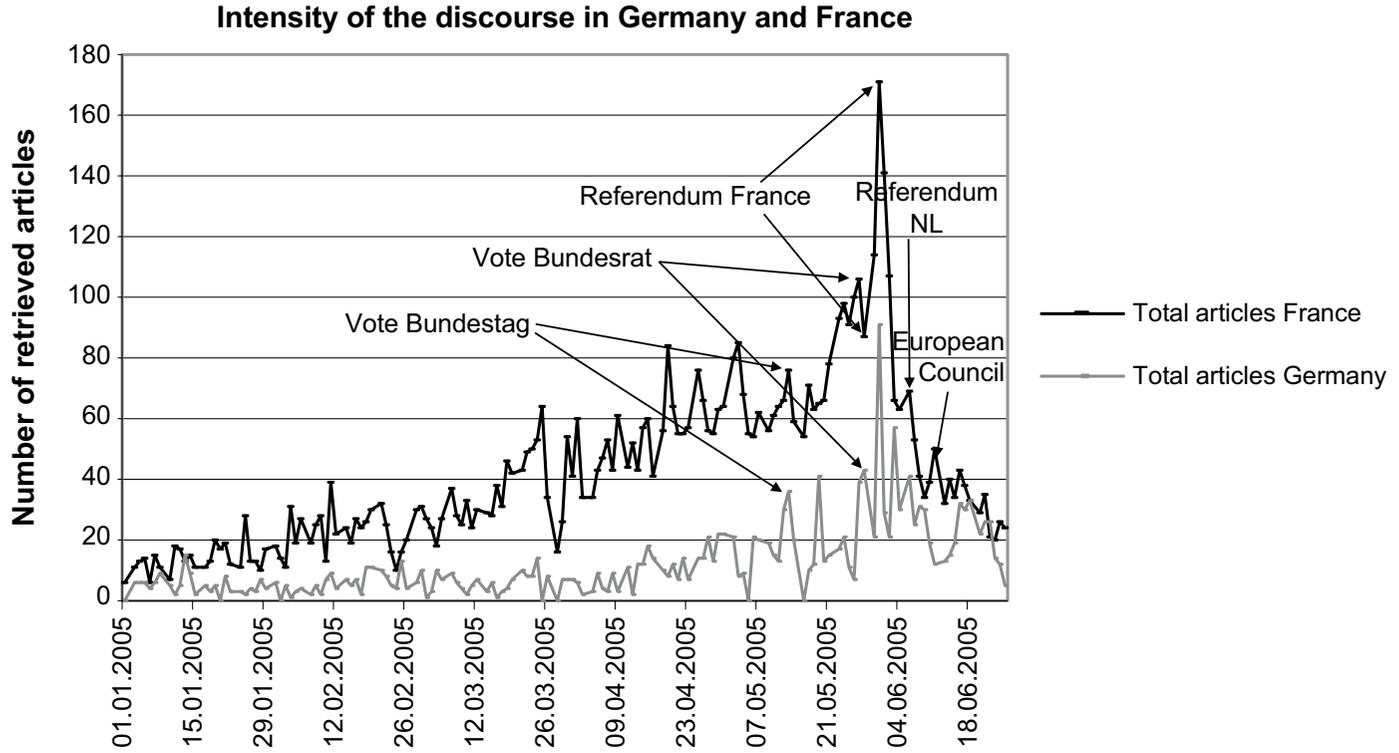


Figure 6.1 Comparative view of the intensity of the Discourses in Germany and France

Source: Own illustration.

These figures make it clear that the high points of the discourses were shifted in time:

In France, the discourse was most intense between mid-March and early June, namely, around the protests, the escalation of the referendum discourse, and the referendum itself.

In Germany, on the other hand, the discourse was most intense between the beginning of May and the end of June, namely, around the votes in the Bundestag and Bundesrat, the referenda in France and the Netherlands, the European Council in Brussels, and the fundamental debate around the question “What kind of Europe do we want?”

6.1.2 Actors

There were also clear differences in the actors who shaped the discourses. In both states, *politicians at the national level* had central roles, but otherwise different actors participated with different weightings:

In Germany, politicians from the EU level and from other EU countries also had important roles. These were less important in France.

Representatives of national civil society organisations, on the other hand, were far more important in France.

The clearest difference was in the role of citizens, who helped shape the discourse in France but had only a marginal role in Germany or were spoken for, and not with.

In France, a very broad audience consisting of professional politicians, activists and volunteers, and citizens from all walks of life discussed how to vote in the constitutional referendum. There was also empirical evidence of this: in the weeks leading up to the vote, the TCE was the top issue in France everywhere, and not only in the media but also in private. The referendum discourse triggered an intensive discussion, and hence an intensive politicisation of European integration, which had previously been a marginal topic for the French: among the debate items and issues voters had mentioned as important with regard to the 2004 European elections, the EU was still far behind – only 8% of French respondents to the European Election Studies mentioned it at all, and only 2% named it as the most important issue (Cautrès and Tiberj 2005, 63–64). However, within the six months of the discourse in 2005, European integration became a central and, in April 2005, even the most important subject of debate. On 23 March, 23% of respondents to a survey by the polling company CSA said they had discussed the EU in private contexts as well as at work. By the end of April 2005, the figure had risen to 37% – the EU had thus

become the most important subject of discussion, far ahead of work, leisure, and family (Rozès 2005, 31). The referendum discourse thus was interpreted as the greatest politicisation of French voters since the 1981 presidential elections (Rozès 2005, 29–31).

In Germany, on the other hand, the discourse remained limited to the circles of those interested in European policy, despite the selective criticism of citizens. Moreover, there was little publicly perceptible controversy, not least because hardly any prominent representatives of the political or societal mainstream spoke out against the Constitutional Treaty.

6.1.3 Rules

The rules of the two discourses also differed: in France, the discourse was largely oriented towards France, and openness towards other reference levels was limited. Moreover, the general rules of political communication and domestic politics applied. Nothing was unsayable; the camp conflict and the “social question” could always have a formative effect. Domestic conflicts quickly became very acute and aggressive. In addition, the political conjuncture also determined the course of the discourse. All in all, the French discourse thus developed its decisive dynamics that ultimately led to a “No” vote.

In Germany, on the other hand, the discourse was decidedly open towards other reference levels and discursive references towards the EU and other EU member states were a rule in the discourse. But there also was such a stable, established, self-evident, and dominant EU narrative with such dominant rules that the *silencing strategy* disciplined anyone who violated it. In this respect, there was much in Germany that could not be said in the discourse, or if it was said, it did not have repercussions in the discourse. In that respect, the German discourse was much more restrained than the French.

Regarding the question after discursive European identity formation, this leads to an ambivalent result:

While the French discourse thus was open and intensive within France, it was rather restrained towards reference levels outside France, and it ultimately led to negative EU constructions dominating in the discourse.

The German discourse, on the other hand, was of low intensity. It was also strongly regulated and open debate was silenced internally. But it was much more open towards other reference levels than the French. However, since there was not much discourse, it led to only a few EU constructions being circulated.

In sum, in both cases positive EU constructions did not succeed in the discursive dynamics, but for different reasons – in France because negative constructions succeeded and in Germany because there barely was any successful meaning construction in a largely restrained discourse. The time after the end of May marks a change here because meanings that constructed identification with the EU were then circulated in a relatively intense discourse.

6.1.4 Reference Levels

The two discourses, as was just said, thus showed a fundamental difference in the references as well as in their presentation. As far as the reference level of domestic policy is concerned, it can be said that

The French discourse focused strongly on domestic politics. In the German case, domestic references were rare.

Regarding the polity levels of foreign countries and the EU, it was the other way round. In France, references to other polities were scarce, and France always was the primary reference. Nevertheless, contributions about and references to other countries, the EU, and neighbouring countries gradually expanded. References to other polities and political levels were much more characteristic of the discourse in Germany. Contributions regularly, frequently, and openly emphasised other polity levels outside Germany. In comparison, this is the only dimension in which the proxy character of the French discourse did not prove to be determining the German discourse.

The way other polities were presented also differed decisively in Germany and France:

France primarily conducted a national and internal discourse, which gradually opened up to the levels of foreign countries and the EU but remained characterised by a predominantly domestic approach (portrayal as foreign policy or as “the other”, or the foreign). In France, reporting on the EU and other countries remained a smaller part of the discourse; the areas were mainly addressed when and because French interests were affected.

Germany conducted a primarily EU-related discourse. France, the rest of Europe, and the EU were the central cause and subject of the discourse, and both were presented as “European domestic policy” and as “the self”. In Germany, discussions took place when and because something new arose in “European domestic policy”, which by definition always touched on German interests.

These differences further justify the general distinction and the main finding of the study that was introduced at the beginning:

While the French discourse can be characterised as a national EU discourse, the German discourse can be classified as an EU discourse with national anchoring.

This constellation has already generated the thesis of the proxy function of the French discourse in Germany, with the German discourse following the events in France (see [Section 5.1.1](#)).

6.1.5 *Subject Areas/Topics, Motifs, Arguments, References*

Corresponding to the specific characteristics of the two discourses already described, most motifs, arguments, and references in the discourses were nationally specific. There were also certain similarities and overlaps. In some cases, motifs were also imported, but only from France to Germany and without significant discursive success. Similarities and overlaps in the topics can be seen above all regarding the EU and foreign country settings, namely, with the presentation of the French discourse, as well as in February with the reports on Spain, in March with the debate on the Services Directive, from April with the reports on the German ratification process, and in May and June via the referenda and the debate at EU level. However, these topics were dealt with in both discourses in different ways, with different intensities, from different perspectives, and with different emphases.

[Table 6.1](#) illustrates similarities and differences in topics, motifs, arguments, and references. It is not implied that these are directly comparable, especially in their discursive role: the similarities refer solely to the contents, not to the discursive function. In [Table 6.1](#), dark grey fields mark direct overlaps or references and light grey similarities.

The overview makes it clear that despite the relative domestic orientation of the French discourse, the central overlaps in the *topic areas* in both discourses were to be found in the areas of foreign countries and the EU. In concrete terms, this means:

Overlaps in the topic areas result from the openness and/or the Europeanisation of the national EU discourses, whereby the German discourse was largely more open and Europeanised than the French.

There were no direct overlaps in the motifs, but there were various similarities.

Similarities, too, resulted from the openness and/or Europeanisation of national EU discourses.

In addition, the various examples in which motifs and arguments of the other discourse were taken up also show an openness in terms of content. This was more pronounced in the German discourse, as it was to a large extent an imported discourse: the adoption of French arguments and motifs was a strongly structuring element of the German discourse.

Table 6.1 Similarities and differences in topics, motifs, arguments, and references of the two discourses

<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>External references: distanced multilevel reference</i>	<i>External references: openness of discourse/multilevel reference</i>
<i>Germany (subcategory foreign countries)</i>	<i>France</i>
Presentation: foreign policy Stronger reference to Germany recognisable on occasion	Central subject area, presentation: European domestic policy Reference to French discourse formative and structuring, until May: proxy discourse
<i>Foreign countries</i>	<i>Foreign countries</i>
Medium importance, presentation: foreign policy Key issue: <i>France as an example and battleground</i> (pioneering role in EU) – No equivalent –	Central subject area Presentation: European domestic policy <i>Imported criticism</i> Medium importance Consequence of the proxy discourse
<i>EU level</i>	<i>EU level</i>
Important topic area when French interests are affected Presentation: foreign policy – No equivalent – – No equivalent – – No equivalent –	Central topic area, presentation: European domestic policy Reference to EU level and EU policy shaping and structuring Central from the end of May: policy debate – <i>What kind of Europe do we want?</i> <i>Citizens/demos</i> Central topic after “No” Presentation: European domestic policy <i>European identity</i> Important topic after “No” Presentation: European domestic policy <i>What next for European integration?</i> Continuous marginal topic Presentation: European domestic policy
<i>Domestic references</i>	<i>Domestic references</i>
<i>The discourse</i>	<i>The discourse</i>
Central topic Presentation: domestic policy <i>Opinion polls/election analyses, commentaries, central actors and their strategic considerations, reflection/analysis of the discourse, reactions</i>	Marginal topic, but continuous Addressed hypothetically/critically: how should discourse in Germany and the EU proceed and what is it to be criticised for?

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>Domestic policy</i>	<i>Domestic policy</i>
Key topic	Marginal topic
Effects on discourse and repercussions of discourse	
Division of parties and camps strongly structuring	
<i>Motifs shaping the discourse</i>	<i>Motifs shaping the discourse</i>
“Yes” motifs	<i>TCE-supportive motifs</i>
– No equivalent –	<i>Silencing strategy</i>
	Central motif
	Had a strong structuring effect
Similarities to <i>Yes</i> , but	<i>Demands on EU policy</i>
	Central motif
	Also, domestic policy instrument
<i>Opponent reference</i>	<i>Reaction to criticism</i>
Central motif of the “Yes”	On domestic criticism
Differentiated into <i>weakening the opponents</i>	On imported criticism
and <i>dealing with the opponents’ arguments</i>	Less important, secondary strand
<i>Yes</i> , but	<i>Relativisations</i>
Important motif of the “Yes” camp	Subcategory of <i>new motifs of support</i>
Differentiated into <i>Criticism of the Government, Turkey Accession, Services Directive, Others</i>	Significant undercurrent of German supporters
<i>Internal debates in the “Yes” camp</i>	– No equivalent –
Important role	
Structuring element	
Weakens “yes”	
<i>Responsibility motif</i>	– No equivalent –
Appeal to the <i>responsibility of the individual, reference to the importance of the referendum</i> , and, occasionally, <i>threatening statements</i>	
Important “Yes” motif on the meta-level	
<i>Pragmatism motif</i>	<i>New motifs of support</i>
Medium importance	Subcategories <i>No alternative</i> and <i>Efficiency</i>
<i>No alternative to the TCE, increasing the efficiency of the EU</i>	
<i>Role of France in the EU</i>	<i>Classic motifs of the German EU narrative</i>
Important “Yes” motif	
Differentiated into <i>strengthening France with “Yes”, weakening France with “No”, and reference to the historical role of France</i>	Marginal motifs until May
	More important from the end of May (above all <i>German task</i>)

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>Normative Europe</i>	<i>New motifs of support</i>
Central motif of the “Yes” Differentiated into <i>Social Europe, Political and Democratic Europe, Europe as guarantor of peace, Europe as guarantor of freedom and human rights</i>	Subcategories <i>Social Europe, value orientation, more democracy</i> Classic motifs of the German EU narrative. There were two central classic motifs used, i.e.
<i>Europe Puissance</i>	Subcategories <i>Economy, Peace</i> <i>New motifs of support</i>
Important “Yes” motif Global political role of the EU and potential strengthening via TCE	Subcategory <i>Peace Power</i> Important supporter motif
“No” motifs	<i>TCE-critical motifs</i>
<i>Opponent reference</i>	Elements of argumentation in ND
<i>Weakening opponents and addressing opponents’ arguments</i>	
<i>Populist motif</i> The central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> is the contrast between the elites and the people: “they are all in cahoots”, “discourse is not democratic”/“the people are being deceived”, the choice of a memorial ballot, and in addition: the arrogance of the elites, criticism of the <i>pensée unique</i>	<i>Split elites/people</i> Included and modified in criticism of the EU as remote from citizens after the French referendum
Other opposites combined with it: <i>Good vs. Bad, Right vs. Left, Workers vs. Bosses</i>	
<i>Left Alliance/Movement motif</i>	Elements of this tentatively and without success in ND
Central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> from the beginning	
Primarily <i>resistance as a democratic responsibility and dynamic of “no”/movement, secondarily concrete goals/mission</i>	
<i>Opposition to Turkey’s accession</i>	<i>Opposition to Turkey’s accession</i>
Subcategory of <i>xenophobia/closed-mindedness</i>	Subcategory of <i>expansion criticism, demands, and reactions to Non</i>
Marginal motif throughout, and only as criticism of Turkey’s accession	
<i>EU criticism/criticism of the TCE</i>	<i>EU criticism</i>
<i>Criticism of the EU</i> (little) and of the content and text of the treaty (both aspects mostly interwoven)	Subcategories <i>Criticism of Liberalism, Militarisation, Democratic Deficit, Loss of Powers Bundestag</i>
As of May, an important substantive motif of the opponents	<i>Evaluation TCE</i>
Other motifs in France than in Germany (German motif militarisation marginal in France)	

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>National republican motif</i>	– No equivalent –
Constant side stream of right and left opponents <i>Republic</i> (and content), <i>nation</i> , <i>La France/Etat Nation</i> , <i>national sovereignty/loss</i> , <i>French social model</i>	
<i>Anti-liberal motif</i>	<i>Criticism</i>
<i>Potential social/labour market deterioration through TCE, harmful effects of the EU, délocalisations, ultra-, neo-, social- ... libéralisme of the EU (especially Services Directive), criticism of neoliberal government decisions, globalisation</i>	Subcategory anti-liberalism, marginal
Central motif of the <i>Non de Gauche</i> <i>Another Europe is possible</i> , subcategories <i>Social Europe, more democracy, another treaty</i>	Elements of this tentatively and without success in ND
Motif of <i>Non de Gauche</i> , medium importance to a marginal role	

Source: Own Representation.

