



The Interpretative Moment of European Journalism

The impact of media voice in the ratification process

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Preface

RECON – Reconstituting Democracy in Europe – is an Integrated Project supported by the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme for Research, Priority 7 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society'. The five-year project has 19 partners in 12 European countries, and is coordinated by ARENA, Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo.

RECON addresses the problem of democracy in Europe in light of challenges posed by globalization. It seeks to clarify whether democracy is possible under conditions of pluralism and multilevel governance. See more on the project at www.reconproject.eu

The present report is part of RECON's work package 5 "Civil Society and the Public Sphere", which analyses how civil society and the public sphere shape the democratic reconstitution of Europe. Adopting a cross-national and cross-sectoral comparative perspective, it explores the conditions and dynamics of democratisation from below: the scope of media communication and public debates and the formation and mobilisation of citizens' support and resistance to European governance.

Erik Oddvar Eriksen
RECON Scientific Coordinator

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Summary

This study critically tests the role of political journalism in EU constitution-making. More specifically, we ask whether political journalists take an active role in shaping public preferences and opinion on European integration and on the prospects of the EU's democratization and constitutionalization. An analytical framework is developed distinguishing between the critical and the representative function of media opinion-making. Journalists are found to interfere with the democratization of the EU either as a critical watchdog controlling and advising political decision-makers, or as a collective voice representing long-term expectations and public dispositions in the debate. This research framework is applied to the analysis of newspaper commentaries in the ratification period of the EU Constitutional Treaty (November 2004 – June 2005). The ratification process is analyzed as a critical juncture of European integration in which enhanced debates and politicization are expected in all member states.

The study draws on opinion-making articles in two quality newspapers in each of six European countries. The countries and newspapers chosen for our analysis represent different degrees of involvement in campaigns for imminent or upcoming popular referenda (France, Denmark, UK) or parliamentary ratification (Germany, Sweden). In countries with a high density of political campaigning and heightened partisan competition on European integration such as France, we can expect the constitutional debate to be characterized by a strong involvement of elite journalists and a direct interactive style of appealing to the reader. In countries with low public attention, demobilization and absence of partisan conflicts such as Germany, we expect a low commitment of journalists, who will either appear as more distant observers of the ratification process, or as external evaluators of the performance of the political elite. In Denmark, Sweden and the UK, ratification was path dependent on prior choices taken in other member states, which made early media involvement likely to evaluate the impact of external events on changing domestic preferences. Norway is discussed as a test case of the external effects of EU constitutionalization in changing political preferences and triggering off normative and identitarian debates in associated countries.

Our research findings point to a rather differentiated picture with regard to politicization in the ratification period, which was only supported and amplified in part by the media. The diversification of nationalized ratification procedures was a major obstacle for the timing of parallel debates about the EU constitutional project and the initiation of discursive exchange between

the member states. Nevertheless, we could observe a general commitment of journalists to become engaged in normative debates about the democratic and constitutional design of Europe (with the exception of Norwegian newspapers). The expectation of an entrepreneurial role of political journalists in actively promoting European integration was not confirmed, however. In contrast to earlier debates, where journalists were found to display an attitude of “progressive Europeanism”, the ratification period was marked by a critical distance on the part of the media. The great majority of European journalists neither identified closely with the project of EU constitution-making, nor did they amplify popular discontent with European integration. The critical voice was mainly taken up in the aftermath of the referenda in reflecting on how to overcome the gap between the EU and its citizens.

If commentaries stand for the critical and representative function of newspaper journalism as a watchdog, but also as a promoter of European democracy, our research concludes that quality newspapers were not at the forefront of popular contention for or against the project of EU constitution-making. In most newspapers, the critical and the representative voice of the media are combined with an anti-elitist attitude of blaming the technocratic character of European integration. However, this amplification of popular discontent and contention through journalists remained restricted to the single and unique opportunity of referenda. The French referendum gave rise to high levels of domestic politicization and also resonated across the European space to take a substitutive function for politicization in other member states, where similar opportunities were not given. The voice of the people against the constitutional project imposed from above was articulated and amplified at one short moment in time and linked to parallel and interconnected debates across the European space.

Chapter I

Mediatization and the erosion of the EU legitimacy

The debate about the legitimacy of the EU and the possibilities of its democratization has so far only rarely addressed the role of the media. An instrumental approach towards the media prevails, acknowledging that the so-called gap between the EU and its citizens is grounded in a communication deficit and that the EU should therefore strive for increased legitimacy in terms of public accountability, openness and participation – in other words: in terms of democracy (European Commission 2006). The remedies promoted by the EU spin doctors are based on the conviction that a) mass media communication should be increased to promote EU legitimacy, b) that the mass media are an impartial transmitter of knowledge, rational arguments and information to enhance the understanding and participation of European citizens, and c) that the mass media are a fair player that can be committed to supporting the EU on its way to deeper integration.

The ratification crisis as a story of failed public communication (Fossum and Trenz 2006) reveals the insufficiencies of this approach treating the media as a social technology for democratising the EU instead of as a cultural and political power constraining the latter's democratization (Slaatta 2006). For a number of reasons, no automatism for the legitimation of the EU can be derived from the vital role of the media as a component of the democratic process: Firstly, because journalists, who serve mainly national audiences, do not necessarily support the EU on its way to democracy; secondly, because journalistic preferences and approval of a democratic EU do not translate straightforwardly into more positive attitudes and preferences of the audience; and thirdly, because political journalism in Europe itself suffers from a legitimacy

deficit with the effect that positive EU media coverage rather backfires on the formation of negative attitudes of the public.

The problem to be addressed after the experience of the popular referenda in France and the Netherlands is thus how to democratise and constitutionalise the EU *with* or *against* the media (de Vreese 2003; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; Trenz 2006). In the EU setting, an institutional design for participative and deliberative democracy is confronted with the reality of “media democracy” in the Member States. Media develop a preference for a certain type of communicative input that the EU political system has difficulties to provide; hence the EU’s notorious deficits in communicating with the general public. Media furthermore produce a communicative output format that increasingly irritates the political system logics of the EU, resulting in the insufficient supply of public support and legitimacy through the media that constrains the scope of Communitarian action.

Mediatization refers to constraints of adaptation and accommodation of the internal system rules and functional logics of governing institutions to the mechanisms of producing and diffusing public attention through the media (Schulz 2004: 89; Marcinkowski 2005: 341). Of particular relevance for the EU is not simply the question to what extent and in what forms such adaptive processes are initiated through wilful design and strategic efforts by institutional actors. The question is rather what conditions such efforts of public communication management in the first place, why European institutions have so far only been able to mobilize very limited capacities of adaptation to media logics and how we can take account of the systematic failures of their communicative efforts.

The dominant instrumental approach towards the media is based on a misconception of political actors and institutions who tend to assume that legitimacy is a product that can be advertised and sold by placing particular media messages or images. Media are seen either as an approval mechanism to increase the social acceptance of the EU or as an educational mechanism to enable critical scrutiny and informed debate (McNair 2000).

It can be expected that mediatization will have a decisive impact on the shape of the emerging EU polity and its possible road to democracy. Media do not only select among the outputs of the EU political system to diffuse the relevant information to the general public. They also provide inputs and feed-

backs that the EU administrative apparatus uses to initiate decision-making processes or to regulate public relations: Media play a role as an agenda-setter for particular policy initiatives, they lie as a shadow upon negotiations, they affect the cooperative or conflictive behaviour of the participating actors, they mediate between diverging interests and expectations and they finally evaluate the outcomes of decision-making processes. At certain points, media might also step out of the shadow and take a more active part in European integration. In other words, media can become actively involved in promoting particular visions of European integration and strengthening critical or affirmative, pro- or anti-European attitudes. The process of EU constitution-making represents one of the points in time where media could be expected to play a central role in agenda-setting, promoting constitutional reasoning, controlling power, aggregating individual preferences and steering public opinion and will formation.

Chapter 2

The interpretative moment of European journalism

European public sphere research has mainly been concerned with the democratic quality of the media measured in the degree of objective knowledge, the degree of fairness and the degree of support of the integration process. Empirical research is often designed as a quality test of media performance in facilitating a European democracy. Recognising the social responsibility of the mass media as an infrastructural requirement of democracy, the bulk of existing media studies is guided by the following normative presumptions:¹

- 1) Political journalism should support the principles of European integration towards a democratic, peaceful and prosperous order.
- 2) Media discourse should replicate the style of rational debate as applied by European elites and intellectuals involved in institutional deliberation.
- 3) Political debates should be about political substance and not about performance, styles or expressions.
- 4) Media should provide a critique of institutional spins, critically observe European key actors (including their own governments) and evaluate their performance according to the ideals of efficient and democratic government in the service of the public good and the citizens.

¹ Indicators for measuring the democratic performance of the media in promoting a European public sphere are developed, for instance, by Peters et al. (2005); van de Steeg and Risse (2003); Wimmel (2004); Kantner (2004).

In testing the democratic performance of news media along these criteria, empirical research has mainly reported negative findings. The news quality is found to be rather low, European news coverage remains exceptional and the readiness of political journalists to transmit “objective knowledge”, to investigate European issues and to become engaged in transnational debates and discursive interchanges is very limited (Trenz 2005; 2006). Explanations for this bleak performance refer to mainstream media nationalism or to the general dumbing down of news quality (Hafez 2005; McNair 2000). The democratization of the EU would thus be restricted rather by the lack of mediating capacities. Media could not be expected to enhance democracy in a constitutionalised EU, but rather to put systemic constraints on the process of constitutional deliberation, turning ratification into a lottery with only minor chances to win any prize.

The question how deliberative, rational and truth-oriented the media are misses the main point of research on the media as an independent and self-referential organisational system that does not replicate the system logics of the EU, but that strives instead for autonomy in terms of selecting, re-interpreting and evaluating political news. This is what we analyze here as the *interpretative moment of European journalism*.

Taking the media autonomy seriously and recognising its power of knowledge-formation and public opinion-making in the EU, our focus in the following is on the active role of political journalism in constructing European news. Political journalism is conceived as fulfilling the dual function of selecting and interpreting the kind of information that forms the basis of citizens' and voters' knowledge of the EU.² Media, in this sense, act as selective amplifiers of political information from external sources and thereby shape information flows on European integration. Furthermore, media interpret European news and thereby contribute to the process of public opinion formation by commenting on European affairs. Observing the media's impact on EU democracy means to re-construct the interwovenness of the media's representation and own interpretation of the world of European politics.

² For the distinction of these two functions, in general, see Hall et al. (1978: 63) and Gerhards et al. (1998). Applied to the context of EU news coverage see Koopmans and Statham (2002) and Statham (2006: 3–4).

From our perspective, the evaluation of the role of the media as an *infrastructure* of European democracy must be complemented by an analysis of the role of the media as an active *player* in democracy. This implies the conceptual task of turning the media from a dependent into an independent variable of European integration. This includes an analysis of the media's active role in framing European politics as well as of whether and how political journalism evaluates European integration and its prospects of democratization and constitutionalization.

The question we are trying to answer in this study is whether and to what extent journalists make use of their opinion-making power to shape and influence the debate on European integration. Did journalists become actively involved in promoting particular visions on the EU and impose their normative choices on the audience? Or did journalists act mainly as neutral transmitters of pre-formulated views of political actors to broader audiences? Is there a specific pro- or anti-European bias in news commentaries on EU constitutional issues? By analyzing this interpretative moment of European journalism, a closer understanding of *mediatization* can be developed as the ways in which the media *interfere* with the democratization of the EU by advancing and constraining the development of a legitimate political order.

The commentary: Making and representing public opinion

Quality newspapers apply a distinction between news articles and opinion articles. A news article is meant to provide unbiased information and abstain from value judgements and the expression of opinions on the part of author. A commentary³ is the place for expressing the media's opinion on a particular issue (Eilders et al. 1998; 2004c). Commentaries are clearly distinguished in style and format; they are usually signed with the full name of the author and

³ In the interpretation of our data we will speak of commentaries in an unspecified way as a sample category of the rather heterogeneous practice of newspapers' opinion-making. In our coding, we have distinguished between commentaries, editorials and background opinion articles. Commentaries and background opinion articles must be written by regular journalists of the respective newspaper and signed by the authors. Editorials are collectively authored by the editorial board to represent the newspaper's official positions on the issue. The editorial is thus the clearest expression of this practice of media opinion-making and newspapers are found to make use of it only exceptionally (Eilders et al. 2004c).

can be found in a special section of the newspaper. The commentator (the pundit or the critic) is the person who discusses political issues in a public context. By addressing particular (individual) opinions to a general audience, she initiates public opinion-making processes.

In the following, we distinguish between the *critical* and the *representative* function of newspaper opinion articles in making sense of European integration. Commentaries can either be the *initiator* or the *indicator* of public opinion processes.

The *critical function of the commentary* is to control and advise political decision-makers. Journalists as the fourth estate voice approval or critique and launch public debates on issues that are considered of public relevance. Commentaries are seen as the counter-spin against the monopoly of interpretation provided by PR specialists and spin-doctors of political institutions.

Nevertheless, in a world of spin and intensified news management, political commentary is the best counter-spin we have. When politics is increasingly a series of performances, we need reviewers. In a world of constantly accelerating information flow, commentary is the ‘gatekeeper and wellhead’, the essential sense-maker in the virtual Tower of Babel.

(McNair 2000: 83)

The commentary pages can further be used as a forum for deliberation where elite journalists meet with other public intellectuals and politicians to exchange views and arguments (Page and Shapiro 1987).

The *representative function* of the commentary is to exhibit the public voice on a particular issue or debate. The commentary of European news corresponds to the increased demand for orientation on the part of the public. Rational citizens tend to accept information and analysis from their preferred and trusted newspaper sources (Page and Shapiro 1987). Whereas actors’ statements in the media by definition represent special interests and partial opinion, journalists’ statements are associated with a more impartial opinion and the general interest. From this perspective, Díez Medrano (2003) analyzes editorials as an *indicator* of public opinion formation processes on European integration reflecting the changing attitudes and preferences of a country over time. The underlying assumptions are that commentaries “represent long-

term expectations of the impact of European integration on the national collectivity”, and further that these particular national images of European integration and European institutions originate in the reflections of elite journalists as members of the most educated groups of society (Diéz Medrano 2003: 107).

The focus on the representative function of newspaper commentaries helps us to systematically analyze how commentaries are used to turn the individual opinion of the journalist or the *collective opinion* of the newspaper into the *public opinion* of Europeans. This difference has been elaborated in a classical study by Hall et al. (1978: 63), who distinguish between two different modes in which a newspaper can express its own voice on an issue. One common type of editorial judgement consists of expressing its own statements and thoughts on an event by translating them into the paper's public language (what Hall et al. called *using a public idiom*). The other type “goes beyond expressing its *own* view in a public idiom and actually claims to be expressing *the* public's views” (what Hall et al. called *taking the public voice*). The essence of the difference lies in saying “we believe that the EU has to be democratised” as opposed to “the public believes that the EU has to be democratised”. For obvious reasons, the latter commentary that claims to speak *for* the public contains a much stronger claim: it claims to represent the collective voice of the public.

The impact of the EU punditry

From a critical perspective this high expectation and reliance on journalism for the control of political power and the promotion of democratic principles puts the autonomy of opinion formation at risk. The punditry has been characterised as the fifth estate in media democracy. It is “a knowledge industry that has grown into a political force demanding recognition, understanding and reckoning” (Nimmo and Combs 1992: 20). Analyzing newspaper commentaries on EU constitution-making thus provides an answer to the question of whether there is an emerging EU punditry engaged in public opinion-making about European integration.

From the historic analysis of European integration, we know about the strong impact of political entrepreneurship in moving integration forward (Milward 1992). Especially at crucial moments of the integration process, such entrepreneurs know how to make use of policy windows to promote their visions.

Their promotional activity is usually analyzed within the political arena and measured in their capacity of cross-national agenda-setting. In the process of EU constitution-making, political entrepreneurship was crucial in the agenda-setting phase (e.g. the Fischer speech at Humboldt University) but also throughout the process of deliberation and negotiation (the charismatic role of Giscard d'Estaing).

Such a view on the role of political entrepreneurship leaves open the question of how particular visions about the future of European integration are spread and amplified to reach broader mass publics. The hypothesis is that political entrepreneurs are particularly successful when they enter into a coalition with public intellectuals and journalists. The emerging EU punditry can then be analyzed as a symbiosis for the floating of ideas and meaning. A first step towards such an analysis is to understand the role of political journalism in constitution-making.

This links back to our research question whether and to what extent journalists act as political entrepreneurs, who either openly campaign for or against European integration (expressing the “media voice”) or who claim to represent and amplify popular opinion (expressing the public voice). If verified, such a campaigning role of political journalism should be expected to have a particular impact on ratification: the period that EU constitution-makers went public. Furthermore, the unitary, plural or fragmented character of media opinion in relation to EU constitution-making needs to be explored. The question is whether journalists are members of a close and distinctive class of intellectuals who promote relatively unitary public opinion, or whether they express plural opinions and attitudes according to ideological or national cleavages. A comparative research design is therefore needed to compare political engagement and attitudes of media opinion-makers across countries.

The existing literature on this question of the campaigning role of political journalism has delivered ambivalent findings. Eilders et al. (2004b: 41) characterise commentators of quality newspapers as the “public sphere elite” but also find that journalists tend to overestimate their own capabilities and influence on opinion-making. Furthermore, the scope of campaigning needs to be clarified. Traditionally, it is believed that journalists mainly serve national audiences and thus systematically renationalise the European debate. The campaigning role of political journalism would preserve particularistic views on European integration and traditional national biases. This would inhibit

collective opinion-making across national borders. Empirical findings on this mainstream anti-Europeanism of political journalism are however scarce and mainly reported from the UK (Gray 2003).

In an investigation of the initial constitutional debate from 2000 in quality newspapers in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Austria and the UK, Trenz (2007) described instead an attitude of progressive Europeanism among news commentators who were overall supportive of the project of democratizing and constitutionalizing the EU, and in many cases even openly campaigned for it. Journalists were found to endorse the deepening and widening of the EU as a kind of moral imperative in defense of the collective good of Europeans and against the self-interest of individual governments. Also Pfetsch (2005) confirms the strong role of elite journalism in promoting the democratization and constitutionalization of the EU. In a cross-country survey of claims-making in editorials, journalists are found to be highly supportive of European integration. With the exception of the UK, the average of negative claims in several EU countries analyzed is below 5% (Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, France and the Netherlands). Italy and France are found to be the most supportive countries. Negative opinion about the EU among journalists figures prominently only in the UK. There is also a significant difference between different types of newspapers: the proportion of negative claims in the regional and tabloid press is four times higher than in quality papers (Pfetsch 2005).⁴

This alleged media bias in affirmatively representing European integration was also conjectured in the French referendum debate. The concern was expressed that journalists could attempt to “manipulate” public opinion. Journalists were accused of sticking to the “European dogma” (what the French aptly called “pensée unique”) according to which supranationalism became a substitutive ideology of European elites to delimit themselves from the traditional dogma of national self-interest and to open towards more encompassing visions of cosmopolitanism and universal rights.

⁴ For both studies, the findings mainly hold for continental Europe. Both studies found a strong cleavage line between UK journalists who tended to dislike European integration, and continental journalists who strongly supported it.

This hypothesis on the campaigning role of elite journalism would thus support a critical view of European integration as an elite project in which the constitutionalization of the EU has mainly been self-organised and carried forward as part of the institutional dynamics of integration, not however triggered by outside mobilization or any other kind of significant external pressure (Mair 2005). The quest for democratization and building a legitimate legal and political order in the EU has been generated from within the EU political system and its supporting environment (including elite journalism).

The democratization of the EU could be seen, then, as the private struggle of an EU punditry trapped in the self-referential logics of constitutionalization. EU pundits are the “gladiators” of an EU democracy who generate and constantly reproduce their own normative arguments. On the other hand, citizens are reduced to the roles of “spectators, cheerleaders and ‘couch potatoes’ of the political process (Denton in Nimmo and Combs 1992: xvii). Bartolini (2005: 407) sees an almost ironic element in this self-referential search for democracy: “there are few historic examples of politicians, bureaucrats and scholars searching so frenetically for ‘democracy’ and ‘legitimacy’ that no citizen has demanded”.

The commentary as a struggle for distinction

Commentaries have further been identified as a way for newspapers to brand their products: “The commentator is crucial to securing brand identification and consumer loyalty to a journalistic provide” (McNair 2000: 64). European news plays only a minor role for this identification of the reader with his or her newspaper. Branding a newspaper as pro- or anti-European does not usually provide a distinctive mark which locates the newspaper in the marketplace and divides its readers into different ideological camps. If at all, this distinction applies to the UK, where the Guardian develops a pro-European profile against the bulk of more or less openly anti-European papers.

More relevant for our case, quality newspaper journalism has been identified critically as a homogeneous field of cultural production which corresponds to the more highly educated, bourgeois public and provides a distinction for both journalists and readers within the wider field of mass media consump-

tion (Bourdieu 1996; Hummel 2006).⁵ One could even hypothesize that the division between different national audiences served by quality newspapers is less pronounced than the division between elite and lay audiences within the national public sphere (Slaatta 2006).⁶ In an increasingly differentiated media market, the public's preferences for particular news formats become an indicator for class distinction. Anti-Europeanism spread by tabloids could then be seen not only in its critical function of elite-bashing. It also assumes an implicit representative function in creating collective identifications of non-bourgeois lay publics against the cultural monopoly of quality newspaper journalism.

The elite newspaper commentary stages the “art of arguing.” In the school of argumentation, the commentator is the headmaster who evaluates the performance of the political actors. Journalists' performance in arguing determines the success of the column. This refers back to the impact of rhetoric in argumentation, a much neglected subject in the theory of deliberative democracy, which starts from the ideal assumption that all contributions should be treated as equal.⁷ Yet the style of arguing matters in the sense that the expressive argument frequently wins over the substantive argument, the rhetoric package over its content and performance over substance. The political intelligentsia can therefore be said to build up a particular kind of authority that comes close to charisma which is exposed through discourse (Nimmo and Combs 1992).

⁵ Class differences in media consumption seem to be more or less accentuated over different EU member states. Bourdieu (1996) draws mainly on observations of the French case. In Germany, the discussion is rather about the identification of popular news formats as underclass media (Nolte 2004). In Scandinavian countries, news cultures seem to be much more egalitarian with quality newspapers widely distributed over the whole population. Kriesi (2001: 45) speaks in this regard of a “Germanic newspaper culture” and a “Romanic television culture” of news distribution. See also the special Eurobarometer on information habits of European citizens (European Commission 2002).

⁶ The difference of popular news media coverage about Europe will be analyzed in a subsequent step of this survey.

⁷ See Iris Young (1996) or Lynn Sanders (1997) for a normative critique of a possible class and sex bias in deliberative theory. The problem is of course that text analysis can only provide insufficient empirical test cases for deliberation. More specifically, text analysis cannot inquire the intention and truth orientation of the participants in discourse. It can therefore not distinguish deliberation from rhetoric – i.e. it cannot determine when “arguments” are used manipulatively by particular opponents who are not open to be persuaded by “the better argument”. In the analysis that follows, it is media performance and not news quality that will be put to the test.

Chapter 3

Methodological design

Our analysis of media opinion-making is based on a newspaper content analysis on the ratification period of the Constitutional Treaty (26 October – 15 June 2005). The study draws on opinion-making articles in two quality newspapers in each of six European countries.¹ The countries and newspapers chosen for our analysis represent different degrees of involvement in campaigns for imminent or upcoming popular referenda (France, Denmark, UK) or parliamentary ratification (Germany, Sweden). In countries with a high density of political campaigning and heightened partisan competition on European integration such as France, we can expect the constitutional debate to be characterized by a strong involvement of elite journalists and a direct interactive style of appealing to the reader. In countries with low public attention, demobilization and absence of partisan conflicts such as Germany, we expect a low commitment of journalists, who will either appear as more distant observers of the ratification process, or as external evaluators of the performance of the political elite. In Denmark, Sweden and the UK, ratification was path dependent on prior choices taken in other member states, which made early media involvement likely to evaluate the impact of external events on changing domestic preferences. Norway is discussed as a test case of the external effects of EU constitutionalization in changing political preferences and triggering off normative and identitarian debates in associated countries.

¹ The newspapers included in our analysis are *Le Monde* and *Figaro* (France); *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany); *Times* and *Guardian* (United Kingdom); *Aftenposten* and *Dagsavisen* (Norway); *Politiken* and *Berlingske Tidende* (Denmark); *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* (Sweden).

The qualitative analysis includes 12 articles per newspaper, yielding a sample of a total of 144 articles. The articles are primarily chosen with regard to the events they describe: (a) the signing of the CT in late October 2004, (b) the Spanish referendum on ratification of the Treaty in late February 2005; and (c) the French and Dutch referenda in May/June 2005. In terms of value added to research on the European public sphere, the inclusion of three Scandinavian countries represents an important and necessary broadening of the empirical focus in previous research. Particularly the inclusion of recently acceded and potential future EU member states – in our case represented by Sweden and Norway – may fundamentally change the way we assess the status quo of the European public sphere (Conrad, forthcoming 2007).

Our sampling strategy was guided by the following principles: First, preference is given to editorials, i.e. articles expressing the collective opinion of the newspaper at hand. Second, longer commentaries were selected over shorter ones. Third, preference was given to as great a variety of authors as possible in order to capture a broader picture of media opinion making. Finally, articles were selected according to contents focusing on the CT as such and not on secondary issues related to the EU constitutionalization process.

The qualitative coding of the articles was conducted with the help of the *atlas.ti* computer package. This computer programme is suited for semi-structured content analysis of text material. A standardized codebook was developed that included a fixed set of variables used either for entire article coding or for marking specific quotations within the article (see annex). The advantage of this method is that samples of quotations referring to single codes could be compiled easily. Quotation lists facilitated the interpretation and the systematic comparison of media discourse across the newspapers.

The aim in the coding process was to reconstruct newspaper opinion-making both quantitatively and qualitatively. Variables referring to the structural elements of newspaper discourse contained a closed list of values. Variables referring to the interpretative elements of newspaper discourse contained an open list of values that could be extended according to new interpretations and aggregated meaning “discovered” in the coding process. Elements of media discourse are thus ordered quantitatively and qualitatively, facilitating the systematic comparison of the material and the relational structure of transmedia discourse. Coding was done by a team of three coders which provided sufficient controlling through double coding and cross-checking of the articles.

Chapter 4

Interpretation of the findings

The overall aim of the following analysis is to map media commitment and attitudes in the EU constitution-making process across countries. More specifically, the active campaigning role of political journalism in the ratification period as the general moment when European constitution-makers go public is analyzed. The overall research question on the active role of political journalism in EU constitution-making is approached in three steps. The practice of newspaper commenting is first classified along formal criteria such as different formats of opinion-making, authorship, and converging/diverging contents and debates. Second, the critical and the representative function of newspaper commentaries is reconstructed. This can be done directly by measuring the expression of journalistic opinions and preferences with regard to EU constitutional issues, their readiness to become involved in political debates and controversies (style of commenting), and the recurrent practice of providing arguments and justifications for their particular visions of EU constitution-making. A more indirect style of newspaper opinion-making refers to the framing of their stories, which discloses particular worldviews about the “meaning” of European integration and the scope of its constitutional project. In a third and last part of the analysis, we trace the impact of mediation and politicization on the EU constitutional process. Both are found to stay in a non-linear relationship, which restricts the role of journalists and their capabilities to focus public opinion and will formation.

Media formats of opinion-making

Types and frequency of opinion-making articles

Styles of commenting are partly dependent on journalistic cultures and traditions and vary between the different countries in the analysis. In cross-

national comparative surveys, this diverging practice of newspaper opinion-making must be taken into account. It is therefore not sufficient to consider merely the commentary page of the newspaper as the exclusive place for media opinion-making.¹ From our survey of constitutional debates, the distinction between media opinion articles (either through editorials or internal commentaries) and regular impartial news coverage frequently becomes blurred. Different sections of the respective newspapers are used to express journalistic opinions and newspapers frequently apply mixed styles to promote normative debates on European integration.² We have therefore decided to include also so-called background opinion articles in our survey, which predominantly give room to the expression of the media voice and which are placed outside the commentary pages. Furthermore, it is important to contrast the media voice against the voice raised by invited guest authors. This space for guest commenting indicates the variety of opinion-making in the newspaper, which is rarely dominated by single journalists.³

Table 1 lists all opinion-making articles on EU constitutional issues that were issued in our period of analysis. The different types of newspaper opinion-making are grouped along the above specified four categories. As a general pattern, the salience of newspaper opinion-making in EU constitutional debates is high, but newspapers provide space for plural opinions and voice from outside rather than monopolising opinion-making through editorials or influential journalists. In France, where the salience of newspaper opinion-making is highest, the journalistic voice nevertheless became less frequent compared to the amount of contributions from guest commentators (particularly in the French *Le Figaro*). Similarly, the practice of guest-commenting clearly prevails in Danish and Norwegian newspapers, where journalists are rather hesitant to take their own stand in the debate. In all other cases, guest commentaries complement rather than substitute the newspaper's own voice.