6.2 Research Questions – Answers in a Comparative Perspective

In the following, the answers to the research questions are now considered from a comparative perspective. This leads to a detailed picture.

Regarding the main research question – *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as a means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?* – the criteria defined in the heuristics were that they *circulate and/or construct ascriptions of meaning to the EU that construct and/or enable positive references in the multi-level system* and, when possible, refer to *political-democratic contents of meaning*. This can also mean, which had not yet been clear when this criterion was formulated, that these discourses are already part of a multi-level system. According to these criteria, the following can be resumed:

The German discourse until May could hardly function as a medium for the construction of European identity because it hardly circulated or constructed any ascriptions of meaning to the EU; however, it fulfilled the second part via its self-evident multi-level reference.

The French discourse, in contrast, consistently fulfilled the first part of the criteria, but not the second. Although it constructed numerous attributions of meaning to the EU, the constructed delimiting references to the EU polity prevailed.

What is decisive here is that the discourse predominantly constructed a distinction from, or non-belonging to, the EU polity, which is to be distinguished from the criticism of certain policy decisions of the EU with fundamental support for belonging.

Moreover, the French discourse was strongly self-centred, hardly constructing France as part of a multi-level system and thus creating an image in which France appeared as “us” or “the self” and the EU and its member states as the “others”.

In this respect, the German discourse from May onwards best fulfilled the criteria. Around the Bundestag vote and especially after the negative referendum, it not only became very intense but also circulated and constructed diverse attributions of meaning to the EU in which even the role of the EU demos was addressed, albeit mostly in an advocacy manner (see answer to research question 2). This made possible the construction of positive references to the EU.

Regarding research question 2 on the contributions and references to the self-definition of a European demos in national EU discourses and the sub-question 1 (*In what respect and to what extent can national EU discourses contribute to generating such a self-definition of the demos?*), it can be stated that

The German discourse until May is an anti-example: virtually no references to the self-definition of a demos were constructed. From the end of May, however, the German case is an example of an *advocatory demos reference*. Although this does not yet represent democratic activity by the demos itself, it constructs positive references and attributions of meaning to a self-definition of the demos. It can thus contribute to the formation of European identity – not unlike the national movements, which also worked with advocacy attributions. In the German discourse, there were also selective horizontal references to citizens of other EU member states, i.e., to an EU demos.

The French discourse, on the other hand, was based on strong democratic activity by the citizens from the very beginning and thus also had great potential to contribute to a self-definition of the demos – had the distinguishing constructions not prevailed. There was an intensive discourse in France; the citizens discussed, protested, and engaged in many ways with reference to the EU. The demand for more democracy and more citizen participation in the EU was also explicitly voiced. However, on the whole, *demarkating* and not positive or integrating references were constructed; a *non-identification* prevailed, summarised as “We don’t want to be citizens of this EU”. Nevertheless, there were also integrating or positive references to citizens of other EU member states, i.e., to the horizontal component of demos construction.

The further sub-questions to research question 2 were: 2. *Are references to the formation of EU-related democratic practice recognisable in the discourses?* 3. *How are the discourses themselves to be evaluated with regard to this normative premise: are they themselves democratic practice?*

There were very few references to the emergence of EU-related democratic practice in the German discourse until the end of May, and equally hardly any EU-related democratic practice.

From the end of May, there were numerous references to the emergence of EU-related democratic practice.

The French discourse, in contrast, was based from the beginning on strong democratic activity by the citizens, thus both forming references to EU-related democratic practice and being classifiable as such.

Regarding question 3 after references to the ideal of a difference-affirming multi-level identity in the discourses, sub-question 1 was: *What references between different polity levels and aspects of identity, in particular between national and European identity, are constructed in the discourse?* This was based on the heuristic assumption that national EU discourses only construct or contribute to the construction of difference-affirming multi-level identities if they construct positive references between the levels of nation and Europe or members of one's own nation and EU citizens. If there are conflicts between the identity levels, or if conflicts are constructed, this has a negative influence on European identity construction.

In Germany, hardly any active or explicit references to the difference-affirming multi-level identity were constructed through the end of May 2005, but implicit and self-evident references to it were consistently present in the discourse through the reference levels. The multi-level identity was thus taken as already existing, and the conflicting constructions did not assert themselves in the discourse.

In France, on the other hand, positive, ambivalent, and demarcating references were constructed in the discourse, but the demarcating ones dominated or prevailed far more strongly, which counteracted a difference-affirming multi-level identity.

Regarding sub-question 2 of research question 3 – *Are there references to shared political-democratic meaning?* – it follows that:

For the German case, the two phases already mentioned must be distinguished: until the end of May, such references were hardly constructed, but from the end of May onwards they were constructed to a significant extent. Thus, from May onwards, the German discourse could potentially contribute to constructing a difference-affirming multi-level identity.

In France, there were numerous references to political-democratic meanings throughout – not, however, to (potentially) collectively shared EU-wide ones, but rather to French-influenced ones. In cases of conflict, the French interpretation was given precedence. This orientation towards specifically French political-democratic meanings, which were constructed in conflict with EU-wide shared meanings, potentially prevented the construction of a difference-affirming multi-level identity. The analysis of the discourse and the opinion polls also suggests that these conflicting constructions prevailed among citizens.

Regarding research question 4 – *What meanings are attributed to the EU in the discourses, and what factors shape these attributions?* – the first sub-questions were: 1. *What happens in the discourse, how does the discourse proceed, and why?* 2. *What meanings is the EU discursively loaded with and why does this happen?* 3. *Which attributions of meaning prevail? Why?* Numerous differences became apparent here:

1 *To what extent were meanings constructed at all?*

In the *French* discourse, the EU was overloaded with negatively coloured meanings (at least on the part of the opponents), while the supporters remained rather unspecific and abstract. In *Germany*, until the end of May, the EU was only slightly loaded with meaning; from the end of May onwards, there were more numerous attributions of meaning.

2 *How were the meanings coloured?*

The *German* meanings were weak, but mostly with a positive reference to the EU; the *French* meanings, on the other hand, were strong, but much less often positive, with the negative ones dominating.

3 *Were there structural similarities between the attributed meanings?*

In both cases, they were often (a) nationally coloured, (b) shaped by certain political conjunctures, and (c) shaped by the interests of the discursive actors.

The fourth sub-question of research question 4 was: *Were there recourses to (1) specific historical or factual circumstances, (2) stereotypes, (3) discursive demarcations to the outside (and if so, what is the outside), (4) founding myths, (5) compatibility to central social codes, (6) fears and emotions, (7) certain media of penetration, (8) practices and symbols?*

- 1 As described, reference was made to certain circumstances and established motifs of national identity (e.g., in the social protests in France).
- 2 *Stereotypes* were used in meaning attribution when this was argumentatively helpful. This was especially the case in the French discourse, where stereotypes from established left discourses, but also newly created ones, served as demarcations (*pensée unique, ultralibéralisme, néolibéralisme, délocalisations, contrast right-left, arrogance of the elites and contrast le peuple-les élites, Bolkestein = Frankenstein, EU = ultralibéralisme*).

These French stereotypes were also received in Germany. Beyond that, hardly any stereotypes of their own were used in Germany.

- 3 *External demarcations* also played a far greater role in France than in Germany. There were numerous direct (*le modèle social français* versus EU/libéralisme) and indirect demarcations (*le social* versus EU). In addition, there were selective demarcations vis-à-vis Turkey and the USA.

These were also evident in Germany. Moreover, external demarcations were rare there; vis-à-vis the EU, they were almost non-existent. In Germany, critical contributions to discussions on the EU tended to take on a threatening tone (e.g., “we won’t go along with everything” or “that’s going too far” on the part of the CSU).

In France, *internal demarcations* were systematically combined with external demarcations and negative stereotypes (right-left opposition and camp mentality, workers against bosses, elites against the people/those up there against those down here/against the government). In Germany, the internal demarcations were manifested in the discourse towards minority voices using the *silencing strategy*.

- 4 *Founding myths* were only used when this was helpful for argumentation. However, they were conspicuously ineffective.
- 5 Relevant societal *codes* were mainly addressed indirectly in Germany (a reference to the integrative nation-Europe model). In France, on the other hand, the references to central social codes were primarily used to construct latent conflicts to differentiate France from the EU or to criticise the EU. The integration advocates tried to establish discursive compatibility between central social codes and the EU but were hardly successful in doing so. And, unlike in the Maastricht discourse, they used numerous ambivalences and relativisations.
- 6 References to *fears* were regularly used in both cases to differentiate from the outside world or the EU. In Germany (accession of Turkey, social cuts, rearmament/militarisation), however, these references were much less effective. In France, numerous references to fears (social cuts, a victory for the right, “ultra-liberalism”) were very effective. In both discourses, however, the proponents also specifically tried to defuse such fears or refute their reasons.

- 7 In terms of *media* of penetration, a central role of alternative forms of dissemination (demonstrations, protests, rallies, internet, leaflets, word of mouth) was evident for the French opponents.
- 8 *Practices and symbols* played a recognisable role only in France (revolutionary symbolism, etc.).

Regarding research question 5 – *What rules shape the discourse?* – it can be summarised that the rules of the two discourses also differed:

In France, the general rules of political communication and domestic politics applied: nothing is unspeakable, and the camp conflict and the “social question” can always have a formative effect. Domestic conflicts quickly become very acute and aggressive. In addition, the political conjuncture also determines the course of discourse.

In Germany, there is such a stable, established, self-evident, and dominant EU narrative with such dominant rules that the *silencing strategy* disciplines offenders. In this respect, there is much in Germany that cannot be said.

Regarding research question 6 – *which groups are the central supporting groups of national EU discourses and thus shape European identity?* – sub-question 1 was: *Which supporting groups (EU elites, national elites, citizens) shape the discourses, how do they do so, and what motifs for action and strategies underlie this?*

In Germany, the discourse was mainly shaped by representatives of the legislative and executive branches at the federal level, other EU states, and the EU, with state politicians on the margins. However, the central impulses for the discourse were provided by representatives of the German legislature with dissenting opinions, the French discourse, and the debate at the EU level or the corresponding actors.

In France, on the other hand, the representatives of the legislative and executive (less so the judiciary) shaped only part of the discourse. Citizens, representatives of associations, trade unions, and NGOs also played a central role. EU elites (politicians from other member states as well as representatives of the EU institutions) played only a small role.

The role of citizens marks thus one of the most striking differences between the French and the German discourses. In France, citizens helped shape the discourse because they were asked to the polls, because it was therefore an election campaign and because it was successfully used to mobilise social and European protest. In Germany, citizens only intervened in the discourse through very sporadic activities, which were reported on even more sporadically, and through letters to the editor, which were often very critical, but had no effect. From May onwards, citizens and their role were then passively addressed in advocacy attributions.

The further sub-questions were: 2. *Do the ideas of the elites prevail in the discourse, or can indicators for processes of social penetration be identified?* 3. *Are there dynamics that run from the top down or also those that run from the bottom up?*

In Germany, the EU narrative did not gain widespread acceptance among the citizens, but rather a decoupling of the opinions of citizens and elites took place. There were virtually no processes of social penetration, but rather indicators that the ideas of the elites were not received, or even rejected.

The dynamics of the discourse in France were essentially determined by the social protests; i.e., they ran from the bottom up. The critique of liberalism and the EU became so dominant in the discourse that it became necessary to position oneself in relation to it or take it up. Moreover, there were numerous indicators of a penetration of critical arguments.

Regarding question 7 – *Are the discourses studied open or closed? Which contextual factors affect discourses and how?* – sub-question was 1. *To what extent did political and social structures, constellations of interests, or culturally specific contexts of meaning influence the respective course of the discourses?*

This was the case in both cases, although in France the contextual factors were asserted far more strongly discursively and shaped the discourse far more than in Germany (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Sub-question 2 was: *To what extent did the discourses have a primarily national reference? Is it possibly interrupted by actors from the EU, actors from other member states, and non-national codes?*

While the discourse in France remained primarily national, actors from the EU and other member states as well as non-national codes had a marginal role, and the EU tended to be portrayed as “the other”; the opposite was the case in Germany. There was a primarily European reference, actors from the EU and other member states as well as non-national codes had an important role, and the EU and its member states were constructed as “the self”.

The sub-question 3 was: *Are there shared references or common contents of the two EU discourses?*

There were clear references between the two discourses, although in Germany these were more recognisable and shaped the discourse more strongly. In France, on the other hand, the reference to Germany was only one point of reference among many, although certain German events were attributed a decisive effect for France (for example, the defeat of the SPD in North Rhine-Westphalia, which was discursively seen as Schröder’s defeat and thus as the defeat of liberalism, and a decisive impetus for the victory of “No”).

For both cases, it should finally be noted that the EU was used as a black box to a significant extent:

In Germany, there were fewer different and hardly any contradictory meanings; in France, however, there was a great diversity of attributions. For many French opponents, the EU was clearly a surface to project all kinds of domestic and foreign policy conflict lines, fears, and points of criticism onto, including the French crisis of political representation and purely domestic conflicts.

6.3 Concluding Overview

The overview presented in [Table 6.2](#) once again summarises the central results of the comparison of the two discourses.

Table 6.2 Comparison of the two discourses studied

	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
Short characterisation	<i>National EU discourse</i>	<i>EU discourse with national anchoring</i>
Contextual impact/inward openness	<i>High</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensively addressed and significant enforcement 	<i>Low</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed little and low enforcement
Degree of Europeanisation/openness to the outside world	<i>Low</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily internal reference 	<i>Very High</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily European, great openness (reference to France!) • Little internal discourse
We-Group	<i>France/French</i>	<i>Germany and EU</i>
Europe award	<i>The Other</i>	<i>The Self</i>

(Continued)

Table 6.2 (Continued)

	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>
Course characterised by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key events • Protests • References back to discourse • Preparation of the referendum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French discourse until May • From May: Bundestag + Bundesrat • Policy Debate “What kind of Europe do we want?” in June
Trigger	<p><i>Primary internal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referendum by the President • Political situation in France • Criticism of the current shape of the EU 	<p><i>Primary external</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote Bundestag and Bundesrat (weak) • Discourse France (strong) • Negative referenda/EU crisis (very strong)
Intensity	<p><i>High</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6358 Articles on the referendum 	<p><i>Medium to low</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1787 relevant articles
Key actors	<p><i>Wide</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French politicians • Civil society actors • Citizens • Journalists, academics, essayists • Hardly significant: actors from EU, other countries 	<p><i>Narrow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians • EU stakeholders • Politicians from other countries • Journalists, academics, essayists
Role of the citizens	<p><i>Central</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discursive triggers • Objects of discourse • Addressees • Discursive participants 	<p><i>Marginal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocated after negative referenda • Protests in letters to the editor and a few actions
Central motifs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically national in character • Strongly influenced by national context • Particularly effective: left republicanism, right-left antagonism, disenchantment with politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically national in character, but: • Conspicuously little influenced by national contexts in terms of what was said • In the unsaid and in the <i>silencing strategy</i>, the elite consensus is implicitly or explicitly addressed
Self-definition of the demos – contributions, references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic especially for left protest movement • But only a few references to EU demos: reference to French demos dominates (pioneering role) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until April: low • From May: advocacy theming
Difference-affirming multi-level identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather no • Multi-level reference: barely or delimiting • Political-democratic meaning: strong, but only specifically French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until May ambivalent/from May rather yes • Multi-level reference: significant and positive • Political-democratic meanings: until May weak, from May strong

(Continued)

Table 6.2 (Continued)

	France	Germany
Factors that shape attributions of meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Specific circumstances/context: yes 2 Stereotypes: yes 3 Discursive demarcations to the outside: yes, the EU is outside <p>Demarcations to the inside: yes, strong</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Founding myths: rare 2 Central social codes: yes, by the opponents 3 Fears and emotions: yes, strong, through the opponents 4 Certain media of penetration: internet, actions, protests by opponents 5 Practices and symbols: yes, specifically created by opponents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Specific circumstances/context: hardly any 2 Stereotypes: no 3 Discursive demarcations to the outside: rarely <p>Internal demarcations: implicitly through <i>silencing strategy</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Founding myths: rare 2 Central social codes: rare 3 Fears and emotions: yes, by critics, not very effective 4 Certain media of penetration: no 5 Practices and symbols: no
Rules of discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly influenced by national contexts • Particularly effective: right-left antagonism, disenchantment with politics/protest culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most striking in the unsaid: national elite consensus manifests itself in <i>silencing strategy</i>
Dominating EU discourses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, stable EU narrative
EU/Europe as a <i>black box</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes
Means for the construction of European Identity?	<p><i>Rather not, because</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delimitations and critique became discursively established • Positive attributions were rare and did not prevail <p><i>But it potentially could have been, since</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad discourse throughout with a high level of involvement of citizens and the civil society 	<p><i>Until May: rather not</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardly any discourse and hardly any attributions • No involvement and no interest of citizens • No penetration <p><i>As of May: potentially yes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious debate on the character of the EU and EU demos

Source: Own Representation.