¹ This research strategy is used by Eilders et al. (2004c) to sample articles for a national survey of media opinion-making in Germany.

² Examples included from the different newspapers: the so-called *Thema des Tages* identified by the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* on its page 3; the regular column called *Zeitgeschehen* or *Die Gegenwart* in the *FAZ*; *Le Monde* daily column called *Horizons*. In the economic section of all newspapers, explicit opinion articles are frequently placed to comment on the political impact of recent common market decisions. In some countries (Germany), the cultural pages (*Feuilleton*) are often used to place personal opinions of the journalists in a more essayistic style.

³ For operational definitions see also the codebook in the annex.

Table 1. Overview of types and frequencies of opinion-making articles (based on the full coverage from 15.11.2004-15.7.2005).

	Editorials	Internal commen- tary	Guest commen- tary	Background opinion article	Total
SZ	0	20	5	48	73
FAZ	6	39	15	8	68
Le Monde	13	65	78	138*	308
Figaro	2	25	134	3	164
Guardian	17	16	22	1	56
Times	16	20	16	19	71
Politiken	23	5	66	16	110
Berlingske T.	13	3	42	15	73
Svenska D.	4	8	15	23	50
Dagens N.	8	11	6	11	36
Aftenposten	12	14	40	5	71
Dagsavisen	7	7	28	4	46

* A special issue of Le Monde of 5th of May 2005 contained 125 articles in a mixed format providing background opinion and information on EU constitutional issues.

Editorials written by the collective board of the newspaper are the strongest indicator for the salience of the media's own voice in the constitutional debate. However, the practice of placing editorials differs widely. In France, editorials are clearly inferior in number, and especially Le Figaro was reluctant to take strong positions in a heavily polarized debate. In Germany, editorials step back in importance for the benefit of opinion articles signed by prominent journalists. Similarly, Swedish newspapers tend to have only one *main editorial* of the day *in addition to* a number of signed commentaries by the individual members of the respective editorial boards. By comparison, the British and Danish newspapers as well as *Aftenposten* (NO) frequently express the newspaper's collective voice on EU constitutional issues.⁴

⁴ The second Norwegian newspaper, *Dagsavisen*, has, in contrast, only very few editorials, and the ones that do address the constitutional project or the issue of Norwegian membership are written in a much distanced analytical-objective style. This might indicate that the newspaper is careful not to express an opinion that may alienate its readership, which is more polarized on EU issues. See also Sitter (2007) who describes a similar attitude of mainstream political parties in Norway to avoid the issue of EU membership as potentially dividing their constituencies.

Editorials can be used as a practice of powerful media agenda-setting in rather depoliticised contexts, where political representatives are hesitant to take up the debate on EU constitution-making. This rule applies to Norway (*Aftenposten*) and most clearly to Britain and Denmark, two countries facing a referendum but with domestic party actors rather unwilling to open the campaign. As will be seen, this role of the media as the avantgarde of political campaigning against the inertia of political elites is mostly used for the expression of critical voice on EU constitution-making.

In sum, all newspapers engage in a debate about the EU's constitutional process both on their own initiative and by accommodating guest commentators. Yet the overall picture is that the media's own voice is less salient than expected. The impact of guest authors on opinion-making is high. Several of the newspapers analyzed tend to give the floor rather to external opinion makers than to their own journalists.⁵

Who writes the commentary?

The privilege of newspaper opinion-making on European constitution-making is reserved to male elite journalists.⁶ Commentaries are usually written by well-known national journalists who have a general knowledge that permits them to contextualise European affairs and to evaluate its overall relevance as well as its normative implications. This rather exclusive practice helps newspapers to maintain a clear divide between neutral provision of information and opinionated articles. The foreign and EU correspondents, who develop a more specialised and more instrumental knowledge in the field, are used mainly as information providers. As a distinctive class of journalists who are increasingly detached from their home contexts, EU correspondents have developed a relative power as transnational agenda-setters, but with limited possibilities to influence media opinion-making in the domestic field (Meyer 2002). To a large extent, EU correspondents control access to

⁵ This is perhaps most clearest in *Le Figaro*, where the commentary pages were opened for a large debate on "Quelle Europe voulons-nous", with articles written mainly by domestic governmental and oppositional actors, but also by public intellectuals, lawyers and academics.

⁶ Elite newspaper journalism is still a dominant male business. There is a remarkable gender bias in media opinion making on EU constitutional issues that consistently applies to all countries and newspapers. The overall average of female journalists in media commenting is barely 12,5%. It varies between 3% (*FAZ*) and 30% (*Times*).

European information by pre-selecting European news, but they are by and large excluded from opinion-making. Consequently, although qualitative case studies show that EU correspondents tend to support pro-European opinions and to favor the deepening of European integration and democracy (Siapera 2004), this generally positive attitude is found to be only indirectly expressed in media coverage on the EU.

The relatively subordinate role of EU correspondents holds across countries and newspapers.⁷ EU correspondents are knowledge and information providers, but not opinion-makers. In general, EU correspondents did not raise a competing, European voice in national debates, but rather fulfilled a substitutive function in enhancing the general knowledge on EU topics. This also explains why many newspapers earmark a lot of space for analyses and background opinion articles. When it comes to promoting normative political debates about European integration, however, the field of opinion-making is entirely dominated by leading domestic journalists and the editors.

The concern of the newspaper with the “informed opinion-making” of their readers was particularly visible in the French debate. *Le Figaro*, for instance, chose a popular format to fight misinformation and lies in the ratification campaign. A daily column called *vrai-faux* was launched to correct popular misconceptions about the Constitutional Treaty in the last four weeks preceding the referendum and to support an objective-analytical view to balance the passionate political debate. *Le Monde* chose a similar format commenting directly on different articles of the CT and their impact for the country: “The Treaty in 40 questions”.⁸ The German *FAZ*, by contrast, chose a more elitist

⁷ Only in Swedish newspapers, the EU correspondents were found to be more integrated. In *Svenska Dagbladet*, the respective Brussels correspondent could play off his competence and introduce a more European perspective against the mainstream opinions expressed by the newspaper’s Stockholm-based editors. Most of the articles coming from the Brussels correspondent, on the other hand, were classified as background opinion articles rather than as commentaries. While these articles did contain opinions about the events reported on, the style of commenting was usually not as pointed as in leaders or commentaries.

⁸ This rubric was strongly monopolised by single top-journalists of the newspaper (in particular by Henri de Bresson). On May 5 *Le Monde* published in addition a 32 pages supplement of background information and opinion articles prepared by the EU correspondents of the newspaper who gave pro and con arguments on 25 central questions of importance for the choice of the voter for approving or rejecting the CT (“oui/non: Les arguments pour choisir”).

approach initiating a legal-constitutional debate among well-known constitutional lawyers.

Such different formats chosen for commenting on the EU reflect the efforts of quality newspapers to detach their advisory-educating role from opinion-making. European debates are still exceptional in the sense that newspapers are less interested in promoting polarized opinions on contentious issues than in giving guidance to their readers as to how they should *understand* the process and project of European integration. The prominence of quality newspapers as interpreters of European news refers back to the unstructured character of European political communication, which is still new and unfamiliar to large parts of the audience. European news do not translate easily into ready-made schemes of interpretation. In such a situation, knowledgeformation must precede opinion formation. The journalistic monopoly of interpreting European integration is then used as a form of disguised opinion-making, which is aimed at supporting the general orientation of the public.

This advisory-educating role is partly also performed by guest commentators, most of whom offer an in-depth analysis of the constitutional process with background information provided by academics or insiders from within government. Contributions from academics and intellectuals are clearly given preference by some newspapers (e.g. *FAZ* and *Guardian*), while others also invite institutional or governmental actors to make their contributions. In particular in France, newspapers were used as a platform for campaigning by an almost equal share of institutional and non-institutional actors. With regard to the provenience of the authors, domestic actors dominate in all newspapers. While the Scandinavian newspapers are the most domestic, German newspapers and the British *Guardian* at least occasionally give the floor to foreign commentators (see table 2 below). An element of transnational communication was most apparent in the French referendum campaign with regular interventions by foreign opinion-makers as participants in the French debate.⁹

⁹ Examples include such prominent figures like German Chancellor Schröder, Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero and European Parliament President Borell who promoted a *Yes*, and German oppositional politician Oskar Lafontaine who joined the French PS dissident Emanuelli to propagate the *No*.

What turned out to be strikingly (albeit not completely) absent across newspapers and countries was the European voice. The *Guardian* featured one article by EU Commissioner Peter Mandelson, while *Aftenposten* (NO) featured two articles by the head of the local Commission Delegation. Members of the European Parliament were however quite active in the Danish¹⁰ as well as in the Swedish debate, although at least in the Swedish case, their contributions were frequently co-signed by politicians of the respective domestic party.

Table 2. Overview of guest commentators in constitutional debates¹¹

	Domestic	Foreign	Intellectuals/ Academics	Institutional actors	EU actors	Convention members	Others
SZ	4	1	2	0	1	1	1
FAZ	9	4	13	1	1	0	0
Le Monde	52	16	36	29	0	1	2
Figaro	104	34	44	63	11	2	17
Guardian	18	4	18	2	0	0	2
Times	15	1	7	7	0	0	2
Politiken	63	3	35	25	2	0	2
BT	41	1	14	13	8	1	6
Svenska Dagbladet	17	10	5	10	1	0	2
DN	8	1	3	2	0	0	4
Aftenposten	38	3	17	17	2	0	2
Dagsavisen	28	0	2	27	0	0	1
Total	391	67	191	192	27	5	41

¹⁰ MEP for Junibevægelsen, Jens Petter Bonde, was also a member of the Convention, but because he has only presented himself as an MEP in the guest commentaries in our sample, he is not counted under Convention-members.

¹¹ Co-authors are only taken into consideration when falling under different categories (e.g. guest commentary in Le Figaro co-authored by Dominique de Villepin (domestic, institutional) and Wolfgang Schäuble (foreign-institutional)).

Main issues and debates

Tables 2 and 3 indicate a shared thematic relevance chosen by all newspapers (including Norway) for rather intense commenting. Ratification created an enhanced need for interpretation and guidance through the media that was displayed over the whole period. The issue cycle shows a clear peak around the French and Dutch referenda in late May and early June 2005. This suggests that ratification failure was experienced in similar terms as a collective trauma attached to a sense of “deep crisis” that needed to be reappraised in newspaper commenting.

Table 3. Issue cycle (based on full sample of opinion-making articles, including guest commentaries)

	26-31 Oct. 04	Nov. 04	Dec. 04	Jan. 05	Feb. 05	Mar. 05	Apr. 05	May 05	1-15 Jun. 05
SZ	4	2	1	2	6	3	10	31	14
FAZ	4	5	3	2	1	5	4	21	23
Le Monde	3	17	5	5	10	21	42	154*	36
Figaro	3	4	4	15	18	19	24	57	20
Aftenposten	3	12	2	2	7	13	6	14	12
Dagsavisen	0	7	4	4	3	4	7	5	12
Guardian	1	1	2	4	5	1	5	18	28
Times	1	0	2	5	2	6	4	16	25
Politiken	2	13	4	6	3	7	18	24	33
Berlingske Tidende	2	5	4	1	3	6	6	16	27
Svenska Dagbladet	6	3	2	2	5	5	2	12	7
Dagens Nyheter	0	1	5	1	3	1	3	9	8
Total	29	69	38	49	66	91	131	377	245

* A special issue of *Le Monde* of 5 May 2005 contained 125 articles in a mixed format providing background opinion and information on EU constitutional issues.

Yet it should also be noted that the wide range of ratification procedures sustained the image of a Union still made up of national public spheres. The ideal that the process should be characterized by a common focus and shared criteria of relevance (Eder and Kantner 2002) was undercut by the reality of re-nationalised debates in the Member States which varied widely in intensity and content. Most newspapers commented on the signing of the Constitu-

tional Treaty in Rome (with the exception of *Dagsavisen* (NO) and the British newspapers), but a longer debate ensued only in France and Germany. Other events such as the highly expected positive outcomes of the Spanish referendum or parliamentary ratification in Germany and Italy were treated as foreign news and consequently did not initiate opinion-making in domestic newspapers.

The one event that reconnected ratification debates in the countries analyzed was the French referendum of May 2005, which clearly drew most media attention also in other member states. In France, the domestic referendum debate clearly stood out, focusing three times as much attention as other European newspaper devoted to EU constitutional issues. In May 2005, more than two articles per day in the French newspapers commented on the ratification process. It has been observed that the referendum debate was livelier than the debate prior to the last national elections (see also Ivaldi 2006). From mid-April onwards, newspaper commentaries converged also in the rest of Europe in interpreting the French (and Dutch) referenda, as well as mapping out the consequences for the future of the European integration project.

While European newspapers commented closely on the French referendum, they devoted only limited space to the domestic ratification procedures. In the UK and in the Scandinavian countries where European issues are traditionally highly contested, the domestic debate about the Constitutional Treaty had barely begun, while relatively high attention was given to the process of ratification in other countries. Only in Sweden, newspapers commented upon the question whether the ratification of the treaty ought to be subject to a popular referendum.¹² By comparison, the Danish and British debates lingered in a “pre-stage”, where the fronts were defined but conflicts around the forthcoming referenda did not come out in the open. In Germany, parliamentary ratification helped to uphold the consensus culture in dealing with European constitutional issues. Partisan competition on governmental EU politics is generally low and covered up by an all partisan consensus on the necessity of deepening and widening the EU (Schild 2003; Jachtenfuchs 2002). Accordingly, the domestic procedure of ratification initi-

¹² More principled questions with regard to the virtues of referenda were raised by the editor of the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, even though it was decided to have a referendum in Denmark (*Politiken*, 1.4.05)

ated in April 2005 drew only little attention (only one commentary in the *FAZ* and five in the *SZ*). Instead, the two newspapers devoted much more space to commenting upon the constitutional choice in neighbouring France.