References

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7 The Contexts in Comparison

In the following, the five contextual areas studied – political system, political parties and European integration, citizens as recipients of the discourses, central motifs of the national identity narratives, and previous EU discourses in France and Germany – are examined comparatively. Based on the results, explanatory theses on the discursive effect of the contextual factors are developed, leading to an explanatory model.

The research questions for considering the discursive contexts were: *How are national EU discourses, and thus the formation of European identity, shaped by specific national contexts and references? What role do each of the following play in the development of national EU discourses: (a) the national political system, (b) the national political parties, (c) citizens as recipients of the discourses, their attitudes towards the topic, as well as the socio-economic situation and the climate of opinion at the time of the discourses, (d) central motifs of national identity narratives, and (e) central aspects and motifs of previous European policy discourses?*

7.1 Context Conditions in Germany and France: An Overview

The *framework conditions* in the two political systems differ in several respects. Firstly, in Germany, the EU Constitutional Treaty was *ratified* only by parliament. This meant that there was much less public discussion about the contents of the treaty than in France, and voters were at best listeners or spectators, but not the target group and decision-makers in the matter. Thus, a fundamental difference between the two discourses is their character: in France, the discourse prepared a binary distinction before a vote (yes/no); in Germany, the discourse preceded parliamentary ratification.

Secondly, it was also less clear in Germany than in France who the *addressees* of the discourse were. Since the electorate did not have to decide, interested parties and citizens as recipients tended to come from among the elites (politicians, academics or intellectuals, and the business community). In France, citizens-as-voters were addressed.

Thirdly, while there is a traditional lack of conflict among the political class in Germany about the question of *European integration*, the contrary is the case in France.

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This is surprising because, fourthly, as in France, there have been changes in the German political system due to *Europeanisation*, which have led to a loss of powers in decisive locations (for example, in the German Bundestag). However, these are much more in line with the logic of the German federal *raison d'état* than was the case in France.

Fifthly, the relationship between the *central motifs of the national identity narrative* and European integration in Germany does not tend to be conflictual, as in France, but is traditionally harmonious. The German Federal Republic was constructed from the outset as a partially sovereign state with the goal of integration with the West.

Finally, German *citizens* are about as positive or critical of European integration as in France. However, the EU-critical potential among the population in Germany – in contrast to France – did not significantly influence the discourse because the citizens did not decide on the TCE. In the following, these findings will be explained in more detail.

7.2 The Role of Political Systems and Their Changes

Europeanisation had induced changes in the political systems of both states in question; however, these related to different areas, and they entailed different reactions in politics and society (Balme and Woll 2005; Mény 2006; Offerlé 2004; Schmidt 2010; Sturm and Pehle 2005; see in detail Wiesner 2014, 126–132, 295–300).

In France, the understanding of the state, or even the core of the *raison d'état*, was attacked by Europeanisation. The idea of the unitary and indivisible sovereign republic was confronted with the requirement of divided sovereignties, and Europeanisation induced a move away from the strong, intervening state towards a more administrative and organising state, and thus also a reduction in the role of the – non-marketised – *services publiques*.

These developments led to defence and protest reactions on the part of sovereigntists, and via social protests, which also characterised the referendum discourse in 2005. Other changes in the French political system, such as the expansion of the *Assemblée Nationale*'s powers to participate in European politics, did not provoke any reactions.

In Germany, the changes were less far-reaching, but also significant, affecting two central elements of the German parliamentary and federal system. The German Bundestag effectively lost powers, as did the federal states and their parliaments. The federal (i.e., based on shared sovereignties) and less interventionist state apparatus did not change structurally.

The areas of the political system that tended to be strengthened by Europeanisation in France – parliament, regions, municipalities – lost considerable powers in Germany. This could potentially have had an effect on the discourse, and it was also addressed as described, but did not decisively shape the discourse.

In comparison, it is striking that there were clear changes in the political systems in both countries, but that these were the subject of far greater criticism in France than in Germany, both before and during the discourse in spring 2005.

Losses of sovereignty, shared sovereignties, and the reduction of the role of the strong state and the *services publiques* have thus played a central role in France for years, but the losses of competence of the Bundestag and the federal states have only been addressed by small groups of state and federal politicians in Germany, and only occasionally, such as in the Maastricht and Lisbon constitutional complaints (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2008; Kirchhoff 1994; Weiler 1995).

This leads to the thesis that the degree to which changes brought about by Europeanisation are perceived as strongly problematic or used as a starting point for EU criticism depends on whether and how such changes are discussed as problems. While this was clearly the case in France for areas such as the *services publiques*, in Germany a significant loss of autonomy on the part of the legislature was almost inconsequential, except for the constitutional complaints on the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties.

What are the reasons for these differences? Why have the changes in the political system been so intensely addressed in France but not in Germany? One major reason has already been discussed in [Section 5.1.2](#) – the German *silencing strategy*, with which the major parties sanction minority voices who deviate from the elite consensus in support of European integration.

Another explanation could be that, in France especially, those developments gave rise to criticism that contradicted central elements of the French conception of the state. The German conception of the state, on the other hand, is explicitly oriented towards European integration through the mandate of the Basic Law (i.e., the German Constitution). In this respect, developments in Germany corresponded to one state objective while counteracting two other central elements of the German conception of the state: the Bundestag and the federal states.

These considerations lead to two further explanatory theses for the low discursive activity around the loss of powers of the Bundestag and the federal states in Germany:

Firstly, European integration as a *raison d'état* for Germany is possibly weighted more heavily by most politicians and citizens than the preservation of the powers of the Bundestag and the federal states.

Secondly, it is possible that both groups of actors do not assess the loss of powers as so serious that it would justify strong criticism of European integration.

A further explanation is to be seen in the structure of the party system, as will be now discussed.

7.3 The Party Systems and European Integration

Linked to what was just discussed, it must be noted that the impact of European integration on the party system was very different in Germany and France (Pütz 2007; Sturm and Pehle 2005; Winock 2003; see in detail Wiesner 2014, 132–144, 300–307).

For France, the positioning on European integration acted as a line of conflict in all camps, especially since the 1990s, and had led to splits and new formations. This could potentially influence the discourse – and in fact it did.

Now, the development of the EU-related conflict lines in the French party system can be soundly explained by the contextual factors: in France, the political system changed decisively due to European integration, the party system was and is split on the matter, citizens are soundly EU-critical, the national identity narrative is opposed to European integration, and EU discourses have always been controversial. Nevertheless, a convergence of the official European policy positions of the major French parties became apparent in the decades prior to 2005; however, this also led to left and right EU critics sharply distinguishing themselves from the centre (Rozenberg 2011).

Thus, instead of disciplining representatives of dissenting opinions in advance, or preventing them from expressing them, as was the case in Germany, the increasing convergence in France apparently even encouraged dissenting voices to express and sharpen their criticism. As the 2005 discourse showed, there is much to be gained from such a strategy.

In sum, it can be stated that

The French political class has never been largely united in its position on European integration. From the beginning, elite discourses on European integration reflected France's specific tension between European integration and the role of state, nation, and sovereignty. However, depending on the political camp and political role (right/left; opposition/government, etc.), arguments against these inherent tensions varied greatly.

In contrast, the German case is harder to explain. There is a convergence of European policy positions that is historically related to a Social Democrat swing in the 1960s with the SPD Godesberg programme. After having had a strongly anti-capitalist stance, the Social Democrats then subscribed to the Western German Social Market Economy and European integration (Schmidt 2010, 86–90). This shift of the Social Democrats occurred much earlier than the one in France and also had much more far-reaching consequences.

In Germany, between the Social Democrats' adoption of the elite consensus in the 1960s and the development of the decidedly integration-critical course of the PDS and Left Party in more recent times, positioning on European integration hardly played a role in the party system. Except for the PDS and later the Left Party, the parties represented in the Bundestag were rather united in their pro-integrationist consensus. There is potential for conflict (e.g., in questions related to the Euro bailouts), but no potential for division. Minority voices could hardly assert themselves or were sanctioned and marginalised with the *silencing strategy*.

In [Section 5.1](#), the thesis was developed that the consensus of the German mainstream parties fuels the *silencing strategy* and that in consequence actors anticipate it. Hence EU-critical politicians know that they will be sanctioned if they contradict the elite consensus, so they either do not publicly criticise the EU or, like Gauweiler and the PDS, do so only if they see something to gain for themselves in the process.

But party convergence alone does not explain voting behaviour. Why were the German politicians and parties who critically addressed changes induced by Europeanisation largely unsuccessful when it came to electoral successes? Although German citizens as a whole up until 2005 were about as EU-critical as French citizens (see below), they gave significantly fewer votes to EU-critical parties (Beichelt 2009, 201; Lees 2008, 17). In federal elections, around 90% of the votes shifted to pro-EU parties (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010). In contrast, as early as in the 2002 French presidential and parliamentary elections, around 40% of the votes were allocated to parties critical of the EU (Perrineau and Ysmal 2003, 180–182). The 2022 presidential election has strongly underlined

that this tendency has not been slowed down since 2002. The results of the first round show 21.95% for the left-wing EU critic Jean Luc Melenchon and 2.06% for the right-wing EU critic Nicolas Dupont Aignan. To those added the roughly 30% votes for the two right-wing extremist candidates Le Pen and Zemmour (see below). All in all, EU critical candidates thus obtained more than 54% of the votes in the first round of the presidential election in 2022 (all above election results for 2022 are taken from Ministère de l'Intérieur 2022). Moreover, the results indicate a right-wing extremist challenge to representative democracy in France altogether, as 2022 also marked a new record for right-wing extremist votes. This indicates a general crisis of representative democracy in France, as will be discussed in [Chapter 9](#).

Coming back to the much more moderate situation in Germany, both regarding right-wing extremism and EU criticism, one possible explanatory thesis for the German situation until 2005 that can be derived from what was said above is that the extensive unity of the major German parties with regard to European integration might also have influenced voter decisions. This thesis is convincing to the point that there simply were few parties to vote for if people wanted to express EU criticism. As will be discussed below, the one exception that has been relatively successful is the Alternative for Germany (AfD) which was founded in 2013.

Two explanations for the German parties' relative resistance against pushing forward EU criticism have been put forward in the literature (Sturm and Pehle 2005, 172–174) and can be rejected after the comparison with France. The first is that the substantively different positions of the German parties on EU policy are not communicated to the citizens, possibly partly because EU policy does not interest the population, or because the parties do not believe that elections can be won using the topic of Europe. Although this is true, the French parties also made this assumption. This contributed to their failure to develop a common position in the 2005 referendum discourse and became a factor in the success of the TCE's opponents. The second thesis is that the German party system favours parties of the centre and therefore also pro-integrationist parties (Lees 2002). Again, this is true, but the French system, with its majority voting system, favours these even more strongly. It also strengthens the opponents' efforts at demarcation and hence polarisation.

So, what then is the reason for the German political system's relative resilience against EU-critical parties? The considerations in [Chapters 4–6](#) allow for succinct conclusions on this:

There are *seven explanatory factors* for the fact that parties critical of integration have a long time been unable to assert themselves in Germany. It can be assumed that their interaction has a decisive effect and that it prevents largely and efficiently EU-critical positioning and tendencies from finding broad support in the German party system:

- 1 The pro-integrationist *elite consensus* to which all ruling parties have subscribed.
- 2 The resulting *silencing strategy* that sanctions dissent.

- 3 The *deliberate adoption* of anti-EU positions by members of major parties, especially the CSU, which discourages the emergence of EU-critical protest parties.
- 4 The *strategic interests* of the respective actors because they only express criticism of the EU when there is something for them to gain from it.
- 5 The manner of *political communication* and the (dis-)connection of EU criticism to motifs and reasons for decision-making that are assertive in national political discourses.
- 6 The (lack of) actual *uptake of EU-critical arguments by the population* (because the fact that EU-critical potential exists in the population does not mean that it is also translated into party-political support – otherwise, certain EU-critical positions would already have become more prevalent).
- 7 The *low electoral success* of EU-critical parties.

The debates on the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2008; Kirchhoff 1994; Weiler 1995), in which the contradictions were more openly represented in the major, traditionally pro-integrationist parties, show that the consensus of the political elites is not endlessly durable, even in the parties of the centre. This leads to the explanatory thesis that these conflicts became apparent because these issues touched upon central motifs of German national identity (see below).

The example of the PDS discussed in [Section 5.1.2](#) also supports this explanatory model, because the PDS broke through the pro-integrationist elite consensus as a whole party. The *silencing strategy* thus only had a limited effect, since it could only result in sanctions from other parties, but not internal sanctions within the PDS. In addition, the PDS practised its criticism of the EU out of strategic interest and tried to specifically connect it with left criticism motifs that were also established in Germany. The PDS thus tried to turn factors 1 to 5 specifically in its favour.

Finally, the case of Alternative for Germany is telling, too. This right-wing populist party was founded in 2013, and its original main issue was a criticism of the German government's politics in the EU financial crisis. AfD pronounced itself strongly against financial aid for debtor states in the EU, and hence in favour of protecting German money. But then in 2015 AfD took on a strong anti-immigration stance, and this led to a major increase in votes. In the pandemic, the party mingled its anti-immigration strategy with a strong notion of protest against the pandemic measures (Hansen and Olsen 2022; Schmitt-Beck 2017).

In all this, EU criticism is still a strand today, but without being the dominant issue. This speaks in favour of EU criticism indeed being taken up, with the AfD being the main German political party that does this, but also of EU criticism not working as a single or stand-alone issue. EU criticism is used as one ingredient in a right-wing populist potpourri. As will be discussed below, the attitudes of the population as well as previous conflicts on EU integration further underline these findings.

7.4 Citizen Attitudes to European Integration

Until 2005, the year of the discourses, both Germany and France showed a medium level of citizen identification with and support for the EU (see in detail Wiesner 2014, 150–165, 307–312). A comparative analysis of Eurobarometer findings until 2005 shows similar tendencies, but it is noticeable that the German population was partly even more critical than the French: between 1984 and 1993, as well as between 1996 and 2002, the EU membership support rates were *higher* in France than in Germany. Around the introduction of the Euro, support in Germany even dropped to below 40% at times (Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

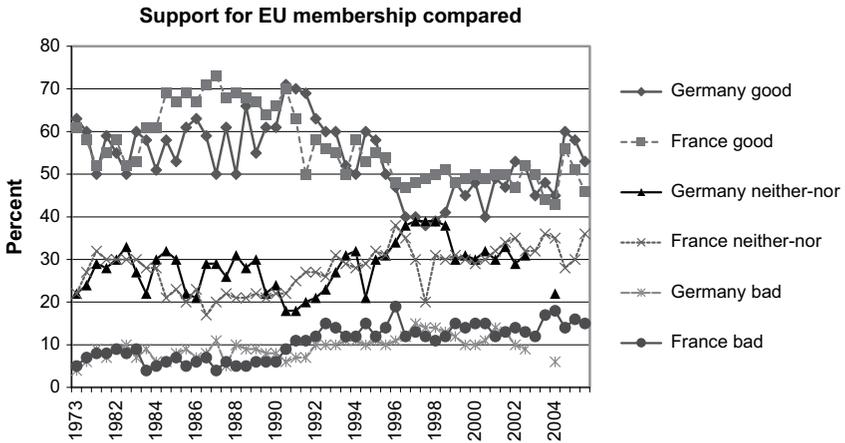


Figure 7.1 Support for EU membership in Germany and France

Source: Eurobarometer 1973–2005; own illustration.

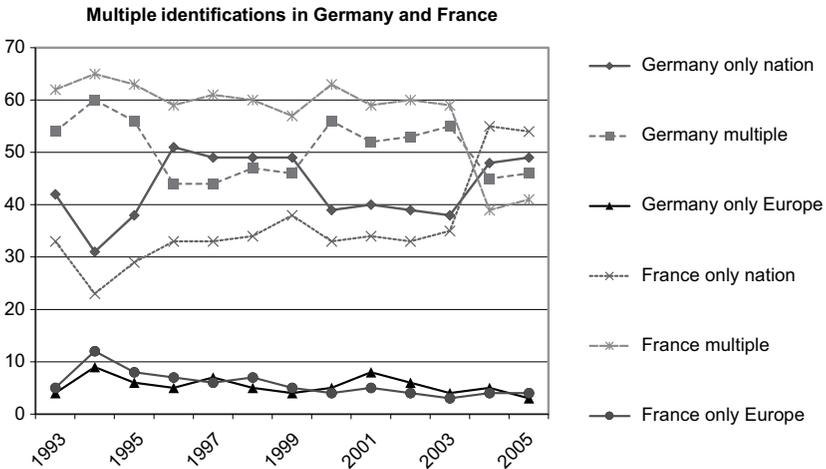


Figure 7.2 Multiple identifications in Germany and France

Source: Eurobarometer 1993–2005; own illustration.

Until 2003, the French population also showed a more pronounced multiple identification than the German population: to that point, around 60% of the French respondents felt both French and European, but only around 50% of the Germans surveyed answered similarly. From 1993 to 2003, the figures in France were 5–15 percentage points higher than in Germany. Only in 2004 and 2005 did the exclusively national orientation in France exceed that in Germany, i.e., in the run-up to the referendum on the TCE in France. It is thus to be suspected that the stronger primarily national identification in France was possibly related to the preparation for the referendum.

The comparative perspective makes clear that the multiple identifications in both states do not correspond to what would have been expected after considering the elite discourses and the attitudes of the population:

In accordance with the pro-integrationist and clearly multi-level identification-oriented EU narrative among the German elite, one could assume that multiple identifications in Germany should be continuously higher, while the conflict-prone French elite EU discourses would have suggested less multiple identification. However, the results show that this is not the case; multiple identifications were even higher among the French over an extended period.

This illustrates that elite discourses not only do not allow direct conclusions to be drawn about the attitudes (or identification and support) of the population, but that elite discourses and attitudes can differ significantly.

For the German case, the results make it easier to explain this discrepancy than for France. Contributions on the part of the German population on the EU hardly played a role in the German EU discourse in 2005; the elite discourse and positioning of the population remained largely independent of each other. This is also an explanation for the reverse phenomenon, namely that the population's attitudes do not correspond to the elite discourse.

Furthermore, one explanatory thesis for this phenomenon is that political elites in the member states are generally more positive about European integration than their populations. This can also be explained by the fact that in both states the political system has been Europeanised, but society is lagging behind. In other words, Europeanisation has taken place from the top down, without the attitudes of the citizens and the social institutions following (immediately).

However, the results of the French discourse in 2005 lay ground for the assumption that elites apparently do at least partially adapt their positioning to the preferences of the population, and they will do so on specific occasions like the referendum discourse. In the referendum discourse, elite and citizen positions quite apparently influenced each other, which encouraged the discourse enforcement of EU criticism.

The previous conflicts related to European integration in both states already mentioned help to explain these findings further. They indicate that the specific, nationally shaped motifs of EU criticism in Germany as well as in France differ. In Germany they were particularly related to the introduction of the Euro and the eastward enlargement, and in France to the criticism of economic liberalism, the eastward enlargement, and the democratic quality of the EU (see below and in detail Wiesner 2014, 186–189, 330–333).

This means that in both states specific EU criticism existed prior to 2005. However, it was only successfully addressed in the French EU discourse in 2005, and not in the German one. How can this be explained? A recapitulation of the factors that led to the discursive implementation of this criticism among the population in the French 2005 discourse is revealing:

Criticism of the EU was specifically introduced by left-wing critics in France; it was directed at specific fears held by the population; it was combined with classical motifs of the French national identity narrative that conflicted with European integration as well as with classical conflict motifs of French political culture; and it was represented by political actors who hoped to gain political advantages from it, while the supporters were divided amongst themselves. In addition, there was a political situation in which criticism was able to assert itself well.

In the German discourse in 2005, some attempts were also made to criticise the EU. In a comparative analysis, it can be conclusively explained why these did not prevail:

The main lines of argument were not directed at specific fears held by the population. Although actors attempted to tie their arguments in with classic or potentially conflicting national identity motifs (e.g., on the question of militarisation), this failed to succeed everywhere. Though the critics did present their arguments because they hoped to gain political advantages, unlike in France, they were confronted with an existing pro-integrationist elite consensus that discursively weakened and marginalised them via the *silencing strategy*. The political situation also failed to offer openings for the critique.

However, the letters to the editor and the sporadic demonstrations show that the TCE critique was adopted by some citizens. There are two further explanatory theses regarding the question of why criticism did not prevail – but they tend to contradict each other:

- 1 There was no opportunity or impetus, as in France, to express this criticism widely, because the ratification process was removed from public participation in Germany.
- 2 The fact that there was no institutionalised participation does not mean that protest by citizens against a decision is impossible, although this protest was almost completely absent in Germany, unlike in France. One possible explanation for this is that in Germany the *raison d'état* ultimately dominates among the citizens, i.e., that despite critique of the EU, they go along with the elite consensus to such an extent that broad resistance never takes off.

The second thesis could also potentially explain why there has been no lasting support for EU-critical parties in Germany.

7.5 Central Motifs of National Identity Narratives and Previous EU Discourses

In France, the contradictions to European integration contained within the core motifs of the national identity narrative are significantly greater than in Germany, where the relationship between the two is harmoniously constructed (Balme and Woll 2005; Bergem 2005; Jarausch 2005; Mendras and Dubois Fresney 2007; see in detail Wiesner 2014, 165–174, 312–319). The fundamental European policy motifs of the last decades in France and Germany also have completely different orientations.

In Germany, they are substantive-normative and future-oriented; they are also positive and supportive, have existed since the beginning of integration, and are shared by all camps. In France, they are related to France's interests, often critical, they have only partially existed since the beginning of integration, and depending on the camp and the debate context, opposing motifs have been added.

Table 7.1 presents an overview.

There was thus more potential for conflict in EU discourses in France since the beginning of integration. Previous EU discourses thus had been traditionally conflictual or at least ambivalent.

In this respect, it is not possible to speak of a uniform elite EU discourse in France. There is no dominant or even uniform EU narrative in France, neither in politics nor among the population. At best, it is possible to speak of an elite and governmental concept that had been largely unchallenged for the years prior to 2005. The referendum discourse in 2005, however, brought it to an unquestionable end.

Table 7.1 Comparison of the basic European policy motifs in France and Germany since the beginning of European integration

<i>France</i>			<i>Germany</i>		
<i>Motif</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Motif</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Use</i>
<i>France's central role in the EU</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps	<i>Peacekeeping</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Specificity of France's state, nation, and republic</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps	<i>Political agreement</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Europe as a means of asserting French interests</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps	<i>Community of culture and values</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Europe as a danger or the end of France's role and sovereignty</i>	Since the beginning of integration	Sovereignist critics, PCF, until the 1990s: Gaullists	<i>Democracy promotion</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Europe as a soulless and irresponsible technocracy</i>	Since the beginning of integration	Sovereignist critics, PCF, until the 1990s: Gaullists	<i>Wealth creation</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Europe as a continuation of France</i>	Mitterrand	EU supporters	<i>Integration as a raison d'état</i>	Since the beginning of integration	All camps, different emphases
<i>Europe as an expression of the division between the elite and the people</i>	Maastricht discourse	Critics of the Maastricht Treaty, the TCE, and European integration in general			
<i>Europe is moving away from what France wants</i>	Eastward expansion	Critics of Eastern Enlargement, Critics of European Integration			
<i>Europe as a vehicle of globalisation and economic liberalism</i>	December strikes 1995	Left EU critics			
<i>Europe as a threat to France's republican values</i>	December strikes 1995	Left Republican EU critics			

Source: Own Representation.

Direct conflicts between state, republic, nation, sovereignty, and European integration, which the sovereigntist and right-wing opponents emphasised, were formative in the Maastricht discourse in 1992 (Wiesner 2014, 280–291). In the 2005 discourse, antagonisms derived indirectly from the understanding of the state and republic (social policy/*services publiques* versus EU) asserted themselves most clearly.

The sovereignty-driven conflicts between France’s national identity narrative and European integration had apparently lost importance among both political actors and the population since 1992.

One explanatory thesis for this is that the real adaptation of the constitution, its organs, and jurisprudence to the necessities of integration over the years also brought about an adaptation of the attitudes of politicians and citizens, i.e., a changed interpretation of the national identity narrative.

In contrast, in all previous German EU discourses, a broad harmony between the national identity narrative and European integration was constructed. This was also the case in 2005.

In the German 2005 discourse, a broad harmony between the national identity narrative and European integration was constructed. However, although the conception of Germany as a part of the EU shaped the structure of the discourse and the statements as a rule (*silencing strategy*) via the self-evident multi-level reference, it was less prominent in the content of the discourse. The role of European integration for the German national identity narrative was thus mainly addressed passively.

The *silencing strategy* also supports the thesis discussed at the beginning of this chapter: most German politicians from the parties represented in the Bundestag regard support for European integration largely as an unquestionable *raison d’état*. Paradoxically, the fact that the established German EU narrative was not explicitly addressed in the 2005 discourse also speaks in favour of this, as discussed in [Chapter 5](#):

A deeply rooted *raison d’état* does not have to be addressed; it can also come to bear precisely by *not* being addressed. In this respect, the fact that hardly any politician in 2005 saw the need to reaffirm the German EU narrative can also be interpreted as a sign of its strength – because it was working. The unspoken postulate that the narrative was strong enough and did not need to be mentioned at all formed the prerequisite for making minority voices appear to be the ones failing to recognise what is self-evident and deviating from the norm.

Overall, it can be said:

The French EU discourses at all levels and in all phases were clearly more critical of the EU than the German discourses – but thus more in line with the preferences of the French. The reverse is true for Germany. The broad elite consensus and the pro-integrationist EU narrative only correspond to the preferences of the part of the population that also supports integration, while the EU scepticism of the other part is not included in the dominant EU narrative.

7.5.1 Discourse, Conception, Narrative

On this basis, some conclusions can be drawn regarding dominant EU conceptions or narratives:

In Germany, there is a dominant EU narrative that has been established for decades, which is shared and supported by the vast majority of the political elites, and which can thus be characterised as a national EU narrative. The results indicate that it is so stable because most of the crucial contextual factors in Germany work to stabilise it and/or prevent it from being critically questioned.

The dominant EU narrative manifested in the *German discourse*, too:

- 1 In Germany, traditional positive references between the EU and Germany that had been established for 50 years were constructed/activated in the EU discourse in 2005; the dominant positive elite narrative was largely confirmed – however, it was hardly activated and mainly manifested in the *silencing strategy*.
- 2 The political elites were largely united in their support for the TCE.

For France, the contrary is true.

In France, on the other hand, there is no stable EU conception, let alone a narrative. Since the beginning of integration, French EU discourses have been marked by conflicts, so despite a convergence of the official European policy positions of the major parties, there have only been temporarily dominant EU conceptions, which have never been entirely or largely uncontroversial. In this context, the referendum discourse should be seen as another in a series of interpretive conflicts.

This manifested in the *French discourse*:

- 1 Within the referendum discourse, opposing elite discourses, whose conflicts were latent beforehand, found a space to express themselves.
- 2 In almost all contributions by right-wing and left-wing opponents of the referendum, a contrast was constructed between national interests or French political culture and the current priorities of European integration in 2005. This markedly impacted the referendum discourse and voting behaviour.

Thus, it seems that the opponents took advantage of the fact that, in case of doubt, national patterns of identification take precedence over European patterns of integration when the two are set against each other.

In the course of the study, further theses regarding the relatively stable national EU conceptions or narratives were developed:

National EU conceptions or narratives must be compatible with the strategic interests of national elites and the core motifs of national identities in order to be sustainable.

- It can therefore be assumed that positive or negative connections between nation and EU are constructed according to the strategic interests of the discursive actors.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the socio-economic context impacts the identification of citizens.

- It can be assumed that the elites refer to this in their discourses.

Overall, the following relations can be assumed: National EU conceptions or narratives construct

- a positive references between the EU and national identity if
 - identification with the EU can be argued to fit national identity.
 - a positive socio-economic context exists.
 - this corresponds to the strategic interests of the discursive actors.
- b They construct negative references when:
 - there are latent or explicit conflicts between national identity and identification with the EU.
 - the strategic interests of the elite representatives contradict each other.
 - the socio-economic context is negative.

National EU conceptions or narratives can be stable or contentious. According to the factors mentioned above, it is assumed that they are stable when:

- there is an elite consensus.
- the discourses fit with national identity.
- a positive everyday context (economic prosperity, etc.) supports this.
- the strategic interests of the elites match them.

If these factors are not present, it cannot be assumed that national EU conceptions or narratives are stable.

7.6 Contexts and Discursive (Non-)Success of EU Criticism

Based on the above, a number of theses on the discourse impact of the contexts can be developed.

In Germany, as described, there is a broad consensus among the political elites in support of European integration that only breaks on special occasions (such as the introduction of the Euro and Turkey's accession; see Wiesner 2014, 165–174, 312–319):

- 1 The consensus of the political parties of the centre breaks down when conflicts caused by European integration touch upon central, deeply rooted motifs of German national identity.

However, the Bundestag's loss of powers that resulted from European integration has hardly been discussed. The following theses for explaining this lack of discussion in Germany emerged based on the above:

- 2 The majority of politicians and citizens attach greater importance to European integration as a *raison d'état* than to the preservation of the powers of the Bundestag and the federal states.
- 3 Both groups of actors do not consider the loss of power to be so serious that it would justify strong criticism of European integration.
- 4 The *silencing strategy* works because support for European integration is regarded by most German politicians belonging to parties represented in the Bundestag as a largely unquestionable *raison d'état*.

The last thesis could also further explain why there has been no lasting support for EU-critical parties in Germany thus far:

5 One explanatory thesis for low voter support for EU-critical parties in Germany is that the *raison d'état* and the extensive unity of the major parties also influence voters' decisions so that they ultimately only support parties that share the elite consensus.

However, the Left Party and AfD are exceptions here, even if EU criticism is not at the core of their political agenda.

The comparison made it clear that multiple identifications did not correspond to the orientation of elite discourses in either country. In Germany, in line with the integrative elite narrative, a stronger multiple-identification orientation (i.e., agreement with statements such as "I feel German and European") would have been expected than in France, where elite discourses are more conflictual. Building on the context model discussed in [Section 2.2.2](#), it could have been presumed that European and national identification are most likely to complement each other positively when the contexts characterise this in that way. This has not been confirmed.

Rather, the German case shows that the contexts characterise the relationships between the identity levels positively to very positively, but the relationships between individual national identification and individual EU-related identification are not more favourable for multi-level identifications than in France, where the contexts characterise the relationships much more critically.

Importantly,

6 This means that elite discourses do not allow direct conclusions to be drawn about the attitudes (or *identification and support*) of the population.

The following theses have been developed to explain this discrepancy between elite discourses and citizen orientations:

- 7 Elite discourses and attitudes can differ significantly because of the following:
 - a Elite discourses and the positioning of the population remain largely independent of each other or do not interact (as in Germany). This is also an explanation for the attitude of the German population not corresponding to the elite discourse.
 - b Elites do not or only partially adapt their positioning to the preferences of the population (as in France).
- 8 Political elites in the EU member states are generally more positive about European integration than their populations.

The results of the study moreover indicate that the relationships between contexts, discourses, and individual attitudes are complex. Various findings point to the need for further research:

- 1 The construction of a delimiting relationship between the levels of identity in the discourse apparently also favours a stronger orientation of individual attitudes towards demarcation.
- 2 The extent to which the construction of a positive relationship between the identity levels in the discourse also favours a stronger orientation of individual attitudes towards multiple identifications could not be established.
- 3 According to the available results, the influencing of identification and support can hardly take place via short-term discourses but is presumably based on longer lasting processes. Therefore, it could be assumed that only long-term positive contextual conditions strengthen identification and support.
- 4 However, such longer term positive contextual conditions are present in Germany, but without the corresponding above-average positive relationship of the two levels being evident in individual attitudes.
- 5 All in all, the role of contexts for individual identifications still needs to be examined more closely.

7.7 How Does EU Criticism Obtain Discursive Success? A Process Model

All in all, it now becomes easy to explain that, and why, conflicting EU discourses repeatedly emerged in France, including in the 2005 discourse. This can be explained by the conflicts between decisive contextual factors and European integration as well as the successful strategies to discursively employ them. However, explanations for why conflicting constructions or negative attributions never discursively asserted themselves in the German EU discourses are less evident: as

described, there was also conflict potential in Germany, but the conflicts were only rarely addressed, and if they were, they did not spread.