The segmentation of media debates is also reflected in the range of issues that journalists commented on in the national media. In the run-up to the referendum, the French debate focused on procedural issues, the style of campaigning, the performance of actors within the campaigns, as well as possible results of ratification. Contents of the Treaty as well as more substantial questions with regard to the normative status of a European constitution and its impact on the democratic design of the EU polity were only randomly debated. By comparison, the Danish, Swedish, British and German newspapers debated ratification procedures in a more principled way, but still predominantly from a national perspective: the feasibility of a referendum in Sweden and Germany, and the planning of the announced referenda in Denmark and the UK.¹³

Apart from the constitutional main issue of the commentary, journalists further used ratification debates to highlight those issues of European integration that were considered to be of particular concern or that were most likely to be affected by the constitutional choice. The overview of such topics that were typically related to the constitutional debate shows a clear weight on material concerns/problems of Europeans: Social policy and employment, the growth and stability pact, competition policy and immigration. The debate was further heavily influenced by questions of future enlargement (in particular Turkish membership), i.e. linked to questions of collective self-understanding and identity. In particular, the last issue was linked to highly diverging interpretations across Europe. The dominant Eurosceptic voice of the *Times* welcomed enlargement as a source of potential allies for the UK in its fight for a less regulated EU. In continental newspapers, enlargement was

¹³ This includes, for instance, a more principled debate in Denmark about the use of referenda as a democratic instrument, in which newspapers could play off their divergent views against each other (*Politiken* openly displays skepticism, while *Berlingske Tidende* is clearly in favor). In Britain, there was a consensus among journalists that the treaty should be ratified through popular referendum, and the domestic debate focused on technical issues such as the form and wording of the referendum question.

interpreted as the main reason for the inevitable deepening and widening of the EU.

In sum, the high density of comments on EU constitutional issues indicates its shared relevance across different media spheres. However, governments' attempts to synchronize the timing of ratification were only partly successful.¹⁴ Only the French debate became a focal point, and somewhat of a substitute, for the debate in other countries both before and after the referendum. Possible reasons for the French to vote "yes" or "no" in the referendum were also heavily debated in other countries. Some commentators even became actively engaged in the French debate by appealing to the French voters to vote yes.¹⁵ Finally, the French referendum opened a space of reflection, in which ratification failure, the upcoming "crisis of the EU" and future scenarios of European integration were collectively made sense of.

The critical and the representative performance of media opinion-making

Our research started with the assumption that the EU constitution-making process is linked to active role-taking and campaigning on the part of the mass media. Journalists mediating constitutional processes do not only appear in their passive role as information providers or as amplifiers of normative debates and reasoning (e.g. in the Convention). They can reasonably also be expected to become actively engaged in the debate – journalists can raise the media voice, i.e. they can express their own preferences supporting or criticizing particular options in the constitutional process. Journalists can also express the public voice, i.e. they can bundle public opinion on EU constitution-making and speak in the name of the people. In the former case, we look for evidence of the critical function of the media; in the latter case, we scrutinize the representative function of the media.

¹⁴ The expected affirmative result of the Spanish referendum of February 2005 was thought to give a positive signal to France and the Netherlands. Also the timing of German Parliamentary ratification was chosen to affect positively the choice of the French voters.

¹⁵ See the *Guardian*, 28.5.05. The case for a yes vote: "If we were a French newspaper we would be urging our readers to say yes, just, as, if a referendum is held on it here, we will be calling on British readers to do the same – though French and Dutch no's will obviate the need for a UK vote".

The questions to what degree the media make use of their own voice and to what degree they claim to amplify the representative „voice of the people“ are of course closely interrelated and media discourse is rarely explicitly advanced along either one or the other of these two functions. We therefore use a range of different indicators to estimate the degree of critical engagement and representative role-taking of the newspapers.

First of all, we code how journalists positioned themselves within the constitutional process, expressing themselves in favor of or against the CT or taking a neutral/ambivalent stance.¹⁶

Secondly, and related to this, we reconstruct the target of support or critique of the commentaries, which can either focus on actors' performance or on issues, contents and debates. The dominant targets of critique can then be linked to media representations of the EU either as a strategic power play between different (elite and/or civil society) actors, or as a space for substantive debate and reasoning. In the first case, media discourse would represent the participatory value of EU constitution-making; in the second case, it would represent the epistemic value of EU constitution-making.

Thirdly, we identify stylistic tools that are used in journalistic writing to charge the stories with tension, passion or emotion. Our content analysis highlighted the following rhetorical devices: polemics, irony, advice-giving, drama, populism and glorification. Using a polemical, ironical or advisory style indicates a critical performance of the journalist. Journalists may, for instance, scandalize the proposals of single actors, mock the bureaucratic apparatus of the European Commission, or suggest policy alternatives. Dramatising, popularising and glorifying writings point to a more representative function of newspaper discourse. Journalists may, for instance, describe the dramatic consequences of no-votes, address people's anti-elite sentiments or praise the achievements and high value of European integration. The polemic style is most unambiguously connected to criticism, while the glorifying style is closely associated with an affirmative position and lack of criticism. In most cases, however, critique and representation in journalistic writings are not mutually exclusive but rather reinforcing each other. As table 4 shows, news-

¹⁶ For operational definitions of this and the following variables see the codebook in the Annex.

paper commentaries tend to be rather critical and not purely representative. They nevertheless give preference to constructive critique and advice over polemics and irony.

Table 4. Stylistic tools used in journalistic writing – frequency

	Polemic	Irony	Advisory	Dramatisation	Populist	Glorification
Total	68	56	90	55	24	17

Fourthly, we categorize the arguments and justifications provided by journalists to make their points in the debate. Of interest here is not only the question whether journalistic critique is also justified or put forward in an acclamatory way. Justifications can further be used as an important clue for understanding what the constitutional project stands for from the perspective of the media: whether journalists defend a vision of the EU as a problem-solving entity, as a community of values or as a community of rights. Finally, we group newspaper discourse around particular interpretative packages that are recurrently used as framing devices in the constitutional debate. Such frames of interpretation can be understood as a more indirect way of newspaper opinion-making, which allows journalists to transmit meaning without necessarily entering an argumentative practice with the audience.

Support or critical distance?

Ratification debates cannot simply be a continuation of constitutional deliberation in the drafting period of the Convention. Debates about ratification tend to polarize complex normative questions and to restrict voice to a “yes” or “no” to the Constitutional Treaty. The treaty as the result of previous rounds of negotiations can be either approved or rejected but it cannot be amended, improved and corrected. The proponents of the treaty therefore strongly rely on symbolic strategies to find public resonance and to motivate the enthusiasm of Europeans for their project. The opponents of the treaty will in turn most likely appeal to popular resentment and cynicism to motivate popular resistance against the European project.

The media do not straightforwardly adopt this logic of politicization in ratification debates. Media debates are generally more complex than simply abiding to this biased yes-no scheme. As a matter of fact, there are only few instances where a clear yes or no can be deduced from the journalistic statements in the commentary. The journalists in our sample generally embraced the constitutional project. Only 19% of the articles clearly expressed a nega-

tive attitude towards the EU constitutional process, 46% expressed an affirmative attitude, while 34% were coded as neutral. In other words, journalists prefer a constitutionalised and democratic European Union to the maintenance of the status quo or even to a withdrawal from integration. Broken down to country and newspaper levels, this pattern remains stable, although the *Times* and the *FAZ* stand out as the most negative newspapers, and Sweden and Norway account for 73% of the articles that take a neutral position towards the Constitutional Treaty.

Despite this general readiness of journalists to support a constitutionalised EU, newspaper commentaries tend to be rather critical in evaluating the results of the negotiations and the performance of European actors and institutions in the process of constitution-making. A strong constitutional engagement is frequently linked to the expression of disillusionment with the contents of the CT or with the ratification process. Only 14% of the commentaries were outright affirmative in their style of commenting, whereas 42% commented the ongoing events in the ratification process negatively, and 42% took a more distanced, objective-analytical attitude. Germany, France and the *Guardian* accounted for most of the affirmative articles, Danish and Norwegian journalists conducted the debate with a more distanced and objective-analytical view, while the most negative tone was applied by Swedish commentators and by journalists of the *Times*.¹⁷

Moreover, the constitutional debate in commentaries is found to be predominantly issue-focused, or focused equally on issues and actors (88%). Actors' positioning in the debate and their strategies clearly step back. Even the French referendum campaign was not dominated by personalized news coverage but by issues. Commentaries do thus not replicate the general trend in routine European news coverage, which is found to apply strategic news framings emphasizing the power game aspects of politics – winning and losing, self-interest, manoeuvres and tactics, performance and artifice (Cappella and Jamieson 1997: 110; Trenz 2000; Kevin 2003; de Vreese 2004).

¹⁷ Taking the stylistic tools as an indicator for media “negativism”, *Svenska Dagbladet* applies the most negative tone, closely followed by the *Times*. In Germany, the *FAZ* journalists step forward with a rather negative tone showing thus their willingness to break the German consensus culture on EU issues and to enhance more critical debate on the EU constitutional project.

This emphasis on criticism largely corresponds to the self-understanding of political journalism from the left and from the right as the fourth estate which observes the political process from a distance and which is alert of power abuse and misconduct. Only Norwegian and Danish commentaries tend for the most part to suppress evaluative statements and give preference instead to an objective-analytical style of commenting about the EU constitution. Confronted with strong external mobilization and pressure, also the French newspapers' voice is slightly less pronounced in distributing critique in the ratification debate.

Ideological as well as national cleavages between the newspapers have only a minor effect on the journalistic choice to support or criticize the Constitutional Treaty. In the liberal/left newspapers, negative views on EU constitution-making are practically absent, whereas more conservative/right and traditional "nationalist" newspapers like the *FAZ* and *Le Figaro* at least occasionally break the chorus of support. In their style of commenting, liberal/left newspapers are slightly more frequent in using irony linked to populism, whereas conservative/right newspapers are more polemical (such as foremost the *Times*).

The objects of critique and the respective attitudes promoted in newspaper commentaries vary over time and across countries. Disparities of timing of the ratification process made it rather difficult to synchronize the debates between the Member States. In practice, 25 different ratification procedures resulted also in 25 segmented debates on ratification. Nevertheless, some common patterns of newspaper discourse can be identified in applying a critical view on EU constitution-making. In general, journalists tend to focus their critique less on particular contents and provisions of the Constitutional Treaty than on the performance of particular actors in the ratification process. Domestic actors (both governmental and oppositional) and instances of domestic politics are most likely to become the object of critique in the strongly politicized ratification debates in France and in Sweden. In the more distanced debates in Germany, Denmark, Norway and the UK, the domestic arena of contention becomes secondary, but governmental actors from other Member States are critically scrutinised by the media (mainly the French president Chirac who is also the actor quoted with most statements in the foreign media).

In the period immediately before and shortly after the French and Dutch referendum, we see a clear convergence in the object of critique of political journalism. This media criticism is targeted at the EU as such, and not at particular actors and institutions.¹⁸ In general, journalists tend to support the popular view of an elite bias of European integration. The elitism of the European project is identified in key decisions concerning the deepening and the widening of the EU: monetary Union, enlargement and transfer of competences and sovereignty. Most journalists (especially from continental Europe) would not go so far as to fundamentally put the deepening and widening of the EU into question, but rather to criticize the way such decisions were communicated to European citizens. EU criticism in the media thereby opens up a field of political struggle against the exclusive intergovernmental field. Notably, this also contradicts the functional view on European politics which maintains that there can be only limited politicization with regard to technocratic governance. Democratic practice should thus be detached from the national realm and challenge the implicitness of European integration.

The only notable exception to this critical engagement of political journalists is found in the French debate. In debating the so-called *Bolkenstein directive*, which according to some observers has been the single decisive European reason for the French “No” (Ivaldi 2006), French newspapers remained rather ambivalent in criticising a neo-liberal market Europe. They became engaged in a relatively short debate, in which they shared the principal concern with the open market while at the same time re-framing the controversial Commission initiative as an issue that should not affect the electorate’s constitutional choice. Following this logic, their critique was mostly re-directed against domestic actors. The “No-campaigners” were accused of taking profit of the *Bolkenstein* opportunity to spread anti-European populism. Thus, what separates France from the other countries in our sample is the high degree of politicization in the domestic debate, which was only reluctantly amplified by the media.¹⁹

¹⁸ Other than in the *Times* and partly also in *Berlingske Tidende* (DK), EU actors and institutions are exempted from criticism. Similarly, EU actors are significantly less quoted in the commentaries and their statements are less contested by the journalists.

¹⁹ See also Vettters et al. (2006) for similar findings derived from claims-making analysis, which is a direct indicator for measuring effects of politicization.

Sweden is the second country in our sample in which the constitutional debate was potentially linked to domestic politicization, although the debate lingered at a pre-stage in the period analyzed and did not draw much media attention. Tellingly, for instance, *Dagens Nyheter* – while fairly silent about the normative desirability of the constitutionalization of the EU – had a clearly advocated position on the question whether or not the CT's ratification in Sweden should be subjected to a popular referendum. On this point, the newspaper clearly propagated parliamentary ratification, yet *not before* the issue would be subjected to public debate in the run-up to the September 2006 *Riksdag* elections.²⁰

In all the other countries analyzed, the constitutional debate hardly ever caused domestic contestation or partisan conflict. Instead it was characterized by a critical observation of the ratification process in France and in the Netherlands. Especially in the last period, most newspaper commentaries took the observatory position of someone who does not intervene directly although affected by the course of events in France. In Germany, the critical function of the newspaper commentary is concealed behind a more expressive style, which consists of evoking the distinctiveness of the constitutional project and of ratification as a particularly fateful moment of European integration history. This resulted in a symbolic language, making frequent use of glorification (at the beginning of the debate) and dramatisation (immediately before and after the referendum).

In countries where the EU constitutional process remained uncontested on the part of domestic actors, a typical pattern of newspaper discourse consisted of calling for more political debate on the issue. Even in *Aftenposten* (NO), commentators declared that Norway, although a non-member, should not ignore the important developments that are taking place in the EU. In Denmark, *Politiken* urged a broader debate about the contents of the Constitutional Treaty. The *Guardian* criticises the yes-side for postponing the debate about Europe and not bringing it up during the general elections. However, such single initiatives by political journalists generally do not prompt political responses. In May and June, the UK (except for the *Times*) and the other

²⁰ The argument on this count was that all political parties, particularly single-issue protest parties such as the anti-European June List, ought to be made to take full responsibility in an electoral campaign.

Scandinavian countries follow the pattern of German newspapers as a participant observer commenting mainly on the French debate. This implies a shift from a critical towards a more analytical focus of the French debate which remained detached from national politics.

Berlingske Tidende (DK) and the *Times* (UK) are the most pronounced in their critique of EU constitution-making. For both newspapers, the Constitutional Treaty is dispensable and linked to excessive normative goals, which have made the EU lose sight of its core, namely the conditions for a successful internal market. Journalists regularly call for a revision of the Treaty and criticise the centralising strive of Brussels. The French and Dutch *no*'s are interpreted as a necessary defense of the nation state. After the referenda, the *Times* recommends that the upcoming British Council Presidency should be used to focus again on economic growth and to bury the constitutional project. The Danish and British debates are also distinctive in that they result in a pro- and anti-European cleavage along which the two main domestic newspapers align (*Times* against *Guardian* and *Berlingske Tidende* against *Politiken*).

In sum, the impression is that EU constitution-making is generally supported by media commenting. Journalists nevertheless enter a practice of criticism of the process and outcomes of ratification and take the opportunity to become engaged in more comprehensive debates on European integration, albeit predominantly after the two referenda. To better understand how media voice re-presents the process of constitutional ratification, we first have to understand the rhetoric and interpretative techniques that journalists use for expressing their support or critical distance. Analyzing secondly the kind of justifications that journalists use to construct their arguments allows us to categorize different perceptions of the EU as a legitimate order that underlie journalistic writing. Analyzing thirdly the frames of interpretation around European constitution-making allows us to reconstruct the particular story lines, images and narratives that transcend the single contextualized debates in the Member States and constitute a shared space of meaning and understanding.

The representative voice of the media

The role of political journalism as advocates of general interests (Nimmo and Combs 1992) is made explicit in media representations of the constitutional process. Quality newspaper journalists frequently favor the expression of a

European perspective against nationalist particularism. By advocating general interests and asking what is at stake for the EU, the newspapers mostly play a balancing role in relation to external input into the debate. Critique is guided by long-term expectations in a constitutionalised and democratic European Union. Yet only few journalists would step forward to campaign openly for the European constitution. The particular worldviews of quality newspaper journalism must therefore be traced back behind the specific rhetoric and justificatory practices that are used to represent the debate.

Stylistic tools

A first indicator to the symbolic representation of European integration can be found in the stylistic tools that are used to tell the story of EU constitution-making. Whereas the critical voice in EU constitution-making was mainly linked to the use of polemics, irony and advice, we identified the representative voice of newspaper discourse in the use of dramatic, populist and glorifying language. The latter is found to be subject to the external events and changing moods that made up the ratification process. The triggering event of the solemn signing of the CT by the heads of state and government in the Campidoglio hall in Rome was explicitly staged for the media. As such, it was accompanied by mainly supportive and glorifying comments in the media, although the general impression is that journalists devoted only little attention to the event that was mainly staged for them. In later commenting during the ratification process and in light of the uncertain outcome of the referenda, journalists made frequent use of drama for constructing their stories. A possible “no” of the people was interpreted as a tragedy and as the expression of a “deep crisis” of the European Union. This media style of commenting represented mainly the defenders of the Constitutional Treaty. Journalists nevertheless kept their distance from the fierce defenders of the “yes” and from the apocalyptic scenarios that were invoked by them (most prominently also by the former Commission President Prodi who spoke of the “end of European integration”).

In the aftermath of the referenda, newspapers tended to withdraw this indirect support from the defenders of the Treaty. The climax of the debate that was reached with the French and Dutch referenda led to a noticeable change in the attitude of many commentators who now began to represent the EU in primarily negative terms and to identify with the people’s vote against the elites. A populist style prevailed in newspaper commenting, blaming the European elites for ignoring the will of the people.

Again, ideological cleavages between newspapers are found to have only a minor impact on the way journalists represent the EU. The representative voice of the liberal/left newspapers in our sample is more frequently linked to the populist expression of their proximity to the people and their distance to a Europe of the elites. Conservative newspapers” which could be expected to represent rather the nation than Europe nevertheless become engaged in a strong glorifying rhetoric with regard to the achievements of European integration and the role of their national governments therein. In contrast to the critical performance of newspaper discourse, we did however find national differences in representing Europe. The use of justifications and the framing analysis brings these national differences to light.

Justifications

The symbolic representation of the EU can further be detected in the way journalists position themselves in the debate and justify their own preferences in dealing with the constitutional issue commented on in an article at hand. Newspaper commentaries are generally not used as a forum for rational debate. Journalists do not systematically enter into a practice of reason-giving and justification, telling their readers what the CT stands for: whether it is useful or not (instrumental justifications), good or bad (value-based justification), and just or unjust (rights-based justification).²¹ Even though most of the commentaries are used to express specific preferences in favor of or against the project of a constitutionalised Union, journalists tended to avoid direct evaluations of the constitutional process, and the justifications found remained vague. Journalists rather draw on taken-for-granted assumptions defending the CT as a necessity that needs no further explanation (see below). Avoiding justification is, of course, also a way of avoiding political contestation. The issue is simply treated as non-controversial, as non-political. This consensual style in representing EU constitution-making is further reflected in the low degree of interdiscursivity of commentaries.²² Actors’ relationships, confronta-

²¹ A similar finding is reported from media claims-making analysis of constitutional debates. Only about one third of the claims raised by individual or collective actors in the media were justified (Vetters et al. 2006)

²² It should be mentioned however that an element of transnational discursivity is introduced by the frequent practice of guest-commenting, which all newspapers make use of. Brüggemann et al. (2006) use guest commentaries as an indicator for the inter-discursivity of an emerging European public sphere.

tions or cooperation are only highlighted in exceptional cases. Different positions in the debate are not systematically linked to each other.

The use of justifications does not necessarily display a divide between the defense of an interest-, value-, or rights-based European Union.²³ In most cases, the project of EU constitution-making is promoted by reference to an instrumental framework of argumentation. Critique is still predominantly linked to instrumental reasoning, but also evokes principles of universal justice and rights or defends contextualised identities. Instrumental reasoning is primarily used to express pro-European attitudes, but also to criticise the insufficiencies of governmental performance in not defending the common interest or in not complying with the functional requirements of European integration. From a normative perspective of justice and rights, the concern is less with the merits of EU citizenship and democracy than with EU elitism, inequality and the suppression of popular sovereignty. The elitist Europe is the shared object of critique, but different emphasis is placed on the EU's social and welfare dimensions. Only one newspaper (the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) regularly defends the CT on the basis of democracy and rights, yet combined with a strong critique of the disregard of European integration for the primary needs and belongings of the citizens.

Justifications are a central indicator for the understanding of media representations of European integration because they make explicit why journalists support and/or criticize the constitutional project. Our findings point out, however, that fewer journalists than expected justify their arguments in an unequivocal way. As we will show in the following section, the predominance of the use of frames over explicit justifications may indicate a more passive role of journalists, who do not defend their own standpoints, but rather observe and review the debate. This is contradicted, however, by the fact that the great majority of commentaries express an outright opinion in favor of or against the Constitutional Treaty. Instead of delivering justifications, media voice is based on more indirect judgments which are contained in the particular story lines and interpretations that make up the constitutional debate.²⁴ This implicit way of constructing the meaning of EU constitution-making can be reconstructed in the use of particular frames of interpretation.

²³ See Eriksen and Fossum (2004) for a differentiation of justifications of EU constitution-making and polity building along these lines.

²⁴ For instance, saying that the Constitutional Treaty is necessary *because* the Union needs to clarify its decision-making procedures is clearly more overt than describing the ratification

Table 5: The use of justifications by journalists in dealing with EU-constitutional issues

Interest:

	SZ	FAZ	LF	LM	G	T	P	BT	DN	SD	D	A	Total
Overall critical						6							6
Rather critical		5				4							9
Neutral	3		1			2			4	2	1	3	16
Rather supportive	3	1	1	4	4		1			5		2	21
Overall supportive	5			4			1		1	1			12

Value:

	SZ	FAZ	LF	LM	G	T	P	BT	DN	SD	D	A	Total
Overall critical					1	1							2
Rather critical		3				2							5
Neutral		1										2	3
Rather supportive		1	2		2							2	7
Overall supportive	1	1		1					2	1			6

Rights:

	SZ	FAZ	LF	LM	G	T	P	BT	DN	SD	D	A	Total
Overall critical						2							2
Rather critical		1			1				1				3
Neutral	4						1		4	3	5		17
Rather supportive	5		1	1	2		1		1				11
Overall supportive	2			1			1						4

debate with reference to the failure of the opposition in recognizing that the treaty does not promote “Anglo-Saxon economics” (*Guardian*, 28.5.05)

Interpretative frames

The reference to frames as ready-made interpretative packages to be applied in public discourse allows journalists to emphasize particular worldviews without entering a practice of reason giving and justification for a clear yes or no (Snow and Benford 1988; Gamson 1992). Frames are patterns of interpretation and meaning that can be used to build larger story lines, in which particular opinions and arguments can be embedded. They are not to be taken for opinions or justifications, but are rather the structures for opinion making (Eilders et al. 2004a: 27). As such, they resemble what has been described by Luhmann (1996: 194) as “schemata” or “scripts”, which are made for repetitive and stereotyped use to pronounce particular arguments about a causal relationship, explaining the complexity of the social world. Frames mark the semantic space for the unfolding of public opinion making and argumentation.

Frames were distinguished by grouping journalistic statements and interpretations along three central interpretative dimensions a) what mechanisms of integration/disintegration are emphasized, b) what framework for constitutional cooperation/integration is highlighted; and c) what role is ascribed to constitution-makers in relation to citizens. Articles can make reference to either one or several of these dimensions. On the basis of this we deduct eight frames that were consistently applied in structuring journalistic discourse and interpretations across the different media spheres.²⁵

a) Frames referring to mechanisms of integration/disintegration

- *The adversarial frame*: constitution-making as a power play between top politicians in defending strategic interests fighting for voters' preferences.
- *The compromise-equilibrium frame*: constitution-making as complex bargaining for the purpose of accommodating different interests and balance power.

²⁵ Our approach to re-constructing frames from media discourse is purely deductive. In a first reading of the data, journalistic statements are typified along these three dimensions until the underlying schemata of interpretation become recognisable. In employing these frames, the aim can of course not be to build coherence of media discourse, but rather to categorize different and often contradictory schemes of interpretation that shape public perceptions of the EU.

- *The destiny/“no choice”-frame*: constitution-making as a necessary adjustment to functional requirements and normative priorities.
- b) Frames referring to the contents of constitutional cooperation/integration
- *The social rights/welfare frame*: the constitution as a framework for welfare and social rights.
 - *The citizenship/rights frame*: the constitution as a framework for individual or collective rights.
 - *The neo-liberal/economic frame*: European integration as a framework for market competition and for the exchange of goods, *not* however as a political union.
- c) Frames referring to role ascriptions of constitution-makers/citizens
- *The heroic frame*: constitution-makers in the tradition of the founding fathers of European integration, defending the common good of Europeans.
 - *The “elite against the people”-frame*: constitution-makers as a new political class out of touch with ordinary citizens.

Below, we examine how the voice of the media appears in the various frames as well as how the latter are used. In other words, are they used in a normative or purely descriptive manner, and how does the use of frames vary between the countries in our sample? The frequency of the frames is presented in the table below.

Table 6. Frequency of frames

Adversarial	Compromise	Destiny	Social	Citizen	Neo-liberal	Heroic	Elitist
24	31	23	13	24	19	31	80

The adversarial frame

This frame centres on how the diversity of actors' interests gives rise to conflict. Such conflict is seen as the fundamental, constitutive feature of the EU. Correspondingly, constitution-making is interpreted as a power play between top politicians who gain and lose in the defense of strategic interests and the fight for voters' preferences. The Convention, the IGC, and the campaign for ratification are instances of this strategic game that consists of building temporary coalitions and compromises, accumulating personal advantages and imposing interests on others.

Media research has pointed out that there is a systematic bias towards strategic news framing in political news coverage (Cappella and Jamieson 1997: 110). Experimental designs in audience research further indicate that repeated exposure to strategic news coverage about the EU produces political cynicism and a declined readiness to support the EU (de Vreese 2004). The dominance of strategic framing in the ratification process would thus undermine the legitimacy of the constitutional project and increase the likelihood of popular rejection.

In media coverage on EU constitution-making, the dominant elite consensus in most countries does not support strategic news framing. This restricts the use of the adversarial frame in commenting. Journalists have only limited scope to portray ratification as a power game between political elites, but rather tend to use the adversarial frame as a kind of background understanding of European integration as fundamentally conflict-driven. From this latter point of view, the adversarial frame can be used with an *evaluative* or with a *diagnostic* accent (see table 7). In the first case, it is used as a negative template, as something that belongs to the old Europe and that should be overcome through the expression of the common will of Europeans in ratifying the treaty. In the second and more frequent case, it is used descriptively to postulate the heterogeneity of the member states and the incompatibility of national interests.²⁶ In such cases, the frame transmits an image of conflict as a constitutive feature, which distinguishes the EU from the nation state and which cannot be simply overthrown by the constitution.²⁷

Table 7. Positions towards the frame, frequency of the adversarial frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Adversarial	4	0	7	12	1	24

²⁶ On occasion, the adversarial frame is also used as a warning, e.g. by the *Guardian* (30.5.05): “Much will be said in the coming days about salutary wake-up calls, heard when Denmark and Sweden rejected Euro membership and Ireland the Nice treaty. But there will be nothing salutary about this failure if governments retreat from Europe into navel-gazing and narrow national agendas. If Britain carries on demanding its money back in the row over the budget it is far from inconceivable that others will demand their sovereignty back, or resist the call to dismantle protective trade barriers.”

²⁷ Besides the evaluative (should be/should not be) and the diagnostic (is/is not) use of the frame, we can distinguish a third descriptive way of applying the frame without expressing strong opinions or making diagnostic statements. In such cases, it is up to the reader to conclude what the EU is/stands for or how it should be.

The compromise-equilibrium frame

This frame is the counterpart of the adversarial frame. It conceives of the EU and its constitutional project as an accommodation of different interests, a balance of power, a fragile compromise, and an outcome of complex bargaining that nevertheless creates some stability and order. The legitimacy of the EU stems from its heterarchical structure and is based on a mixture of different legitimacy principles (contributions by the European Parliament, the national parliaments, governments, etc.). The Constitutional Treaty is seen as a technical instrument guaranteeing the smooth functioning of this complex institutional architecture and its performance in the sense of efficient governance.