So, it is obviously not enough that a certain contextual factor is given – it must firstly also be *addressed* and secondly influence the discourse or *assert* itself there.

The results have thus far advanced various theses that can explain why EU criticism was strongly addressed in France, but hardly at all in Germany. They are summarised once again as follows:

- 1 Explanatory factor of *elite consensus or dissent, and elite support or criticism*: In Germany, there is a broad pro-integrationist consensus among the major parties – this also leads to real losses of powers such as those of the Bundestag being supported (see above). In France, on the other hand, although there is an official convergence of positions among the major parties, there is significant dissent among French politicians and parties on the issue of European integration (see above).
- 2 Specific German explanatory factor of the *silencing strategy*: The elite consensus is so strong in Germany that minority voices who deviate from it are sanctioned. They anticipate that criticism of the EU will bring them disadvantages and therefore express it less often or not at all (see [Section 5.1.2](#) and above).
- 3 Explanatory factor of *strategy and opportunity*: In Germany, there is something to be gained by opposing this consensus only in special initial situations for certain actors. Either minority representatives within large parties use it to strengthen their special role, or entire parties, such as the PDS, deviate from the consensus because they want to tap into the EU-critical potential in the population (see [Section 5.1.2](#) and above). In France, on the other hand, due to the specificity of the party system and the high conflict potential of European integration, as well as in view of the electoral successes of EU-critical constellations, there is generally something to be gained from EU criticism (see [Section 4.2](#) and above).
- 4 Explanatory factor of *party structure*: Parties in Germany are more firmly and clearly structured than in France; deviant behaviour is sanctioned more severely. In France, it can go largely without consequences (there is no threat of party sanctions or expulsion proceedings).
- 5 Explanatory factor of *involvement/non-involvement of citizens*: In Germany, citizens are not asked their opinion on European integration, so their critical attitudes are not addressed (see above). In France, they are regularly asked, and their critical opinions are regularly publicly addressed (see above).
- 6 Explanatory factor of *acceptance/non-acceptance by citizens*: Voters in Germany rarely support Eurosceptic positions and formations, especially

not in the long term (see above). In France, these have better chances of success due to the flexibility of the party system, and they also achieve significantly greater electoral successes, thus apparently enjoying greater acceptance (see above).

- 7 Explanatory factor *conflictual/integrative model of national identity and European integration*: The German national identity narrative constructs Germany as part of the EU and as the engine of European integration. These motifs are so deeply rooted that they not only shape the behaviour of politicians, but apparently also prevent citizens from supporting sustained EU criticism (see above). In France, on the other hand, the national identity narrative conflicts with European integration in crucial ways (see above).

Overall, these factors are very fruitful in explaining the differences between the German and French discourses:

For Germany, the explanatory factors are specifically so pronounced that they contribute to preventing EU criticism from being addressed in the discourse at all.

For France, they are so pronounced that they favour their being addressed.

The German discourse in 2005 underlines the explanatory power of the above theses: the few criticisms of the EU voiced in the German discourse did not prevail among the population, even though they were certainly taken up, as letters to the editor and isolated demonstrations show. In 2005, however, it did not lead to support for parties critical of the EU or to widespread protests against the EU. Explanatory factor 5 (inclusion/non-inclusion of citizens) could explain this:

There was no opportunity or impetus in the German discourse, as there was in France, to express this criticism widely, because the ratification process was removed from participation by the population.

But there is also another, opposite, explanation. Although there was no institutionalised citizen participation in the German decision on the Constitutional Treaty, there could still have been protests – but such protests were almost completely absent in Germany, unlike in France. One possible explanation for this is:

- 8 In Germany, the *raison d'état* ultimately also prevails among the citizens; i.e., despite EU criticism, they support the elite consensus to such an extent that they do not openly resist it.

There are also other factors that can explain why criticism of the EU that is voiced does not prevail or does not prevail permanently in the discourse in Germany:

- 9 Explanatory factor of *motifs used in the discourse*: Are positively defined motifs connected with positions towards the EU (peace, freedom, democracy) that are core components of the national identity narrative? Or are equally deeply rooted negatively defined motifs used (*le social, les délocalisations, le chômage, l'ultralibéralisme*)? Is there an appeal to specific EU-related fears? Can established stereotypes be linked to, and what kind are they? Positive, as in Germany? Or do they exploit latent or overt antagonisms, as in France?
- 10 Explanatory factor of the *political situation*: Does the political situation favour the assertion of EU criticism?

These factors are also so pronounced in Germany that EU criticism can hardly assert itself in the discourse. For France, the reverse is true: the chances are high that EU criticism will prevail in the discourse.

Thus, for each contextual factor, it is necessary to consider (1) *how* it is shaped and whether it results in potential conflict, and (2) whether and *why* it becomes effective in the discourse.

Table 7.2 illustrates this for the contextual factors in Germany and France. It also shows that in France in 2005 *several* contextual factors were addressed and could interact, unlike in Germany:

The overview also illustrates the contrasting picture of the two cases: in France, on the one hand, there were changes induced by European integration in almost all contextual factors that could potentially influence the discourse. Almost all of them were also both addressed and became effective in the discourse (such as the changes to the *services publiques*). In Germany, on the other hand, there were already fewer potentially effective contextual factors. Moreover, these were either not addressed (criticism by the population of eastward enlargement) or they did not assert themselves in the discourse (loss of powers of the Bundestag).

All in all, the contextual factors explain the discourse only in part.

They do not explain by themselves whether and why they are used and made effective in the discourse or whether and why they can assert themselves.

Table 7.2 Contextual factors in Germany and France and their discursive impact

	<i>Germany</i>			<i>France</i>		
	<i>Expression of contextual factor in Germany</i>	<i>Discursive evaluation in Germany</i>	<i>Discursive impact?</i>	<i>Expression of contextual factor in France</i>	<i>Discursive evaluation in France</i>	<i>Discursive Impact?</i>
System	Loss of powers Bundestag, loss of significance federalism	Not central	Low	Restriction <i>Services publiques</i>	Central	Strong
Parties	Smaller protest parties, without success	Marginalised	Low	EU as cleavage, major conflicts, divisions	Central	Strong
Citizens	Critical	Marginalised, silenced, not asked	Low	Critical	Targeted and successfully addressed, corresponding actors	Strong
National identity	Harmonious, inclusive, <i>raison d'état</i>	Conflicts addressed, no enforcement	Low	Critical	Regularly successfully thematised	Strong
Previous EU discourses	Few potential conflicts Harmonious to alternating	Conflicts hushed up, do not assert themselves discursively	Low	Conflictual	Conflicts regularly addressed, linking to old lines of conflict	Strong
(a) Government discourses	Harmonious to alternating	See above	Low	Officially convergent	Rather harmonious	Strong
(b) Party discourses	Largely harmonious to alternating	See above	Low	Officially convergent; in fact, partly conflictual	Conflict potential in parties intensively addressed; potential for division	Strong
(c) Discourses critical of the EU	Potential conflicts rarely addressed	Conflicts addressed, no/hardly any discursive enforcement	Low	Increasing importance	Regular use, conflicting potential	Strong

Source: Own Representation.

This means in consequence that changes induced by Europeanisation in political systems and cultures, and the resulting potential conflicts, are a necessary condition for a critical discourse mobilisation – but they are not yet a sufficient condition. What is needed in order to mobilise these issues discursively is the opening of a discursive arena (such as a referendum campaign), actors that want to thematise the conflicting issues, and a political situation that favours this. A certain constellation of contextual factors thus only influences the emergence of conflictual constructions in discourse if

- 1 There is *potential for conflict* between a contextual factor and European integration.
- 2 There is a *discourse* on the issue or an occasion to start one.
- 3 The potential for conflict or the contextual factor is also *specifically addressed* and used in the discourse.
- 4 The *constellation in the discourse* (actors' interests, citizen's attitudes towards it, openness to arguments, general climate of opinion, potential gains) favours the conflict being addressed and received.
- 5 There are *actors* who do both.
- 6 And the conflicts *prevail* in the discourse.

In order for the conflicts to prevail and impact the discourse, the following is necessary:

- 7 The conflicts can *connect with* further, potentially discursively successful motifs or discourses, such as *le social* in France. In Germany, in contrast, it was not possible to link them with “winning topics”, and the EU itself is not one, either.
- 8 There are other *factors in the political conjuncture* that favoured them being mentioned.
- 9 There are *strategic or political advantages* to be gained for the discursive actors by addressing the conflict (this was clearly the case for opponents in France – but largely not in Germany).

Furthermore, the results indicate that

- 10 The *degree of discursive anchoring of a contextual factor* is decisive; i.e., the more strongly a motif is anchored in important reference discourses, the more likely conflicts on European integration will be

addressed and the more likely they will also assert themselves in the discourse – as in the example of the D-Mark in Germany, where opposition to the introduction of the Euro was very strong, and as in the example of the *services publiques* in France.

The decisive difference between Germany and France is that in Germany the fundamental, pro-integrationist EU discourse is strongly anchored as a *raison d'état*. Thus, it is likely that opposition to European integration in Germany can only be mobilised discursively if linked with reference motifs that are similarly strongly anchored (such as the D-Mark). In France, by contrast, almost everything that is part of the *raison d'état* can be constructed as potentially conflicting with European integration and can also be discursively mobilised.

These considerations and theses result in a *process model* for the discursive enforcement of contextual factors potentially in conflict with European integration.

Whether and when conflicts between the five contextual factors under consideration – system, parties, citizens' attitudes, national identity narratives, and previous EU discourses as well as European integration – are addressed and prevail in EU discourses is decided in *several phases*.

These phases are presented in [Table 7.3](#).

Taking into account these phases, it becomes obvious that in France in general, and in 2005 in particular, all the dimensions mentioned in [Table 7.3](#) had an impact. This means that a discursive EU-critical mobilisation and the discursive impact of EU criticism are more probable to happen and to succeed in France in general. As will be discussed in [Chapter 9](#), the same goes for the Brexit referendum and the UK. In Germany, on the contrary, the dimensions mentioned in [Table 7.3](#) until today act against discursive EU-critical mobilisation and the discursive impact of EU criticism.

But [Table 7.3](#) and the discussion in this chapter also underline that it is not a sufficient condition for discursive EU-critical mobilisation and the discursive impact of EU criticism to happen and succeed only to have a referendum. The other dimensions and phases are needed as well. The 2005 TCE referenda in Spain and Luxemburg, for instance, saw much less EU-critical mobilisation with much less of a discursive impact, and in both cases the “Yes” won the majority.

Table 7.3 Process model of discursive enforcement of conflicts between contextual factors and European integration

1st Phase: Are there (potential) conflicts between European integration and contextual factors? (Necessary but not sufficient condition)

Theses:

- The more conflicts there are, the more likely they are to gain in importance (and vice versa, the less)
- The more deeply rooted in the prevailing narrative of national identity the contextual factors/motifs that conflict with integration are, the more likely and intensively they are to be addressed

2nd Phase: Is there an opportunity to address them? i.e.:

- Is there a discourse? What is it, what is the extent, what is the occasion?
- Is there a conjuncture (among the elites and/or the population) that favours the mention of certain motifs?

3rd Phase: Are they addressed?

- Do discursive actors have a political or strategic interest in doing so?

4th Phase: Do they prevail?

- In the discourse? Is there a mutual reinforcement of discursive settings and motifs?
 - Among the citizens/voters?
 - Open questions: How do discourses affect voters? What preferences do citizens develop and why?
-

Source: Own Representation.

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8 National EU Discourses and European Identity

In the light of the results, how can the main question finally be answered – *In what respect and to what extent do national EU discourses function as means for the formation of European identity and the democratisation of the EU?*

8.1 Did the Two Discourses Work as a Means of European Identity Construction?

European identity, according to the working definition presented, needs to be a difference-affirming multi-level identity in order to be sustainable and to be able to integrate the different national contexts and identities. However, the findings on France and Germany highlight difficulties in the emergence of such an inclusive and difference-affirming European multi-level identity. They show the crucial role of national contexts and national identity narratives.

Overall, the findings suggest that the formation of European identity depends to a significant extent on national identity narratives, contexts, and influencing factors, i.e., also on national political cultures and systems.

In this respect, a different conclusion had to be drawn for the two cases. For the German case, it was twofold: until the end of May 2005, the continuous, active, and positive multi-level reference of the discourse had a potentially constructive effect on European identity. The lack of attributions to the EU tended to counteract this. From the end of May, however, the multi-level reference was also accompanied by an intensive debate about politically substantive attributions to the EU.

The German EU discourse in 2005 was thus, at least from the end of May, a potential means for the construction of European identity.

The German example illustrates that a positive reference between national and European identification on the discursive reference levels, established by a dominant elite discourse, leads to the ideal of an inclusive and difference-affirming European identity as a multi-level identity being met. However, it also shows that this does not at the same time mean that it is also constructed through active attributions – rather, a discursive impetus is needed to do so.

In the French discourse, there were numerous attributions of meaning to the EU, but those that constructed a demarcation from the EU, or non-belonging, prevailed discursively.

The French discourse thus potentially worked against the construction of a difference-affirming European multi-level identity.

The French case shows that an intensive discourse does not have to go hand in hand with the construction of positive attributions or of belonging, but can also result in the construction of demarcation.

What is decisive here, it should be emphasised once again, is that it was not only criticism but also a demarcation from the EU as a polity that was constructed, i.e., non-affiliation.

This should be distinguished from criticism of individual policies with fundamental acceptance of or support for affiliation.

Overall, it was striking that in both discourses the active construction of positive or integrating references to the EU occurred less frequently than the extensive absence of active attributions (in Germany) or the active construction of negative or conflicting references (in France).

Successfully constructing European identity, however, would require *the active construction of positive or integrating references* – similar to what happened successfully in nation-building: the national movements were concerned with the construction and dissemination – quite deliberately, often controlled from above – of positive attributions to the nation. Such processes were mainly found in the German discourse from May onwards. Contributions in the discourse then actively questioned, mentioned, or constructed an EU demos, EU democratic activities, and EU identification. Otherwise, the EU was mainly discussed when it was criticised.

But why, in both states, were there debates and attributions to the EU mainly when there were conflicts and needs for demarcation, and why were positive attributions so rare? One explanation for this is that national political elites often and readily declare the EU to be the cause of national problems. So, at least in some states, there is little tradition of positive attributions by these important supporting groups.

Another explanation is that the need for discussion on a topic arises less in the case of silent acceptance, but rather in the case of dissent and conflict. Conflicts, however, also have identity-constructing components in that they stimulate debates

and form a common focus for them. Moreover, debates that result from conflicts do not necessarily have to result in demarcations.

Conflicts are not per se an obstacle to the construction of European identity. Rather, what is decisive is whether they go hand in hand with the construction of a fundamental identification or a fundamental demarcation.

8.1.1 *Constructing Difference-Affirming Multi-Level Identity?*

The questions already addressed in [Section 2.2.1](#) now need to be taken up again. While the counterfactual norm of difference-affirming multi-level identity describes an ideal or a target, the analysis of the national discourses focused on how these take place in reality – based on this, I can now discuss to what extent the reality of identity-constructing discourses does correspond to or bring us near to the ideal of difference-affirming multi-level identity.

No clear conclusion can be drawn:

The results indicate, on the one hand, that national EU discourses can be largely empty of content, create demarcation, or be related to completely different content than political-democratic and/or difference-affirming identification – in many respects, the examples studied thus did not bring about constructions of meanings that corresponded to the counterfactual norm of difference-affirming, political-democratic oriented multi-level identity.

On the other hand, both discourses also showed very clear references and developments towards the ideal, or parts of it, such as the political-democratic meaning attribution and multi-level identification.

There are thus approximations to the ideal, as well as contradictions to it. This is further discussed below.

The study has also shown that at present, the content attributed to the EU differs at the elite level of national and EU politicians in both France and Germany.

Thus, there is currently no uniform EU-wide elite EU identity conception; elites' attributions of meaning to the EU differ partly nationally and partly according to the role of the actors.

This means that there is not even a common basis for difference-affirming, political-democratic meaning among the elites in different EU countries.

Furthermore, the results indicate that political identity cannot be clearly separated from stronger emotional attributions and identifications with ethnicity, social

group, religion, culture, or nation. Such attributions recognisably resonated in both discourses. However, this is not necessarily problematic for the construction of a difference-affirming multi-level identity. The crucial question is what role these differences play in European identity. A difference-affirming European multi-level identity is supposed to integrate the most diverse identifications and emotional attributions with regard to ethnic groups, social groups, religions, cultures, or nations on the basis of a common political-democratic identity. However, these must not conflict, but should share a common, political-democratic basis that is neutral towards internal differences. In this concept, group affiliations and political affiliations are not in opposition or in competition with each other, but political affiliation plays the overriding role. It is the basis on which the different group affiliations should be possible and compatible.