Table 8. Positions towards the compromise-equilibrium frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Compromise	2	1	4	14	10	31

The table above shows that the compromise-equilibrium frame is mainly used to give a descriptive account of European integration or to interpret the constitutional process in an evaluative-affirmative way. The constitution is seen as a “carefully crafted compromise between different visions of the union” (*Guardian*, 30.5.05). As such, it represents the “maximum possible” (SZ, 15.5.05), the “fruit of a multilateral, extremely complex negotiation” (*Le Monde* 6.4.05), which, imperfect though it still may be in many respects, must be accepted because it would be unreasonable to expect any further concessions:²⁸

Le texte soumis à ratification est imparfait, mais il est admirable si l'on veut bien se souvenir qu'il est le fruit d'une négociation multilatérale extrêmement complexe dans laquelle chacun a dû faire des concessions. S'imaginer qu'après un non de la France il suffirait de se remettre autour d'une table pour faire triompher “nos idées” est irréaliste.

(*Le Monde* 6.4.05)

Similarly, *Dagens Nyheter* (SWE) (22.5.05) explains the impact of the treaty in the following way: “All in all a bit more intergovernmentalism here, a bit

²⁸ In this latter case, the compromise equilibrium frame shows affinity to the no choice frame.

more supranationalism there. But no dramatic change of the whole.”²⁹ However, the compromise–equilibrium frame is also used to promote a certain understanding of the Union. This is most apparent in Britain, where the need to recognize the diversity of the preferences and needs of the member states is repeatedly underlined, as the following quote from the *Guardian* illustrates:

This is our new bespoke Europe. The motivations for joining and participating are cut 25 different ways; so is what Tony Blair likes to call the "heart" of the project. None of this, if you can still smile, is fatal. All of it can and should be part of building a European future where history never ends. But we can't do that by mystic diktat.

(*Guardian* 30.5.05)

This quote is also illustrative of an ambivalence towards the constitutional project or, perhaps more precisely, towards the constitutional *process*. The compromise–equilibrium frame is used to defend and attack the treaty, as well as to promote different visions of the Union. As such, it is compatible both with an intergovernmental and a supranational vision of the EU. The *Times* is quite alone in criticizing the constitution for failing to recognize the equilibrium of autonomous member states. Accordingly, the Constitutional Treaty is criticized for breaking up this delicate accommodation of European diversity.

But it is as Europeans that we hope that France, a founding mother of the EU, votes ‘no’ –and thus opens the way to a genuine reform that would make the Union the servant, rather than the unelected and barely accountable master, in the European house of many proud nations that we wish to see strengthened and equipped for a changing world. (...) Vast and vague, the very concept of the EU constitutional treaty was wrong. It should have been, and could still be, a brief and easily digestible statement containing a set of principles to which all the peoples of Europe could sign up.

(*Times* 31.5.05)

²⁹ ”Summa summarum lite mer mellanstatlighet här, lite ökad överstatlighet där. Men ingen dramatisk förändring av helheten.”

In most other cases, this interpretative frame is used to support constitutionalization as an attempt to re-establish the European equilibrium in light of recent challenges of political integration and enlargement. Fundamental treaty reform should therefore be strived for to redefine the coherence of the multi-level system of governance.

The destiny/no choice frame

This frame focuses on the Constitutional Treaty as a necessity, as something automatic and inevitable that is needed for functional reasons or as an absolute normative priority, and as the only viable option for Europe. The treaty is presented either as the rational agreement of deliberation in the Convention or as the fruit of complex intergovernmental bargaining that should therefore not be further contested in public debate. A rather different use of this frame is made in the aftermath of the referenda. Referring to the constitutionalization of the EU as an inevitable necessity and as a functional requirement is a way of making sense of ratification failure as only a momentary setback for European integration. In many defiant statements made by the protagonists of European constitution-making, this implies an expression of disregard for the vote of the people: “With the death of the EU constitution, they will simply have to go back and try again, because this is still the only game in town” (*Guardian*, 3.6.05).

Table 9. Positions towards the destiny/no choice frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Destiny/ no choice	5	1	1	15	1	23

The destiny frame depicts the EU as a realm of necessity and functional requirements, not as the realm of political choice. The road towards constitutionalization is predestined; in consequence, ratification failure is tragic. In France, a slogan has been created for this: “pensée unique”, meaning the dominance of a European dogma according to which the “no” is excluded for its fatal consequences. Even where journalists recognize that the no-camp is right in blaming the many insufficiencies of the Constitutional Treaty, the “yes” is still regarded as compulsory for lack of a better alternative, and the “no” is categorically excluded for its disastrous and irresponsible consequences. The no-choice frame releases the defenders of the treaty from giving reasons for why a “no” is wrong. Neither does it inspire the media to tell their readers what the treaty is actually good for. Instead, it turns into destiny.

This account raises the problem that popular referenda are rendered superfluous since they take place in a no-choice context, in which the yes-option is framed as rational consensus, constructive and progressive, and the no-option as irrational, destructive and regressive.³⁰

Remarkably, the destiny/no-choice frame was most widely used in France, i.e. in the only country in our sample where the people actually had a choice. The polarized French debate frequently builds an asymmetry between the two positions in terms of the higher rationality of the “yes” and the pointlessness of the “no”. This leads to a fundamentalization of the conflict in which the opponent is not recognized as a legitimate partner to enter into a debate, but rather degraded as ‘populist’, ‘xenophobic’, ‘demagogic’, ‘hypo-critical’.³¹

The frequency of the destiny/no choice frame in the French debate does not necessarily mean, however, that French journalists proposed to detach the constitutional project from the people’s choice. French journalists rather stepped forward as the defenders of debate and fair political controversy (thus trying to reintroduce the adversarial frame into the debate). In many cases, they critically referred to the no-choice arguments articulated by the defenders of the Treaty, particularly the way the French President Chirac headed the debate. The commentators thus understood their intervention as a kind of friendly reminder to the political elites that their kind of argumentation could be counter-productive and strike back on them:

³⁰ Ultimately, this presents a problem to the theory of deliberative democracy that has to spell out how and why the rational consensus emerging from a deliberative process should be re-confirmed by the people’s choice.

³¹ See the influential columnist of *Le Figaro*, Ivan Rioufol, who complains about the low profile of the debate, in which the defenders of the yes (the “ouiistes”) stigmatize and even insult their opponents: “Oui, cette campagne inédite a pris des airs de révolution. Et ce sont les ‘ouiistes’ qui en ont fait eux-mêmes la démonstration: par la violence de leurs réactions, ils ont montré qu’ils vivaient la contestation comme une atteinte à leur autorité. Dimanche, Raffarin pourfendait encore les ‘nonistes’, ‘mélange hétérogène qui fait cohabiter à la fois des révisionnistes d’extrême droite et ceux qui ont accepté qu’un mur divise l’Europe’. Avant lui, Chirac avait stigmatisé leur ‘connerie’, Delors les ‘menteurs’, Barre les ‘falsificateurs et hypocrites’, sans compter les ‘moutons noirs’, ‘xénophobes’, ‘populistes’, ‘démagogues’” (*Le Figaro*, 27.5. 05).

Les partisans du oui l'ont enfin compris. Le oui qui écrase, le oui qui décrète sa supériorité, voire son mépris sur le camp du non, cela ne prend pas. C'est même contre-productif. Face à un non protéiforme, face à un non exprimant des peurs diffuses et s'insinuant partout, des franges les plus défavorisées à Saint-Germain des Prés – où il est « tendance » aujourd'hui de s'afficher dans l'opposition à la Constitution européenne –, d'autres pistes sont désormais explorées pour redonner vigueur au oui.

(*Le Figaro*, 11.5.05)

In the French debate, the no-choice frame was also linked to a question of identification with European values, making the “yes” obligatory for those who identify with European integration. The most controversial statement in this regard came from the French President Chirac who declared that “you cannot be European and vote ‘no’ in the referendum” (*Figaro*, 5.5.05). At this point, the journalists in our sample clearly identified with the opponents of the constitutional project represented by Laurent Fabius, who played off the value absolutism of the pro-Europeans against the rights of free opinion and diversity: “this means disqualifying and demonizing those who do not think like you” (*ibid.*).

The social rights/welfare frame

This frame emphasises the Constitutional Treaty’s role for providing a framework for welfare, fighting unemployment, and guaranteeing economic stability and growth. The EU is seen as a service provider for European citizens; it protects citizens from economic risks in the context of unbound competition and globalization.

Table 10. Positions towards the social rights/welfare frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Social rights/ welfare	2	4	2	1	4	13

The social rights/welfare frame is used with least frequency. This is somewhat surprising considering that social issues were emphasized as one of the main reasons for the French and to some extent also the Dutch rejection of the Constitutional Treaty. The frame occurs five times in our sample of French articles, and out of these, three quotes clearly argue that EU social policy should be among the core issues to be addressed in the treaty, while two quotes describe how the treaty does not support the idea of a social Europe.

As we shall return to later, this low frequency of the social rights/welfare frame in French quality newspapers is indicative of the self-ascribed role of French journalists as the “rational voice” and the way they distanced themselves from the ‘populist voice’ in the campaign rather than nurturing its role as representing the people’s concerns.

In the German debate, the welfare dimension is taken up only indirectly and discussed as a French concern that affects Germany to the extent that the ratification of the treaty is put at risk. In the Norwegian case, the frame is used to interpret the French debate. In Sweden, it is used on one occasion to express concern that social rights are not sufficiently incorporated into the treaty, while the frame is not used at all in the Danish case. The British newspapers’ references to the social Europe are clearly distinguished from the continental debate. The *Guardian* rejects the idea that the two no’s can be explained by Europe’s lacking social dimension and, echoing the *Times*, affirms that today’s Europe needs a new social direction (6.6.05): “Europe today is only socialist to the extent that the Soviet Union in the last years of Brezhnev was socialist.”

The different emphasis on the social rights/welfare dimension points to a latent cleavage in EU constitution-making, which is not only determined by competing interests among the governments of the Member States, but also by diametrically opposed expectations among the different constituencies. Commentaries hint at such fundamental dissent but do not offer a forum for mediating between the positions.

The neo-liberal-economic competition frame

This frame sees the EU basically as a market for competition and for the exchange of goods and explicitly *not* as a political Union. The Constitutional Treaty can be seen as providing insufficient solutions or it can be seen simply as unnecessary for the completion of the internal market.

Table 11. Positions towards the neo-liberal-economic competition frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Neo-liberal-economic competition frame	2	4	2	5	6	19

In France, this frame becomes the negative template of an EU concerned mainly with market building (*l’Europe liberale*). Nevertheless, journalists have

been rather reluctant to join the campaign against the neo-liberal market Europe, a campaign mainly led by the political left as the principal argument for rejecting the treaty. Instead, political commentators use the frame in a diagnostic way to explain the result of the referendum. From the British perspective, it is deplored that the continental left “has become so blinded by fears about globalisation and economic liberalism” (*Guardian*, 4.6.05). Especially the *Times* frequently refers to market Europe in an affirmative way as a particular vision of European integration that makes the Constitutional Treaty redundant (26.5.05):

What kind of Europe should Mr Blair fight for? In the coming year it will be time to jettison Jean Monnet's top-down vision of a single political identity for the continent. In its place there is a compelling case to make for a Europe that can compete economically with China and India, a Europe that gets on with completing the momentous task of creating a genuine single market in goods, services and capital. That means focusing on the Lisbon agenda rather than distracting itself with forays into areas as diverse as foreign policy and criminal justice.

(*Times*, 26.5.05)

British journalists thus construct a story in which market-building and constitution-making are seen as mutually exclusive. Growth and competitiveness are presented as what should constitute the core of the integration project. The rejection of the treaty in the referenda is thus welcomed as Britain's chance to launch a different Union or even to roll back European integration. Compared to their European colleagues, journalists of the *Times* step forward here as one of the most active media campaigners with the particular mission to bury the “top-down vision of a single political identity for the continent” and to forge a “new vision for what Europe could be: larger, freer, and hence stronger. In this case, less really can be more.” (*Times*, 3.6.05).

Although the affirmative use of the neoliberal frame is most apparent in Britain, also the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Germany and *Le Monde* in France argue that market orientation and the completion of the internal market have been the cornerstones of the European integration process from its inception. From the continental perspective, however, only few would argue that economic growth and competition is superior to the political and normative integration into a

common constitutional framework. As with the fierce reaction of the “social Europe”, the British vision of a liberal market Europe is difficult to reconcile with mainstream debates that are pushed in the other member states.

The citizenship/rights frame

This frame emphasizes the Constitutional Treaty as a new supranational framework for individual or collective rights. Its main contribution consists of promoting European citizenship, rights and participation, thereby strengthening the democratic components of the newly emerging polity. Europe is seen as a space for participation of European citizens and for the enhancement of democracy.

Table 12. Positions towards the citizenship frame

	Overall critical	Rather critical	Neutral	Rather supportive	Overall supportive	Total
Citizenship	0	0	6	11	7	24

The journalists in our sample mention the democratic component in an unspecified way, usually evoking the democratic deficits of the EU, but not expressing their preferences for a particular democratic design or procedure (participatory, representative, deliberative, etc.). All in all, the interpretative context of citizenship, rights and democracy was less frequently referred to than one could generally expect in a process of constitution-making. Half of the occurrences of the frame appeared in Danish commentaries. This mainly reflects an internal Danish controversy on the use of referenda as a democratic mechanism. The two main newspapers *Politiken* and *Berlingske Tidende* disagree about the question whether referenda would be a constructive way to promote European democracy. The former states that:

In short, the referenda are the wrong answers to the right question. The EU must be further politicised and democratised, if it is to survive. But it has to happen in a constructive, not a destructive manner. This could be solved by direct elections of those who will negotiate a new treaty in the member states – in other words, a form of democraticised convention model.

(*Politiken*, 24.4.05)³²

³² ”Folkeafstemningerne er kort sagt det forkerte svar på det rigtige spørgsmål. EU skal politiseres og demokratiseres yderligere, hvis det skal overleve. Men det må ske konstruktivt,

Berlingske Tidende argues in contrast that it is wrong to perceive constitutions as too complicated to be subjected to a referendum. The commentator is in favor of holding even more referenda about EU issues, and that the direct vote of the people should be considered as a ground pillar of democracy (*BT*, 27.3.05).

There are at least three reasons for why newspapers do not contextualise the constitutional debate more systematically beyond the framework of citizenship, rights and democracy. First of all, the democratic components of the Treaty were rather consensual. The fact that democracy and citizens' rights should be strengthened in the process of EU constitution-making was generally taken for granted. There can be only little controversy about the general importance of fundamental rights to be enshrined in the treaty, and also the substance of European citizenship remained principally untouched, with no substantial amendment to the legal provisions already established by previous Treaty reform.³³ Secondly, it was less the content of the Constitutional Treaty in terms of substantial rights than the process of constitution-making that the media challenged. In these terms, it was regarded as insufficient to impose rights and citizenship from above. The referendum should rather be used as an opportunity to practice these rights and to mobilize the plural voices of the citizens. Legitimation should be derived not from the consensus of the political class but from the "micro-oui" from below (*Le Figaro*, 11.5.05):³⁴

Mais, à côté de ces institutionnels de l'Europe, des anonymes, des associatifs se sont mis aussi au travail pour faire émerger le « micro oui », le oui de « la France d'en bas », chère à Raffarin, contre le oui venu du sommet. Depuis quelques semaines, les initiatives ciblées se multiplient ainsi de toutes parts. Le oui se communautarise désormais, se segmente à n'en plus finir. Femmes, hommes, femmes de gauche parisiennes, artistes, homosexuels, Italiens de France, Bretons de gauche, avocats d'affaires, étudiants de l'association Pour nous Cé Oui, écologistes sans frontières, Chrétiens

ikke destruktivt. Det kunne være ved at vælge dem, der skal forhandle en ny traktat ved direkte valg i landene – en demokratiseret konventsmodel, så at sige.”

³³ This corresponds to a general strategy of EU constitution-makers of not overburdening the process avoiding to raise issues such as immigrant and minority rights, an extension of EU citizenship rights, etc.

³⁴ Similar concerns were more adequately expressed by the “elite against the people frame” that we turn to next.

des semaines sociales de France, Etudiants juifs de France... la liste des appels pour ratifier la Constitution européenne ne cesse de s'allonger.

(*Le Figaro*, 11.5.05)

Thirdly, the modest frequency of the citizenship/ rights frame is explained by the timing of constitution-making, which, at the time of our analysis, had entered the stage of ratification. Consequently, most articles were preoccupied with the process of ratification and its possible outcome, rather than evaluating the content of the treaty. The concerns were much rather how to secure people's consent and what strategy would be conducive to ratifying the Treaty, not however what normative criteria the process has to fulfil in order to secure democratic legitimacy.

The heroic frame

This frame focuses on the moral integrity of EU constitutional entrepreneurs linked to the high value of the constitutional project. Constitution-makers are the heralds of a better future who fight for the common good of Europeans. As such, they stand in the tradition of the founding fathers, whose mission they carry on. The project of European integration here assumes a value of its own; it is portrayed as something worth fighting for. Perceived as an historic achievement "without precedents in the history of humankind" (*Le Figaro*, 27.10.04), the constitution for the united Europe has been shaped by the heroic deeds of the grand Europeans, but is perceived at the same time as the logical outcome of the history of European integration which has created commonality and a strong commitment for one another:

Ohne die Römischen Verträge von 1957, ohne "Rom 1990" mit dem feierlichen Gelöbnis einer wirklichen "Union" hätte es kein Europa der sechs Staaten, dann der 15 und jetzt der 25 gegeben.

(*FAZ*, 30.10.04)

The heroic frame was used primarily in the context of the signing of the Constitutional Treaty in Rome. Journalists typically refer to the grand achievement of the founding fathers, the milestones of treaty reform as well as the Union's economic and political success. The signing of the Treaty in Rome becomes a key event that is repeatedly commemorated in later contributions. Ratification thus creates its own "heroic" history with major accomplishments like the signing of the treaty or the Spanish referendum as consti-

tuting a collective practice of commemoration. *Politiken* (DK), for instance, writes that: “The first element is the historic awareness of what the EU has replaced: centuries of European history, where war was the order of the day” (29.5.05)³⁵. The commemoration of the glorious past can further be used to reinforce the negative view of the present linked to a widely held feeling of crisis. It is deplored that the EU’s present leadership lacks the charisma of earlier leaders. The heroic frame also brings in an additional element of drama with the outlook of a “no” (or two “no’s”) as a kind of historic rupture in the success story of European integration.

Table 13. Position towards the heroic frame

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Heroic frame	0	4	5	11	11	31

The heroic frame is found in all countries except for the UK, where it is used only on one single occasion by the *Guardian*. In the British debate, the future potential of the Union is given a stronger emphasis, rather than evoking its historic dimension and its past achievements. These future prospects attributed to the Union are disconnected from the founding moment; it is not the historic grandeur of the project that is important, but its open future choices.

The elite against the people frame

The elite against the people frame is by far the most frequent interpretative device in discussing the constitution-making process across countries and newspapers. This frame is based on the assumption that the will of the people is different from the one expressed by European elites. The Constitutional Treaty is seen as yet another example of a political class out of touch with ordinary citizens. European elites fundamentally misrepresent the will of the people. European integration is seen as driven by anonymous market forces or by a “new political and media aristocracy” (*Le Figaro*, 27.5.05) that affects people’s lives.

Table 14. Positions towards the elite against the people frame.

	Should not be	Is not	Neutral	Is	Should be	Total
Elite	18	2	6	52	2	80

³⁵ ”Et første lag er den historiske bevidsthed om, hvad det er, EU har erstattet: århundreders europæisk historie, hvor krig hørte til dagens orden”.

In defending the rights and identities of the people, referenda are interpreted as upheavals of popular sovereignty against the elitism of the EU. The “no” is perceived as a victory of democracy over the relentless train of Eurocracy or over the conspiracy of European elites. It was an act of resistance against the “no-choice ideology” and the consequential logics of European integration:

Selbst wenn die Motivforschung noch am Anfang steht, so gibt es Anzeichen dafür, daß viele Wähler das Verfassungsreferendum dazu genutzt haben, ihren Unmut über die Entwicklung der Europäischen Union an sich auszudrücken.
(FAZ, 10.6.05)

And above all, [the referendum] shows that the peoples of Europe no longer content themselves with the EU remaining the elite project that it was created as.³⁶
(*Dagens Nyheter*, 15.6.05)

This was where “people’ power” came in. It was a victory over elite group-think – *pensée libre* versus *pensée unique*. Other governments, Britain's included, should give citizens the same opportunity.
(*Guardian*, 31.5.05)

A slightly more benign view on the ratification failure interprets the choice of the people as a reminder for political elites to take people’s preferences more seriously in future rounds of Treaty reform. For the EU, this should imply a step back from too ambitious a project of political integration and to comply with the material and cultural needs of its citizens.

There are nonetheless significant differences between the countries in their use of the elite against the people frame. In Germany, the elite against the people frame is only “discovered” in the aftermath of the referendum and used as an interpretative tool to make sense of ratification failure. In light of the deep disillusion of most commentators as “convinced Europeans”, this frame is used to introduce a new spirit of fatalism that sees the European pro-

³⁶ ”Och framför allt visar den att Europas folk inte längre nöjer sig med att Europeiska Unionen förblir det elitprojekt den skapades som”.

ject close to failure. One commentator combines this fatalism with a negative portrayal of the public sphere as the realm of irrationality and populism, which constrains the world of institutions as the realm of reason and rationality:³⁷

Das deutsche Grundgesetz hatte gute historische Gründe, dem Parlament ohne einen echten Verlust seiner Handlungsfähigkeit kein Selbstauflösungsrecht zuzugestehen. In der europäischen Öffentlichkeit aber grassiert längst ein anderer, ein plebiszitärer Stil: der Machiavellismus der Stimmungsdemokratie.

(SZ, 31.5.05)

The elite against the people frame is the most frequent interpretation of European integration in the two Norwegian newspapers (23 out of 80 instances). Although it is not directly linked to the Norwegian membership debate, the dominance of this frame nonetheless reflects the importance of the issue of popular sovereignty for mainstream Euroskepticism that had already been decisive in the two referenda campaigns of 1972 and 1994 (Hille 2005). The elite against the people frame is least conspicuous in the two French newspapers. This low frequency is surprising given the fact that the Constitutional Treaty in France had been subjected to more intense debate and public scrutiny than in any other country. A possible explanation refers to the observation that high values of external politicization correlate with low values of media partisanship. Since the condemning of the elite bias of European integration played a prominent role in the French no-campaign, journalists opted for a more neutral position in the debate.

In the aftermath of the referenda, some commentators in France and Germany used the elite against the people frame in a self-critical attitude to reflect retrospectively upon the media's own role in the debate. The conclusion drawn in these comments is that the constitutional debate stood for the breakdown of the critical function of the media, which had allied too closely with the political elites and failed to understand the people's concerns. Identification with the people thus becomes part of the journalistic struggle for interpretative power and distinction. Quite often, this self-criticism goes

³⁷ A kind of anti-popular attitude that, for historic reasons, is found to be widespread among public intellectuals in Germany. See Giesen 1993.

along with malice against journalistic colleagues or against well-known intellectuals who have defended the constitutional project in the run-up to the referenda. Thus, to some extent quality newspapers approach the language of populist journalism and its anti-elitist, anti-intellectual attitudes.

Chapter 5

Mediatization and politicization

During the ratification period, the European Union and its Member States went through a relatively short¹, but still decisive process of politicization. Politicization implied that the EU constitution became the focal point for the expression of societal opposition and resistance. As such, the constitutional debate that unfolded in the months prior to the French and Dutch referenda was largely at odds with general patterns of politicization carried by mainstream political parties and institutions, which in most Member States gave preference to a consensual style of settling EU constitutional issues (Mair 2005). The referenda campaigns thus developed as a rather unusual case of bottom-up politicization carried mainly by non-institutional and peripheral actors (Zürn 2006). Given the findings above, to what extent can we say that this unexpected and belated politicization of the EU in the ratification process was supported or even stirred up by political journalists? Did journalists offer themselves as amplifiers of societal resistance or did they instead seek to calm down and demobilize their readers?

Our findings point to a possible discrepancy between politicization measured in terms of societal contention and mediatization measured in terms of media amplification of political conflicts and debates. In some countries, such as France, the domestic debate was running high with newspapers appeasing rather than stirring up the debate. In other countries, such as Britain, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, domestic debates lingered in a pre-stage and

¹ Intensified political debate across all member states was mainly restricted to a short peak of the three weeks around the French and Dutch referendum (see Vettters et al. (2006) for comparative data on the general political debate on EU constitution-making).

journalists *mediatized* the French (and Dutch) referendum debate as an opportunity for critical reflection in their own country.

The common assumption that mediatization has increased the likelihood of politicization of EU issues, slowly undermining the EU's consensus culture (Meyer 2005), must therefore be qualified. European news coverage of referenda is not simply 'business as usual'. Journalists may seek the opportunity of European referenda to take a more active, political role in the debate about Europe. In this first case, politicization and mediatization support each other. Journalists may also decide to step back in the debate as a passive and neutral mediator of the political process, filtering the highly politicized contributions according to criteria of fairness and objectivity. In this second case, the politicization of the EU would occur *against* the media.

In our empirical survey, we used different indicators to measure the conflictiveness of media debates on EU constitution-making (position of the author, style of commenting, actor- or issue-focus, rhetorical tools). In general, these indicators revealed a low inclination of journalists to become involved in politicization, and a preference to take a neutral, informative-educative role. Little evidence was found even for individual journalists to take an active campaigning role either in favor of or against the CT (with the exception of the *Times*). However, this all changed once the referenda were approaching. Predictions of outcomes were commonplace. Critical reflection about the future of the European Union in light of the likely nonnegative outcomes in the French and Dutch referenda was initiated. Obviously, this critical and reflective debate was intensified in the period immediately after the referenda. Although journalists refrained from blaming particular actors and institutions, they became engaged in a fundamental critique of European integration as an elite project where public opinion and popular concerns were not taken into consideration (as demonstrated above by the frequent use of the elite-versus-the-people frame).

Then again, the case of France is different from the general European picture. Journalists confronted with heavily politicized debates in the partisan arena tended to withdraw from their active campaigning roles. In our case, quality newspapers thus did not support the politicization of EU constitution-making in France. Instead, newspapers preferred a consensual style of settling constitutional issues. This led to an alienation of parts of the public. Readers accused journalists of living on another planet, detached from political realities:

Vous nous présentez un débat entre partisans du oui de droite et partisans du oui de gauche, remarquait alors un lecteur de Villemoisson-sur-Orge (Essonne), Gilles Dao. C'est un peu comme si le journal vivait sur une autre planète, déconnecté des réalités, une oreille collée à l'Elysée et l'autre à la Rue de Solferino. Pendant ce temps, la France d'en bas, celle des ouvriers, des employés, des techniciens, des cadres, des enseignants, des agriculteurs, des chômeurs débat à bâtons rompus... On aimerait que Le Monde soit plus près des cages d'escalier et des salles communales, plus près des Français.

(*Le Monde*, 16.5.05: 14)

The critical and the representative function of newspaper commentaries as an experimental field for European democracy are equally displayed over the European space. All newspapers selected (including the Norwegian ones) became involved in a normative debate about the desirability of the constitutionalization and democratization of the EU. This is manifested in the general readiness of journalists to support the EU, but also to make use of their critical feather, especially after the referenda. However, it is important to underline that this criticism is co-existent with a general support for the European integration project and does not attack the performance of particular actors and institutions.

The complex relationship between politicization and mediatization in the ratification debate helps us qualify some commonly held myths about media society (Rössler and Krotz 2005). Instead of an all pervading and hegemonic media voice that monopolised European debates, a much more differentiated image of media impact on politicization and public preferences and opinion formation emerges. For the French media analyst Dominique Walton, the French referendum shows that neither the media nor the elite shape public opinion.² It is noteworthy that French quality newspapers did not break the EU's consensus culture as assumed by Meyer (2005), but rather supported the consensual style of dealing with EU constitutional issues. Opinion-making in French quality newspapers was highly distinctive, with journalists distancing

² A statement made in a *Le Monde* guest commentary on 5.6.05.

themselves from popular mobilization and playing off their “superior” knowledge and inside view.

In other European countries, the initially low intensity of media debate is certainly due to lacking partisan contention – either still dormant as in Denmark and the UK, or covered by a broad partisan consensus as in Germany.³ The consensual style that is apparent in most quality newspapers can be interpreted as a sign that journalists treated the debate at a “pre-political” stage and that contention about the constitutional project was marginalized. To some extent, this disinclined attitude may reflect journalistic preferences to depoliticize EU constitutional issues and not to become engaged in editorial conflicts about the constitutional project as such. In most newspapers, however, the readiness of political journalists to become engaged in critical role-taking actually increased in the course of the debate. The interesting finding related to these cases is that lacking domestic politicization was at least partially substituted by enhanced mediatization pushed forward by political journalists as the main promoters of constitutional debates in their countries.