This idea is also found in Habermas' concept of *constitutional patriotism*. He emphasises that constitutional patriotism does not mean that all citizens identify themselves solely as citizens of the state, but that the political identity of a community must be *neutral* towards cultural differences (Habermas 2005, 225–27). Therefore, it can only be thought of as constitutional patriotism, namely, as an agreement to the principles of the constitution.

The political integration of citizens ensures loyalty to the common political culture. The latter is rooted in interpretation of constitutional principles from the perspective of [...] a common horizon of interpretation.

(Habermas 2005, 225)

He continues

The universalism of legal principles manifests itself in a procedural consensus, which must be embedded through a kind of constitutional patriotism in the context of a historically specific political culture.

(Habermas 2005, 226)

The tensions between democracy and difference potentially resulting from this claim have already been mentioned in [Section 2.2.1](#) and will not be discussed again here.

8.2 What Is Missing in the Construction Process of European Identity?

All in all, therefore, the construction of European identity through national EU discourse does not run in a self-fulfilling way. According to the findings of constructivist nationalism research and in comparison to the factors mentioned in [Section 2.2.2](#) which have so far conditioned successful processes of collective identity construction, it becomes apparent that most of these factors were not present, or only partially present, in the two discourses studied. If these factors are interpreted as dimensions of a process model, with the construction of the meaning of collective identities as explanandum, it can be clearly shown which of the factors were found in the examined discourses and which were not ([Table 8.1](#)).

Table 8.1 Process dimensions of collective identity construction and their (non-)implementation in the EU discourses examined

<i>Process dimensions</i>	<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Found in examined EU discourses?</i>
<i>A) Explanandum</i>		
Construction of meaning of collective identity	Invention Omission Content attribution	Yes
<i>B) Dimensions in the process of construction and penetration</i>		
1 Elites as supporting groups	Intellectuals: power of interpretation Elites (politicians) as supporters Citizens/educated affluents	Little/rarely Conditionally/partially Very rare
2 Supporting groups circulate attributions/contents	A territory/the identification with it is laden with certain, positively connotated meanings	Germany: until the end of May, largely no; from the end of May, yes France: no, because negative connotations prevailed
3 Attributions find resonance with	Audience Citizens	Germany: no France: yes – but negative/delimiting
4 Attributions achieve penetration: Conditions	Public Elites (politicians) as supporters Support of the masses Alliance elites/masses <i>Top-down penetration</i> <i>Bottom-up penetration</i> Several phases of penetration: 1. cultural avant-garde, 2. activities of the supporting groups, 3. support of the masses	Given Partially given Hardly In France yes – but for <i>Non</i> , in Germany: no Barely Positive: no. Instead, negative in France (fears, worries, anger) 1. Given, 2. Conditional, 3. Not given
5 Reinforcement through practices and symbols	Symbols Rites References to basic codes	Rare
<i>C) The following continue to have an effect (not examined here)</i>		
6 State and bureaucracy	State Political, technical, and administrative conditions	National governments and bureaucracies Do not tend to work in favour of European identity construction
7 Education	From elites/supporting groups From citizens	Both rather rarely related to European identity
8 Market and capitalism	Market/Capitalism/Economic Conditions Industrialisation	Given – but people do not identify with a market alone
9 Society	Writing (language) High culture Modernity	Given – but not sufficient without other factors

Source: Own Representation.

Comparing the results for the national EU discourses examined here with this process model of hitherto successful processes of collective identity construction, *numerous gaps* emerge:

- 1 The construction of collective identity consists of constructing *meaning* or attributing a specific and positive meaning to a territory and the identification with it: however, this was only partially the case in the discourses studied, namely, in Germany from May onward.
- 2 In this context, *elites* played central roles in the construction processes, but they only partially did what elites had done in the nation states – circulate positive or integrating attributions – and were thus only limited supporters of identity construction.
- 3 The ideas of the elites should *resonate* with the audience or citizens. This was largely not the case in Germany (it was assumed that this was also due to the passivity or lack of activation of the elite EU narrative). In France, it was not the integrating or positive but the critical and delimiting attributions that found resonance.
- 4 Collective identities assert themselves in *processes of social penetration*, whereby three phases can be distinguished: (4.1) *Proto-identities* can be conditionally taken for granted. There exist historical and more recent attributions to the EU that are potentially activatable, e.g., by EU institution. (4.2) The *avant-garde* of the *supporting groups* begins to disseminate their ideas. This was only partially implemented. (4.3) And they receive *support* from the broad mass of the population. This did not happen or barely happened for the positive/integrating references, but rather did take place in France for the delimiting/conflictual ones.
- 5 *Penetration* is required, not only from the top down, but *also from the bottom up*, with people connecting their hopes, fears, desires, and interests with the polity. This was largely absent in Germany and the opposite happened in France: people connected their fears, concerns, and problems with the EU. Thus, in Germany, there was no alliance between elites and the masses, and in France it only happened on the side of the treaty opponents. The results of the study also show that interpretive struggles developed between *top-down* and *bottom-up* attributions in France, and in some places a reverse dynamic emerged: the ideas or actions of the potential audience influenced the elites and prevailed over their ideas. In this respect, there was definitely fertile ground in the French construction process for the development of mass support or an alliance between elites and citizens – although, as described (for the time being), the conflicting constructions prevailed.
- 6 Certain *practices and symbols* play a key role – monuments, flags, and buildings, as well as festivals and rites, such as national commemoration days, processions, military parades, and holidays. There are only a few of these in relation to the EU; the French case also showed that existing national practices and symbols were used to demarcate France from the EU and that new demarcating practices were also created.

The dimensions not analysed in this study also reveal gaps in the construction of attributions of meaning to the EU:

- 7 *State institutions* have so far played a central role in penetration processes in the construction of collective identity. However, state institutions in the EU are national and have so far had an at most partial and non-targeted effect on European identity construction.
- 8 The same applies to the role of *education*: it is organised nationally.
- 9 The *market and capitalism* are a given in the EU and thus a prerequisite for penetration; however, they are insufficient as the content of a meaningful identification.

After examining the discourses based on the factor model developed from constructivist research on nationalism, two decisive open questions must be addressed:

First, the construction processes of national identities underlying the model took place using sites of coercion such as the military and the monopoly on the violence of the newly emerging states – be it vis-à-vis the individual citizens or other states. There are open questions as to how far this is actually necessary for the successful construction of collective identity and, if it is, whether it is then desirable for the EU, or acceptable from a normative perspective.

Second, Hobsbawm rightly points out that the *bottom-up component* of penetration was accompanied by citizens projecting not only their hopes and desires but also their emotions (love, attachment) onto the emerging polities. Ultimately, this resulted, among other things, in the willingness of many young men to die for their fatherlands. Again, the extent to which such emotional attachment is actually necessary for the successful construction of collective identity and, if it is, whether it is then desirable for the EU or acceptable from a normative perspective are open questions. Moreover, how far does such emotional identification have to go – up to the willingness to die for the EU?

Thus, in conclusion, some final thoughts remain on the question of whether and to what extent identification with the EU would also have to be based on an emotional foundation in order to be sustainable. The results described on the construction of national identity speak in favour of this because it was particularly sustainable when people associated their hopes and emotions with the nation. However, this does not necessarily mean that a kind of European nation has to emerge – the question is rather which original EU-related meanings or values could be the basis of a more emotionally charged identification. To put it provocatively: an emotionally charged identification with a polity and the meanings attributed to it does not necessarily have to result in a willingness to die for it, or in the devaluation of the populations of other continents. Rather, it can be based on a difference-affirming, non-violent, multi-level identity.

8.3 Summary and Research Outlook

In the following, I will resume concluding thoughts on the main results of the two case studies and the comparative research design, the limits of the findings, points of departure for future research, and the question of whether the results generally underline the chances of achieving the counterfactual norm of a difference-affirming European multi-level identity, or rather the limits.

Overall, the research design integrating different theories and approaches proved to be very fruitful in answering the research questions. It made it possible to firstly conceptualise, secondly operationalise, thirdly relate, and fourthly examine the relationships between normatively defined, individual and collective aspects of European identity. The mix of methods chosen for the study also proved fruitful. The eight analytical dimensions of discourses developed (course, actors, rules, reference levels, topics, motifs, arguments, references) could be examined in detail in a comparative manner.

The examination of contrasting cases was particularly revealing. As expected, elementary differences between the two discourses became apparent: a *national EU discourse (France)* was contrasted with an *EU discourse with national roots (Germany)*.

However, both discourses also showed tendencies towards Europeanisation and different facets in which they acted as a means for the construction of European identity (the active participation of citizens in France and the self-evident multi-level reference in Germany). Overall, each of the two discourses showed correspondences with and/or approximations to the counterfactual norm of difference-affirming multi-level identity.

The targeted and comprehensibly operationalised exploration of the *contexts*, their inclusion in the discourse analyses, and the comparative observation also proved fruitful in several respects. On the one hand, the course of the discourse, the effect of the discourse, and the eight discursive analytical dimensions (course, actors, rules, reference levels, topics, motifs, arguments, and references) could be explained far better by specifically considering these contextual factors than by solely considering the contents of the discourse. On the other hand, the direct comparison of the contexts and their effect on the discourses was also very revealing, especially due to the comparative set-up with two contrasting cases. The results of the discourse analysis made it possible to form illuminating theses as to why and when certain contextual factors had a discursive effect or not. A process model was then developed that can be used to estimate future conditions for the emergence and assertion of EU-related motifs and discourses.

8.3.1 Chances and Limits of European Identity Formation

Do the findings rather underline the chances of achieving a difference-affirming multi-level identity in the EU, or more strongly the limits? The conclusion on this question is mixed.

As regards the *chances*, over the course of both discourses, the ideal of the difference-affirming multi-level identity was approached, which is grounds for optimism with regard to its potential for development.

In *Germany*, a clear and self-evident multi-level identity was visible. Nearly all discourse actors referred to it, and it gave rise to a debate about the EU demos and the future of the EU. The construction of a multi-level identification existing at the elite level proved to be largely stable and was only occasionally questioned. This stable multi-level identification at the elite level underlines the chances – although, as discussed in detail, it would in the future have to be accompanied by a multi-level identification and EU-related democratic activity on the part of citizens.

In the *French* discourse, a demarcation from the EU prevailed. However, this finding requires a differentiated assessment for two reasons. Firstly, if positive EU references had prevailed in the French discourse rather than demarcating ones, the positive consequences for the emergence of European identity would be clear. Secondly, as already noted, and as will be further discussed in [Chapter 9](#), the fact that policies at the EU level were criticised in the French discourse is not in itself a problem for the emergence of European identity – the problem is rather that the general demarcation, i.e., a non-identification with the EU, was constructed on the basis of the rejection of certain EU policies. A critique of specific EU policies accompanied by a construction of fundamental identification with and support for the EU as a polity would clearly have to be seen differently: political protest against certain decisions and developments is democratic activity related to the polity in question and thus also an elementary part of input legitimation. It entails citizens criticising the decisions of the government of a system that they fundamentally support.

Limits: Both discourses also revealed limits to the emergence of European identity. In *Germany*, the limits consisted primarily in the lack of participation and the inactivity of the citizens (even if they were not directly consulted by referendum, they could still have become politically active on the issue), and in the fact that the difference-affirming multi-level identity has so far been constructed and confirmed predominantly at the elite level. The *French* discourse also led to the construction of a clear demarcation vis-à-vis the EU as a polity. Demarcation was primarily constructed when the meanings attributed to the EU did not correspond to an ideal defined as French.

Thus, both discourses revealed very different chances and limits – which allows for a conclusion that rather emphasises the possibilities of European identity development:

If, in the future, those developments in both discourses that helped to bring reality closer to the ideal of a difference-affirming European multi-level identity (the self-evident multi-level construction in Germany, the active discourse in France and in Germany from May onwards) were to complement each other, the chances for their emergence and reinforcement would be good.

8.3.2 Research Outlook

The design of the study also results in various limits to the explanatory power of the results. First, the complexity of the research design meant that only two cases could be examined – for good reasons, these were two large founding member states. In order to further ground the results in a broader empirical basis, in the following [Chapter 9](#), the main findings and models are discussed against the case of the Brexit discourse and the model is found to have strong explanatory value there.

Second, the analysis of two national EU discourses showed which attributions of meaning were able to assert themselves in these discourses. At the same time, the long-term impact of individual discourses is difficult to predict.

The anchoring or changing of discursively constructed attributions of meaning both in national EU conceptions (or EU narratives) and among citizens is a very lengthy process that takes years, if not decades. However, the present study could only reconstruct this long-term effect in part, namely, with reference to the historical EU discourses.

To deal with this, I have discussed elsewhere (Wiesner 2015) which effect the French discourse had on citizen attitudes. Moreover, assumptions for the future can be made based on the previous EU discourses and an overview of the political cultures in both countries, which was done in [Chapter 7](#). A long-term view at France (see [Chapter 9](#)) underlines a general crisis in French political culture.

All in all, a number of starting points for further research emerge from the results:

- 1 It would make sense to use the integrated research design as a basis for further mixed-methods studies on European identity and national EU discourses.
- 2 Broader comparative studies of national EU discourses with more cases and/or including other factors and dimensions would be illuminating: new, small, and marginal member states should also be included.
- 3 It would also be instructive to examine the long-term effects of EU discourses by: (1) considering other discourses in the same countries to examine whether or not the patterns are perpetuated and where changes can be found, as well as (2) through interviews with politicians and citizens to determine whether there are indications that they have adopted the patterns found in the discourses and to what extent. It would also be possible to conduct (3) quantitative-empirical studies among citizens to check whether there are indications of their having taken on motifs from the discourses.

- 4 For a future EU discourse, a multi-method study combining discourse analysis with a concurrent panel study and/or qualitative interviews with citizens as recipients of the discourses would also be informative.
- 5 Discourse analyses using other empirical material (books, mass newspapers, websites, leaflets) would also be illuminating, as they could capture other sites for mediating attributions of meaning to the EU.
- 6 The models developed in the course of the study could be tested in the context of such further studies.
- 7 The same applies to the further theses developed in the course of study.

In [Chapter 9](#), I will now take up some of these aspects.

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9 Towards the Critical Informed EU Citizen

The French and Dutch referenda on the TCE in 2005 only imposed an intermediate break on the ratification procedure of the new Treaty. The European Council rather quickly decided to do what was mainly a label change: the Treaty was stripped of the Charter on Basic Rights and all constitutional symbolism, and then a text that was almost the same as the one of the TCE was ratified in the usual way, via the European Council and the national parliaments. Today's Lisbon Treaty is thus largely identical to the TCE. However, despite the integration process continuing, the challenges regarding EU politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation that have become apparent in the 2005 discourses have stayed on. This is especially obvious when looking at the current French political culture and the last French elections, but also when taking into account the next major EU referendum, namely, the Brexit referendum in 2016. The following is devoted to discussing these issues and their consequences for EU politicisation, democratisation, and identity formation.

9.1 The Brexit Referendum Discourse

On June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom's adult population voted in a referendum on the country's EU membership. The question asked was, "Should the UK remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" While 51.9% of those participating in the polls voted for "Leave", only 48.1% voted for "Remain". Turnout had been 72% (all numbers BBC, 24 June 2016). While, as explained above, the consequences of the French and Dutch "No" votes on the TCE have been very moderate since they just led to some cosmetic changes and pushing Treaty ratification back into the realms of the European Council and the national parliaments, the consequences of the "Leave" vote have been much more dramatic. They led to years of complicated negotiations between the UK and the EU, and ultimately the UK leaving the European Union in January 2020. How do the Brexit referendum result and the related discourse appear in comparison to the French 2005 referendum and discourse, and to the findings presented in the previous chapters?

A closer look indicates a number of similarities regarding the sociodemographic voter profiles, but also some differences. First, both votes were very clearly aligned with regional income structures. The Brexit vote had a clear regional component that was strongly similar to the French one. While 59.9% of those voting in

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London opted for “Remain”, the economically less developed British regions in the majority voted “Leave” (BBC, 24 June 2016). This picture is very similar to the sociodemographic outcomes of the French 2005 referendum, where also the poorer and less developed regions voted “No” in the majority (Fourquet et al. 2005, 110–112, see in detail Wiesner 2014, 438–439). But, second, when it comes to the age groups, the British case differs from the French one, with 73% of those aged between 18 and 24 voting “Remain” and 60% of those aged above 65 voting “Leave”. In contrast, in France those aged older than 60 voted “Yes” in the majority, whereas the younger age groups in their majority voted “No” (IPSOS 2005, see in detail Wiesner 2014, 438–439). This means that the Brexit vote indicates a strikingly similar voter pattern when it comes to the socio-economic situation, but a different one when it comes to age.

The most probable explanation for this is that the Brexit discourse was strongly driven by right-wing arguments, parties, and actors, which rather appeal to older voters, whereas the French discourse was driven by left-wing EU arguments, parties, organisations, and actors, which tend to appeal to younger voters. Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer summarise the Brexit discourse and vote as a manifestation of right-wing populism (Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019, 3). This refers to the discourse being led very much by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). The main motifs of the “Leave” campaign centred on fear of immigration and protection of the National Health Service (NHS), and described the EU as an “Other” (Cap 2019; Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019; Smith 2021; Zappettini 2021). There was a left criticism of the EU, too (Demata 2019), but it was less decisive.

Despite this clear difference in the ideological camps and motifs driving the discourses, the Brexit discourse and the French referendum discourse show more similarities. Namely, the “Remain” campaign suffered from the same weaknesses as the French “Yes” campaign. The proponents of the “Remain”, i.e., the mainstream parties, were split internally. Moreover, the Remainers felt too secure of the victory (Smith 2021, 482), and they underestimated the risks. As the French mainstream political elites in their “Yes” campaign, the “Remain” camp put forward utilitarian arguments that were deemed to be logical, matter-of-fact, and convincing, whereas the “Remain” camp appealed to emotions and fears (Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019). Moreover, similar to the split in the French mainstream parties, in Britain, too, both large parties, Conservatives and Labour, had both Remainers and Brexiteers in their ranks. This led to arguments in favour of Brexit to be debated in parliament (Wenzl 2019), similarly to what happened in France. In contrast, in Germany in 2005, EU criticism was discursively silenced with the *silencing strategy* (see [Chapters 4 and 5](#) and in detail Wiesner 2014, 191–294, 337–397).

Like in France, the (right-wing) criticism of the UK “Leave” campaign fruitfully met with a general rise of right-wing populism since the 1980s (Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019, 2–4). In addition, previous EU discourses and the British national identity narrative were even more controversial with regard to the EU than it was the case in France. EU-critical arguments of the “Leave” campaign thus also fruitfully met with a well-established criticism of EU membership. The British EU elite conception hardly changed since the Second World War. British EU discourses

emphasise British distinctiveness and traditional reservations: “[...] a free England defying an unfree continent. There is still a feeling of ‘them’ versus ‘us’ [...]” (Marcussen et al. 2001, 112). Unlike their German and French counterparts, British political elites have never consistently tried to change these centuries-old concepts of identity (Diez Medrano 2003; Hörber 2006; Larsen 1997; Marcussen et al. 2001). And like in France, these well-established traditional motifs were fruitfully and rather easily used and applied in the Brexit campaign.

In sum, despite the British referendum discourse in 2016 being driven from the right when the French discourse was driven from the Left, and despite different age patterns of “Leave” and “No” voters, the two discourses show striking similarities. The following was said about the French case in [Section 4.2.5](#):

“Overall, in terms of the course of the discourse as well as the development of motifs and arguments, the adversary references of both camps should be evaluated differently.”

In the “Yes” camp, they mainly revealed its weakness: there were many reactions to the opponents, and their issues and motifs were taken up, while their own arguments remained weak. These were signs of the agenda-setting function of the “No” camp. Only in April, the only month in which the “Yes” camp asserted its own arguments to any appreciable extent, were there also just as many reactions in the “No” camp. The intensity of the reactions to each opponent obviously varied depending on the strength of the respective opponents and their arguments.

Having said this, it can be concluded that the arguments of the opponents of the TCE were able to prevail in the French discourse for various reasons:

- 1 They used the French tradition of protesting against those in power or “those up there”.
- 2 With the anti-liberalism motif and its link to the social protests, the left opponents were able to successfully occupy the issue that had proven to be decisive in almost all election campaigns of recent years: the social situation. In this way, the Non de Gauche succeeded in linking classic left-wing arguments, social protests, and the resistance to the Constitutional Treaty.
- 3 From March onwards, the opponents of the TCE had successfully established their chain of argumentation: social ills – ultra-liberalism – are caused by (a) the government, (b) the EU, and (c) all those who support the “Yes”. This line of argumentation allowed for various reasons to advocate the “No” vote: out of opposition to neoliberalism, out of opposition to the EU in its current form, or to make the referendum a protest vote against the government. Once this argumentation was established, the

- message of the left supporters and the PS leadership, “L’Europe sociale passe par le oui”, was no longer convincing.
- 4 From March onwards, the dynamics of the discourse created in this way worked in favour of the opponents of the TCE. Every current social issue and every criticism of the government was now linked to the referendum – even from the right.
 - 5 Added to this was the weakness of the “Yes” camp: it used few substantive arguments of its own, often only reacted to criticism, and was divided. Its contentless meta-arguments also tended to reinforce the impression of arrogance.
 - 6 On top of all this, all the supporters, even the right-wing ones, took up the topics of the “No” camp, like Sarkozy and Bayrou with their opposition to accession. This showed an ambivalent attitude and no open or clear support. While the Non de Gauche message was clear and simple, the “Yes” camp had many different messages, all ambivalent.
 - 7 It was striking that arguments on policy substance and political alternatives were apparently less decisive than clear exaggerations: the central goal of the “No” camp was not to present political alternatives, but to “be against” – to put it bluntly: it was about clear and simple opposition, not about complicated alternatives.

In a comparative perspective on the British case, similar patterns can be detected:

- 1 The “Leave” proponents used the British tradition of contesting the European Union.
- 2 With the anti-migration stance, the right opponents were able to successfully occupy a decisive issue for right-wing contestation.
- 3 The Leavers successfully established arguments that constructed the EU as anti-NHS and pro-immigration. These lines of argumentation allowed for various reasons to advocate the “Leave” vote.
- 4 The dynamics of the discourse created in this way worked in favour of the “Leave” campaign.
- 5 Added to this was the weakness of the “Remain” camp. Like in France, it used few substantive arguments of its own, often only reacted to criticism, and was divided. Its contentless meta-arguments also tended to reinforce the impression of arrogance.
- 6 On top of all this, the supporters, even the right-wing ones, took up the topics of the “Leave” camp. While the “Leave” messages were clear and simple, the “Remain” camp had many different messages, all ambivalent.
- 7 Arguments on policy substance and political alternatives were apparently less decisive than clear exaggerations: the central goal of the “Leave” camp was not to present political alternatives, but to “be against” – to put it bluntly: it was about clear and simple opposition, not about complicated alternatives.

These similarities are further underlined by another look at [Table 9.1](#) (see also [table 7.3](#) in [Chapter 7](#)) that presents the following process model on the discursive success of EU criticism.

The course of the Brexit discourse as sketched above gives strong support to this model.

In phase 1, the potential conflicts between European integration and the five context factors have been even more pertinent in the UK in 2016 than in France in 2005: changes in the political and social system have been present and critically addressed, and political parties have been strongly EU-critical and even more split in the matter than in France. As explained above, both the national identity narrative and previous EU discourses in the UK have been strongly conflictual to European integration. Prior to the referendum in 2016, UK citizens had been strongly EU-critical too, with only 30% of those asked stating to have a positive image of the EU in the Eurobarometer poll preceding the Brexit referendum (autumn 2015), compared to 34% in Germany and 35% in France (Eurobarometer 2015, 7). Only 33% of the British citizens felt that their voice counts in the EU, compared to 49% in Germany, 41% in France, and even 72% in Denmark (Eurobarometer 2015, 10).

With regard to phase 2, there clearly was both the opportunity, namely, a referendum and a discourse, and the political conjuncture to address these tensions.

With regard to phase 3, they then were addressed, and clearly because several political actors of all camps had a strategic interest to do so, in particular the Tory

Table 9.1 Process model of discursive enforcement of conflicts between contextual factors and European integration

1st phase: Are there (potential) conflicts between European integration and contextual factors? (Necessary but not sufficient condition)

Theses:

- The more conflicts there are, the more likely they are to gain in importance (and vice versa, the less)
- The more deeply rooted in the prevailing narrative of national identity the contextual factors/motifs that conflict with integration are, the more likely and intensively they are to be addressed

2nd phase: Is there an opportunity to address them? i.e.:

- Is there a discourse? What is it, what is the extent, what is the occasion?
- Is there a conjuncture (among the elites and/or the population) that favours the mention of certain motifs?

3rd phase: Are they addressed?

- Do discursive actors have a political or strategic interest in doing so?

4th phase: Do they prevail?

- In the discourse? Is there a mutual reinforcement of discursive settings and motifs?
 - Among the citizens/voters?
 - Open question: How do discourses affect voters? What preferences do citizens develop and why?
-

Source: Own Representation.

opponents to the EU and the UKIP. This supports the thesis that without UKIP Brexit would not have happened (Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer 2019, 6) – at least it would have been more difficult to obtain.

With regard to phase 4, the EU-critical motifs and tensions between the British context factors and EU integration not only were addressed in the discourse but, like in France, also dominated the discourse and prevailed. The outcome, in consequence, was again very similar to the French TCE referendum in 2005: the “Leave” prevailed in the vote.

A clear difference to the French case, however, is that UKIP was the most decisive player and right-wing EU criticism brought the decisive motifs – whereas it was the French left-wing *Non de Gauche* and its motifs that won the French discourse and the referendum. As said above, the French discourse was driven from the left and the British from the right. Other than that, the similarities with France were blatant.

9.2 Populism, Euroscepticism, and Legitimate Critique – (Not Only) Labelling Questions

One dominant motif in the French referendum discourse has been termed in the above the “populist motif”, since, in classical ways of populist argumentation (see, e.g., Moffit 2020), it opposed allegedly corrupt “elites” and the hardworking “people”, which is obviously a classical populist trope. To what extent is such a classification useful and what does it entail? I will in the following critically discuss the benefits and limits of using the concept of “populism” in the context of EU criticism, and I will also discuss the benefit of another concept developed in EU Studies and Comparative Politics, where EU criticism is frequently labelled as “Euroscepticism”. It will be argued that criticism of policies and political institutions, and criticism that is EU-related, first and foremost is a legitimate part of democratic political culture, even if it can at times be mingled with both populist arguments and even if it can at times classify as Eurosceptic. Any representative democracy must be based on the possibility to openly debate, criticise, and contest parliamentary and governmental decisions. Importantly, this also means that EU criticism is by no means to be confused with a criticism of representative democracy as such, even if there may be arguments where the two go together. In consequence, I will plead for a more nuanced application of the concepts.

As was just said, populism is often associated with criticism of representative democracy or the EU, but such an equation is too much simplified. A number of authors have thus been underlining that populism cannot simply be classified in a black-and-white manner by separating a populist and a non-populist camp (see, e.g., Jörke 2021; Jörke and Selk 2017; Katsambekis 2022). Moreover, it is important to take into account the background reasons and socio-economic drivers behind populist votes and party alignments. Studies on populist discourse in the last years have been discussing that and how crises trigger populist reactions (Stavrakakis et al. 2018), and hence that and how populist discourse is linked to crisis situations and criticism of certain policies (see, e.g., the contributions in Ostiguy, Panizza, and Moffitt 2020).

In this context it should be mentioned that the EU's successive crises of the last years clearly affected citizens' trust in and support of the EU (but also in their national parliaments and governments). In the financial crisis, trust in the EU, which for many years had been significantly higher than trust in the member state institutions, fell disproportionately sharply. In spring 2012, it was only 31% on average in the EU (compared to 50% in spring 2008; Eurobarometer 2012, 13). Approval of national parliaments and governments fell less markedly, from 34% and 32%, respectively, in 2008 to 28% each in spring 2012. Citizens' opinion of the EU also deteriorated markedly. In spring 2008, the EU still evoked a positive image among 48% of Eurobarometer respondents; in spring 2012, this was only the case for 31% (Eurobarometer 2012, 14). While trust in the EU institutions has recovered since 2015, the drop during the financial crisis underlines the argument just made.

A crisis situation is also one background in the French case. As will be discussed in [Section 9.3](#), the French political culture since the beginning of the 2000s has shown several crisis symptoms. The extreme-right had considerable electoral success and the established mainstream parties experienced a breakdown. A number of citizens claim not to be heard and to be left aside by the political elites, as was expressed by the "*Gilets Jaunes*" movement (Kempin and Tokarski 2019). In both the French case and the Brexit case just discussed, those voters who generally feel left aside by the democratic mainstream, i.e. the lower socio-economic strata, supported the populist arguments (on the rationality of populist votes, see also Jörke 2021).

These considerations are in accordance with authors in populism research who claim that a simplifying criticism of populism negates that democratic politics needs some grain of populism (Panizza and Stavrakakis 2020) in the sense of politics taking citizens' needs into account. Others even argue that a vital political left needs to be more populist (Mouffe 2018). This argumentation has also been applied explicitly to the European Union (Critchley 2015).

The argument that criticism is a legitimate part of any democratic process, as has been said, is valid also for the EU. This means that criticism of both EU policies and the character of the EU as a polity is firstly a legitimate part of democracy in the EU, which leads to critically rethinking not only the notion of populism in this respect but also the term "Euroscepticism".

The debate on Euroscepticism has been intense in the last two decades (see, e.g., Caiani and Guerra 2017; Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2018; Vries 2018). Following the definition of Euroscepticism first used by Paul Taggart (Taggart 1998, 366), the label "Euroscepticism" names a contingent or qualified opposition, as well as outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration. When considering that this definition of Euroscepticism was much discussed and developed further, for example, by Taggart and Sczerbiak (Sczerbiak and Taggart 2008), Kopecky and Mudde (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, 300–302), Fuchs, Roger, and Berton (Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009, 20–22), or more recently Vasilipolou (Vasilopoulou 2018), the picture becomes more detailed. Taggart and Sczerbiak distinguish soft and hard Euroscepticism, the difference being defined as the one between (a) concerns about one or a number of policy fields leading to the expression of a qualified opposition against the EU and (b) a principled opposition

against the EU and European integration. The distinctions of both Kopecky and Mudde as well as Fuchs, Roger, and Berton take into account David Easton's differentiation of specific and diffuse support (Easton 1965, 124–126) and hence distinguish different degrees of support of, and opposition to, the EU. Whereas Kopecky and Mudde distinguish Euroenthusiasts, Europragmatists, Eurosceptics, and Eurorejects (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, 303), Fuchs, Roger, and Berton identify several dimensions of principled, generalised, and reasoned support and define Euroscepticism as the term denoting the negative evaluations of the EU with regard to these three perspectives (Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009, 24–26). In sum, as Vasilipolou (Vasilipoulou 2018, 22) states, it must be said that

[...] Euroscepticism is a contested concept. Its multidimensional nature entails that it can be directed to the system as a whole, its institutional design, specific policies, or the perceived general direction of the EU regulatory system. Scholars are faced with a trade-off between specificity and wider applicability [...]

Without dwelling further on the different definitions (for such a discussion, see Vasilipoulou 2018 and the contributions in Caiani and Guerra 2017; Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2018; Vries 2018), the important takeaway at this point is that there are differences between (a) a rejection of the EU on the whole and (b) a rejection of EU policies, (c) a criticism of EU policies, and (d) different degrees of criticism or opposition. A key question with regard to the last point is to define at which point of opposition or targeted criticism it is useful to speak of Euroscepticism. As has been repeatedly underlined now, the simple fact of criticising a policy of the EU is not enough here, on the contrary: political opposition against governmental policies is one of the principles of representative democracies and has nothing to do with a kind of rejection of the representative system as a whole.

This means that if political actors only claim the need to improve or reform the EU, its institutions, and its policies, it seems nonsensical to label this as “Eurosceptic” at all. If a movement or a person claims that a certain state should exit the EU, as it was the case in the Brexit referendum debate, the label “Euroscepticist” might be more appropriate. This indicates that the proposal of Fuchs, Roger, and Berton is helpful – not distinguishing opposites, but degrees on a continuum. If we want to aim for labels at all, it is useful to think of labels that express this continuum and the fact that criticism is an essential part of representative democratic politics.

When looking at the arguments of opponents to specific aspects of EU integration in both discourses studied in this book, at least two different political aims can be distinguished: the first one, which could be termed “Less-Europeanist”, claims to stop the integration process or to change its character, whereas the second one, which could be termed “Alter-Europeanist”, claims a different EU. Including these differentiations would lead to the following distinction scheme:

- 1 Euroscepticism: Principled opposition against the EU as a polity (usually discussed as hard Euroscepticism)

- 2 Targeted, argued criticism against certain features of the EU and/or its policies, showing possible different directions:
 - a Less-Europeanists: “not more integration”, argued in different strands, e.g.,
 - nationalist
 - economic
 - populist (elites, corruption, super-state) EU criticism
 - b Alter-Europeanists: “another integration and/or more integration, but a different one”, argued in different strands, e.g.,
 - a more social
 - more democratic
 - more environment-friendly EU

In all this, policy criticism is only a legitimate form of criticism in any representative democracy. In that sense, most of the French and German arguments fit into the second category, or they represent legitimate criticism, which means that the label “Euroscepticism” is not adequate here. The French construction of demarcation from the EU is a frontier case between (a) and (b). As discussed, it counteracts the construction of a difference-affirming EU identity, as it constructs demarcation – but it is not yet to be classified as principled opposition against the EU. The French TCE opponents that demarcated France and the EU did not argue against the EU per se, but against a specific kind of market-liberal EU. This means that demarcation from the EU was based on a strong criticism of specific EU policies. The British “Leave” camp, only, has been arguing principled opposition against the EU.

9.3 A Crisis of French Political Culture

The French TCE referendum discourse in 2005 also expresses the symptoms of a long-standing crisis of French political culture. When it comes to understanding the motifs used in 2005, this links to previous and later protests, movements, and election results in France, and to the arguments discussed above: one background of populist criticism lies in crisis symptoms.

One symptom of the French crisis of political culture is the frequency of protests and protest movements, the most prominent one of the last years being the “*Gilets Jaunes*”. The *Gilets* clearly were a protest movement that would qualify as populist in the terms just discussed, but it is also clearly related to this crisis, which underlines the above. In the case of the *Gilets*, a key background is a criticism of lower social strata against certain government measures and an overall criticism of the first Macron government as too elitist and as insufficiently legitimised (Kempin and Tokarski 2019). This argument has also been put forward against the second Macron government. The way the pension reform law was passed in spring 2023 – by decree since there was no parliamentary majority (Lough 2023; NPR 2023) – underlines that such arguments are not entirely taken out of the blue.

Another blatant symptom of the crisis of French political culture is the de facto breakdown of the formerly established mainstream parties. As discussed in

Section 7.3, already in the 2002 French presidential elections (Perrineau and Ysmal 2003, 180–182), a right-wing extremist reached the second round of the presidential elections, namely, Jean Marie Le Pen in 2002. He then obtained 16.86% of the votes in the first round, much more than the socialist candidate Lionel Jospin (16.18%). Jacques Chirac only obtained 19.4% of the votes. In the second round in 2002, however, Chirac obtained 82% (all numbers in Perrineau and Ysmal 2003, 380). The next time a right-wing extremist made it to the second round was in 2017 with Jean-Marie Le Pen's daughter Marine Le Pen. She obtained 33.90% of the votes in the second round (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2017).

The 2022 presidential election has strongly underlined that this tendency has not been slowed down since 2002, with a new record for right-wing extremist votes reached. 41.45% of the votes in the second round went to right-wing extremist Marine Le Pen as opposed to 58.55% for the liberal Emmanuel Macron, and thus more than two fifths of the voters decided for a right-wing extremist candidate. Already in the first round 23.15% had voted for Le Pen and 7.07% for Eric Zemmour, who is even more right-wing extremist than Le Pen. This manifests a right-wing extremist challenge to representative democracy in France altogether.

The fact that right-wing extremists are also EU-critical only underlines the discussion in **Section 9.2**. EU criticism has been going along with the crisis of the French mainstream parties, but importantly, and as discussed in the last section, EU criticism can neither be equated with populism per se nor with right-wing extremism. Therefore, if the right-wing extremists are EU critics, the same is not true vice versa. The pronounced EU criticism in France can rather be put in relation to the mistrust in established political elites in general and the mistrust in the EU institutions that has been discussed above.

In line with this argument, the developments in the French elections since 2002 further underline that there is a general crisis of representative democracy in France that is at least two decades old. Looking backwards at the development of the French party system since the referendum discourse in 2005, the picture becomes even more blatant. In the 2007 presidential election, the second round still took place between the classical opponents, a Socialist (Ségolène Royal), and a conservative politician, with the Conservative Nicolas Sarkozy winning the polls. In 2012, the second round took place between Sarkozy and the Socialist Francois Hollande, this time Hollande winning the election.

The 2017 presidential election was then marked by a decisive breakdown of the formerly established party system, with the second round taking place between a total newcomer at the head of a new movement, Emmanuel Macron, and right-wing extremist Marine Le Pen. In the first round, they had obtained 18.19% and 16.14% of the votes cast, respectively. The conservative candidate Francois Fillon only had obtained 15.15% of the votes cast, and the fourth position was obtained by left-wing politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Francois Hollande, the sitting president, could have been a candidate a second time, but even refrained from participating in the election. Benoit Hamon, the socialist candidate, only obtained 4.82% of the votes cast (all numbers Ministère de l'Intérieur 2017).

This breakdown of the classical parties was accentuated in 2022. Valérie Pécresse, the conservative candidate, only obtained 4.78% of the votes and Anne

Hidalgo, the socialist candidate, not more than 1.75% in the presidential election (all numbers Ministère de l'Intérieur 2022a). The picture of the legislative elections that took place just afterwards indicates that these developments in the party landscape are pertinent, but were less pronounced in the legislative than in the presidential elections. The new left party coalition *Nouvelle Union Populaire Écologique et Sociale* (NUPES) obtained 31.60% of the votes cast, Macron's movement *Ensemble!* obtained 38.57%, and Le Pen's *Rassemblement National* (the former FN) obtained 17.3%. The conservatives earned only 6.98% of the votes cast for a formation now named "*Les Républicains*" (all numbers Ministère de l'Intérieur 2022b).

In analysing these changes, it can be argued that NUPES thus realises with some delay what had been the aim of the *Non de Gauche* coalition (see [Chapter 4](#)): a union of the old and the new left, including not only Mélenchon's *La France Insoumise* (as the biggest partner) but also the Greens and the Socialists and some other smaller groups. NUPES thus takes up the role of the former socialist camp and its allies, with the lead now being with the old left, and Macron's movement the one of the former moderate right-wing parties. However, it cannot be denied that the French party system saw a severe change since 2005.

All this speaks in favour of not interpreting the referendum result in 2005 as an isolated event. It is both an EU-related vote that expressed criticism of, distrust in, and dissatisfaction with a specific character (market-liberal) of European integration and a more political-culture-oriented vote that expresses a generalised distrust in the political class, be it French or European. In that respect, the French referendum discourse again matches with several motifs of the Brexit discourse – but also with the criticism of technocracy on the EU level that was discussed in [Section 2.1](#).

9.4 EU Politicisation and EU Democratisation

The study also allows for succinct conclusions on how to conceptualise and study politicisation that confirm the theses put forward in [Section 1.1](#).

First, the comparative observation laid out in [Chapter 6](#) allows for conclusions regarding the politicisation of European integration and the Europeanisation of public spheres. As laid out in [Chapter 2](#), the construction of a European identity requires EU-wide processes of exchange and identification. It is an open question whether and to what extent these processes can take place on the EU polity level, and namely, to what extent they will be able to recur on a European public sphere, or rather on the Europeanisation of national public spheres. The findings indicate that the multi-level dynamics can take different types of interrelations:

The politicisation of European integration and the Europeanisation of national political public spheres can proceed in different ways:

- 1 As in France, via national concerns and political actors that lead to the EU and/or other EU countries becoming national issues, or else
- 2 via the more or less self-evident integration of what is happening within the national and EU sphere into national discourses, as in Germany.

Second, as the empirical part of the book has underlined, especially the French referendum discourse in 2005 showed clearly that the politicising actions of actors outside the core of the political system and the major parties – i.e., movements, civil society actors, and individual citizens – had a decisive impact on events and decisions in the core of the political system. In particular, they initiated an opinion formation process that led a majority of voters to reject the Treaty on a Constitution for Europe in a referendum.

This underlines the claim made in [Section 1.1](#): a broader approach to studying politicisation is needed that includes such outside-system actors and practices, both in theory and empirical analysis. It also confirms the usefulness of the definition put forward in [Section 1.1](#): *politicisation means to mark something (an issue) as collectively relevant and as an object of politics and hence as debatable or contested* (Wiesner 2021a, 268). This definition refers to studying phenomena both inside and outside of the political system. In that context, the French case is a case of politicisation led bottom-up and in relation to more generalised contestation of political elites and the system, whereas the German case indicates how discursive strategies hinder politicisation to be effective (*silencing strategy*).

Third, it was proposed that a broader set of methods and foci of analysis, including micropolitical, speech-act, and action-oriented perspectives, is fruitful in politicisation research. Such a design was applied to the comparative discourse-analytical study in this book. Both empirical cases studied indicate that such approaches deliver fruitful results for understanding processes of politicisation, and also non-politicisation or depoliticisation, as in the case of the German *silencing strategy*.

Fourth, these considerations also invite to further concretise the two conceptual relations mentioned in [Section 1.1](#): the relation between EU politicisation and EU integration, and the relation between politicisation and democratisation in and of the European Union.

As the cases show, politicisation can negatively impact the integration process or the smooth governance of the EU and its policies – but, importantly and again, this is not to be equated with it being undemocratic. Especially the French case indicates the tensions between EU politicisation and the continuation of EU integration: it ended with a “No” vote against the Constitutional Treaty. But this still does not mean that politicisation is per se dangerous, let alone detrimental for EU integration – especially as the French result did neither stop the integration process nor the new Treaty, which was ratified and put into effect as Lisbon Treaty shortly after the referenda.

Following what has been argued in [Section 1.1](#), politicisation can have democratising effects, depending on its character and whether it is democratic or undemocratic politicisation. This also holds true for EU politicisation. With regard to the question of whether politicisation is beneficial for EU democratisation, the cases also gave very concrete indications. As discussed, both the French and the German discourse on the Constitutional Treaty were major processes of EU politicisation. They also were major instances of broad and open public deliberation about the EU. Both discourses and especially so the French one hence had a major

democratising effect – this was summarised in Chapters 4–6 and 8. Very concretely this underlines and empirically solidifies the claim made in Section 1.1: politicisation clearly can have major democratising effects in terms of raising public discourse and exchange. The point, then, is that politicisation and its democratising effects, the enhancement of public debate, and the preparation of democratic decisions do not necessarily lead to the outcomes that EU scholars, politicians, or other persons would deem to be the best.

These arguments can be further detailed by the ideas put forward in three classical neofunctionalist texts on the politicisation of integration by Schmitter (Schmitter 1969), Haas (Haas 1968), and Lindberg and Scheingold (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). They describe different possibilities, dynamics, and directions of the ways EU politicisation can develop, how it can trigger EU opposition (or not), and which effects this will have on EU integration or democracy in the EU.

Lindberg and Scheingold are concerned about the effects of politicisation on the integration process. For them, politicisation can, but not necessarily will, trigger opposition to EU integration. This opposition then can, but does not have to, build obstacles to the integration process. Obstacles will, however, not stop integration. In the same vein, Ernst Haas states that economic dissatisfaction may trigger political opposition to the integration process and that political opposition might create demands for more federal political action.

Philippe Schmitter (Schmitter 1969) focuses on public discussion of the EU and citizen involvement; i.e., he is more concerned with democracy in the EU. He describes a complex and open model of politicisation and argues that an increase in controversialness (i.e., politicisation) of integration might create more debate and a widening of the audience; i.e., that it might trigger more people to be interested in EU politics. This might ultimately lead to the EU redefining its objectives, and to more EU citizens getting loyal to the EU.

This account describes a dynamic in which politicisation has a positive impact on both EU citizen involvement and citizen support, and European integration. The dynamics Schmitter describes happen in nation states and their representative democracies. If citizens do not support a policy, they can debate it, contest it, oppose it, and try to change it.

Against this backdrop, the politicisation of EU integration, the development of EU opposition, and its effects on integration and EU democratisation can be conceptualised in different pathways. In the following, I propose a taxonomy of four different scenarios of these interrelations (see also Wiesner 2021b, 2023).

- 1 In a *bottom-up enhancement scenario*, the politicisation of integration is positive for the integration process and EU democratisation, since it entails more conflict and more debate about integration and hence an increase in public perception and participation. The relationship between citizens and elites is a dynamic one. Citizens participate, engage, and politicise issues. This ultimately leads to a redefinition of integration objectives, more identification of the citizens, and an increase in EU support. The German discourse from the end of May onwards matches this scenario best.

- 2 In the *top-down enhancement scenario*, politicisation is positive for the integration process, but not democratising, as it is mainly based on the party-political activity of pro-EU parties. There will be less interaction between elites, citizens, and activists than in the dynamic model. But still, political parties and media that communicate the EU positively may raise EU support and in consequence also gather votes in EP elections. The German discourse until May matches this scenario.
- 3 In a *bottom-up obstacle scenario*, politicisation is negative for the integration process but democratising. The process here is similar to the bottom-up enhancement scenario. Citizens and activists politicise the EU, but engage with the EU in a system-critical way. Bottom-up activities and politicisation do not create EU support and may be directed against the EU or representative democracy as such. The French EU referendum discourse is a case in point.
- 4 In the *top-down obstacle scenario*, politicisation is negative for the integration process and for democratisation. Again, it is mainly based on party-political activity, this time of anti-EU parties. There will be less interaction between elites, citizens, and activists than in the bottom-up obstacle scenario. Political parties and media that communicate and politicise the EU critically may push citizen EU support to decline and in consequence also gather votes in EP elections. These dynamics run in a similar way as the ones in the *top-down enhancement scenario*, but trigger EU criticism instead of EU support. The Brexit referendum debate matches this scenario.

9.5 Towards the Critical Informed EU Citizen

To conclude, the 2005 national EU discourses on the TCE teach important lessons of general importance for the European Union, its politicisation, its democratisation, and the formation of European identity. Namely, and in short, if we want the EU to be further democratised, it needs to be politicised. Institutional changes are one decisive part of EU democratisation – to fill them with democratic activity is another. As I have discussed the necessary institutional changes in detail elsewhere (Wiesner 2019, 281–301) and also in [Section 2.1](#), I will not extend on them here, but concentrate on politicisation: politicisation means enhancing citizen engagement, democratic practice, and open debate. This claim has several consequences.

Namely, open debate is not only a crucial element of representative democracy but also, as has been argued and analysed throughout this book, a means of European identity formation. Building a stronger democratic European identity also means discussing an idea of an EU common good, i.e., of what the EU stands for – and how are we going to develop this idea if not via debate?

Moreover, as was laid out in detail above, criticism of certain policies or of the character of a polity as a whole is also a legitimate part of both politicisation and democracy. Not only is it allowed to be critical – a democracy without criticism is hollow. All this is valid for EU criticism, too. But overall, the results and outcomes of criticism, and of open debates, are contingent. That is, if democracy is the government of, by, and for the people, as discussed in [Section 2.1](#), the people might

deliberate and come to a decision that is not compatible with the wishes of political elites. Especially if these voting outcomes are the result of an electoral majority, we as Social Scientists must take them seriously as an expression of the will of the majority of the people.

With regard to the outcome of the French EU referendum in 2005, this proved difficult for a number of politicians and social scientists. But the 2005 French referendum discourse not only is a perfect example of an intense and open public debate on the European Union – it is also a case of an informed EU criticism winning a vote. The French voters in 2005, overall, were well informed about their decision, and they decided in the majority against a specific type of European integration that they judged as being too market-liberal. Importantly, as the discussion of the various crisis symptoms in France underlined, criticism usually does not gain ground if the ground is not fertile. It is too simple to just qualify the French 2005 vote, or a phenomenon such as the *Gilets Jaunes*, or right-wing extremist electoral successes, or even the “Brexit” vote, as “populist”, and it is also too simple to believe that it is enough to explain to people what would be a more reasonable political or electoral behaviour.

Not only it means not to take the sovereign seriously if anyone explains from top-down that a certain behaviour is not reasonable. Moreover, rationality might, or might not, be the reason for a vote. On the one hand, it may be judged perfectly reasonable to vote for EU-critical, right-wing populist or extremist parties, just because they express the interests of a certain group of voters best (Jörke 2021). On the other hand, as Arlie Russel Hochschild (Hochschild 2016) convincingly explained, the social groups that voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election in the United States did not benefit from his policies, and their vote was hence not reasonable in a classical sense.

In sum, we need to understand there is no simple top-down strategy to just explain to the people the rationality of the EU (or, as it stands, a vote for mainstream parties). Democracy rather depends on critical, informed, and engaged citizens. To conclude, this means that both Social Sciences and EU Studies, and the EU, its politicians, and its institutions should welcome politicisation and EU criticism as part of the necessary democratisation of the EU. They indicate we are on track towards the critically informed EU citizen.

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