The resonance of the French case is of particular relevance for understanding the dynamics of mediatization in other countries. Politicization in France had a kind of substitute function for those other Member States where similar opportunities were not given. The French debate was not only closely observed by all newspapers. Journalists also identified with the issues and concerns raised in the French debate and used them to open a forum for domestic debate. In particular, the results of the two referenda were taken as representative for the deep gulf between the EU and its citizens and as a clear indicator of a crisis that affected the whole of Europe. Journalists thus did not fall into the trap of interpreting ratification failure as merely domestic events caused by the internal dynamics of the French and Dutch debates. While it was recognised that such domestic factors (e.g. the unpopularity of Chirac) also played a role, journalists were ready to politicize EU constitution-making

³ An exception is represented by the *Times*, which persistently argued the case for the rejection of the CT. Contrary to most of the other non-French newspapers, the debate in the *Times* left behind the interpretative framework of EU constitutionalization, opening instead the alternative vision of Europe as a non-political free-trade zone for which the French vote did not really matter. Apart from some gloat over the result of the French and Dutch referenda which might be bad for Europe but certainly good for the UK (see e.g. *Times*, 3.6.05: 19).

on the basis of the more general concerns that were raised in the debate and that affected Europe as a whole.

In France, and notably also in Germany, the ratification debate reads as a story of disenchantment of political journalists with the prospect of EU constitution-making. The media warmly welcomed the signing of the Treaty in October 2004. Even as late as February and March, newspapers saw little reason for pessimism and were confident that possible resistance in the UK and in the Scandinavian countries could be overcome by a strong will for constitutionalization in the core Member States. This illusion was broken by opinion polls indicating the likelihood of popular rejection of the CT in the French referendum from around the end of March 2005. Whereas German newspapers upheld their rather distant view on a debate fully controlled by political elites, the French newspapers were pushed in a more and more defensive position against bottom-up mobilization and popular resentment. In Germany, oppositional voices were marginalized and their arguments were treated as curiosities that could not really affect the inevitable course of events. In France, the unwanted politicization of the referendum campaign shifted the media debate from an overall emphatic, affirmative glorifying coverage to increasing media cynicism.

Beyond this background, the politicization of the French referendum debate unsurprisingly received only little support from the media in the own country. In spite of the high density of coverage over the whole period (see table 1 and table 3), the French media were not ready to amplify popular contention. As shown in table 4 and table 5, most journalists did not hide their sympathy for the constitutional project and expressed rather critical views with regard to the style of campaigning of opponents and proponents of the CT alike. The evident purpose of this journalistic attitude was to calm down the debate and to avoid misinformation and agitation.

From the no-side, this gave rise to attempts at marginalizing the media voice. Blaming the media for their pro-European bias became a central part of the campaigning strategy. Most effectively, the no-coalition accused the media of elite favoritism. In April 2005, a petition was signed by 15,000 persons to

protest against biased media coverage in favor of the constitution, accusing the media of censorship, absence of pluralism and disinformation.⁴

The anti-media campaign displayed an enormous mistrust against editorialists as the “new enemies of the people” (*Le Figaro*). The two French newspapers analyzed reacted differently to the challenge of involuntary politicization. *Le Monde* was more offensive in its style. In the aftermath of the referenda, the newspaper recognizes and defends its active campaigning role: “Nobody can oblige *Le Monde* to be neutral about a question of such central importance like the European construction. Ambiguity was not an option. Its readers wouldn’t have appreciated a ‘yes but’ or a ‘wrong no’ (6.6.05).⁵ *Le Monde* openly rejects the idea that it should be balanced in the sense of giving equal voice to both camps: “A newspaper is not made with a calculator” (*Le Monde*, 16.5.05: 14). In addition, differences between election campaigns and referenda campaigns were emphasized. In European integration, there are no governmental and oppositional parties that merit equal attention, but instead a very plural pro-European camp that cuts across party cleavages and cannot be classified along a left-right scheme. It is therefore argued that the particularity of the pro- and anti-European cleavage releases the media from the principle of neutrality of opinion. Quality newspapers have the obligation to stay on the side of reason and rationality and to dissociate themselves from anti-European populism that is spread by more unbalanced media formats (*Le Monde*, 15.5.05: 15).

In turn, *Le Figaro* was more concerned with its predominantly EU-hostile readership. It opened a forum for guest commentaries and avoided the ex-

⁴ In absence of popular news formats which raise the anti-European voice in other countries, the attack against the media in France was mainly self-organised and spontaneous. The audience stroke back on the newspapers own webpages, blogs were bombarded with thousands of contributions and the stars among the journalists were heavily insulted by their readers. A new myth was born of the cyberspace as the real democratic forum and the realm of truth against the conspiracy of the “pensée unique” in the printed space as the realm of lies and propaganda. Letters to the editor are further used as an indicator to test out the loyalty of the readers with the newspaper opinions. In one article, *Le Monde* comments the strong reactions of its readers that range from canceling their subscriptions to insults of the journalists and editors.

⁵ “Rien n’obligeait *Le Monde* à être neutre sur une question aussi essentielle que la construction européenne. La tiédeur n’était pas de mise non plus. Ses lecteurs n’auraient apprécié ni un ‘oui, mais’ ni un faux non”.

pression of strong opinions by its own journalists. A collective journalistic statement in favor of the “yes”, scheduled for publication on May 4, was withdrawn at the last minute by the director of the newspaper, who was afraid of the potentially damaging economic effects of a strong EU commitment.

In the Scandinavian context as well, where contention on EU issues traditionally has a high standing among political parties, newspapers were not found at the forefront of politicization. In contrast to Germany, the Swedish government’s commitment to the parliamentary ratification of the CT was heavily contested domestically, but with journalists rather playing a tranquilizing role. However, external campaigners involved in this debate were regularly given voice as guest commentators in the newspapers, among them foremost national MP’s or MEP’s speaking on behalf of their respective domestic parties and equally representing the domestic yes- or no-movements. The style of commenting in the internal commentaries, on the other hand, indicates an increasing level of politicization at least on the part of *Dagens Nyheter* in the context of the impending ratification failure in France and the Netherlands. Whereas the paper had previously been mainly concerned with distributing policy-advice and instructing its readers on the contents of the CT (mainly at the hands of its Stockholm-based EU reporter), a polemical attitude in favor of EU constitutionalization on the part of *DN*’s editorialists became more conspicuous as the CT’s likely failure as a result of the French and Dutch referenda became evident, resulting in reproachful statements such as this one: “Nationalism is the most successful internationalism there is: everyone can agree that the own country is best. That feels like a reassuring basis for future European cooperation” (*DN* 2.6.05).⁶

In the case of Norway, it is perhaps not surprising that the level of politicization was rather low, seeing as most of the political parties try to avoid a real debate about membership. Journalists adopt a general attitude of abstention and scrutinize the EU constitutionalization process mainly as bystanders who still closely observe ratification (reflected in the relatively high number of commentaries over the whole period analyzed), but mainly from an analyti-

⁶ ”Nationalismen är ju den mest framgångsrika internationalism som finns. Alla kan enas om att det egna landet är bäst. Det känns som en betryggande grund för framtida europeiskt samarbete.”

cal-objective perspective avoiding direct identification with the yes- or no-camp and most notably not connecting the European process to the dormant domestic debate of Norwegian EU membership.⁷

At the early stages of the Danish constitutional debate, politicization was restricted to the level of partisan conflict, intensively debating the Socialist People's Party's (SF) position in the constitutional debate. Traditionally, the SF has been divided on European integration; their decision to join the other yes-parties in campaigning for the CT leads both Danish newspapers to conclude that Danish debate has been "normalised". In other words, the EU is no longer a theme of fundamental polarization but an arena of partisan contention.⁸

Together with the *Guardian*, both Danish newspapers reflect a readiness of journalists to support the EU and to become engaged in fair critique. For instance, the *Guardian* urged to "Listen to Luxembourg" (editorial, 12.1.05). Like *Politiken* (DK), the *Guardian* journalist also ridicules the no-camp, e.g. by reference to "Europhobic demonology", a position taken frequently in the British tabloid press. As in Denmark, debate in May and June is dominated by

⁷ While journalists tend to avoid the issue of Norwegian EU membership, the guest commentaries in *Dagsavisen* and *Aftenposten* are more autonomous to raise the issue. Symptomatically, in June, *Dagsavisen* opens a small debate between the yes- and no-camp about how one can interpret the French and Dutch no. The controversial nature of the EU issue is better brought to bear by the debate about Norwegian participation in the "EU army". The no-camp would for instance write: "Norwegian soldiers to war for the EU?" (Åslaug Haga, 31.5.05). The second extensive, EU-related debate among guest commentaries concerned the fate of the Norwegian constitution confronted with membership and a constitutional treaty. This debate was restricted to *Aftenposten* which gave the floor to specialists and academics.

⁸ Simultaneously, while *Politiken* calls for a diverse debate within the yes-camp it also characterises the no-camp as "reactionary". *Berlingske Tidende* writes that in the wake of SF's yes, the "nihilistic Red-Green alliance" can fight the nationalist Danish People's party over being the "true" no-sayers. Both Danish newspapers also spend some time describing how the *No* shifted to the political right (despite the Red-Green Alliance being an "alternative on the left"). Among the guest commentators, however, these suppositions are contradicted, as are the newspapers' arguments in favor of the CT. Thus, the level of politicization that is reflected in the two Danish newspapers shows how the media tended to neutralise partisan conflict and chose not to amplify the otherwise contentious political climate. Admittedly, *Berlingske Tidende* raises questions about the public support for the EU; this is also reflected in their support for a referendum as an expression of the people's will (no matter what it may entail), while *Politiken* is clearly sceptical.

analyses of the prospects and possible consequences of a French and Dutch no. Although the rejections are treated mainly as a major blow to the EU⁹, external commentaries clearly balance the newspaper's position, as does their economics editor, Larry Elliot, e.g. in a commentary titled "This week the monster turned on its creators". His positions resonate with the other British newspaper in our sample, the *Times*, which recurrently calls for a rewriting of the treaty on the grounds that it does not solve the real challenges that the Union faces, namely lack of competitiveness and economic decline. Thus, it is actually the content of the treaty that is politicised, the resounding argument being that the CT should be re-written to clearly serve an economic purpose.¹⁰

⁹ "It is no exaggeration to say that the future direction of an EU of 25 countries and 455 million people has suffered grievous collateral damage in the battle for the soul of an agonised and unhappy France" (editorial, 31.5.05).

¹⁰ The majority of the *Times*' guest commentators are also opposed to the CT and are even more explicit than the newspapers' internals: "Rather than losing one's virginity to a gentle rubbing-up against international institutions, the loss of sovereignty to an impenetrable web of overlapping legal and political systems is a process which leaves everyone feeling royally shafted". In fact, this tendency is so clear that one of its columnists opened his commentary with "No, I am not mad", when arguing for his support for a French yes. Shortly afterwards, he is answered by one of the *Times*' journalists who states that: "If Magnus can truly divine clarity in this constitution, then I have a cup of tea leaves for him to interpret".

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study has critically tested the role of political journalism in EU constitution-making. More specifically, it asked whether political journalists take an active role in shaping public preferences and opinion on European integration and its prospects of democratization and constitutionalization. An analytical framework was developed that distinguishes between the critical and the representative function of media opinion-making. Journalists were found to interfere with the democratization of the EU either as a critical watchdog controlling and advising political decision-makers, or as a collective voice representing long-term expectations and public dispositions in the debate. This research framework was applied to the analysis of newspaper commentaries in the ratification period of the EU Constitutional Treaty (November 2004 – June 2005). Ratification was analyzed as a critical juncture of European integration in which enhanced debates and politicization could be expected to take place in all member states.

Our research findings point to a rather differentiated picture with regard to politicization in the ratification period, which was only supported and amplified *in part* by the media. The diversification of nationalized ratification procedures was a major obstacle for the timing of parallel debates about the EU constitutional project and the initiation of discursive exchange between the member states. Even though there was a general commitment of journalists to become engaged in normative debates about the democratic and constitutional design of Europe (with the exception of Norwegian newspapers) the expectation of an entrepreneurial role of political journalists in actively promoting European integration was not confirmed. In contrast to earlier de-

bates, where journalists were found to display an attitude of “progressive Europeanism” (Trenz 2007), the ratification period was marked by a critical distance of the media. Except for the British *Times* and Swedish *Svenska Dagbladet* the great majority of European journalists expressed generally pro-European attitudes, but did not identify closely with the project of EU constitution-making. On the other hand, journalists did not amplify popular discontent with European integration either. The critical voice was mainly taken up in the aftermath of the referenda as part of reflecting on how to overcome the gap between the EU and its citizens.

If commentaries stand for the critical and representative function of newspaper journalism as a watchdog, but also as a promoter of European democracy, it must be concluded that quality newspapers were not at the forefront of popular contention for or against the project of EU constitution-making. Journalists regarded themselves primarily as expert actors and used the commentary for giving advice (see table 4). Advice is two-directional: criticising political choices on the basis of better alternatives and enhancing public knowledge and educating the public. Not surprisingly, quality newspapers generally chose an attitude of critical distance and were not ready to amplify popular resentment against the EU. In commentaries, quality newspaper journalists speak to the political elite and not to the people. By detaching public *reasoning* from popular *voice* in the ratification period, they gained argumentative strength, but created a situation of potential misrepresentation. This elite bias of quality newspapers was partially corrected in light of the referenda results and used for a critical reflection on the EU communication deficit, again mainly addressing the elites as the principal carriers of European integration.

The result of the French referendum may be used as an indicator for measuring media impact on shaping voter preferences. The French negative vote *against* the overwhelmingly positive voice expressed in the media would thus expose the bankruptcy of journalism as an instrument for public opinion formation (Fossum and Schlesinger, forthcoming 2007). Journalists were accused of no longer being the fourth estate that controls power in the name of the public interest, but one of many interest actors trying to shape public life. Rather than controlling public opinion, quality newspapers in countries like France thus became the negative template of public opinion. Their commitment to rational discourse was embedded in a strategy of distinction that allied progressive Europeans with the elite readerships of the newspapers and

that dissociated them from the anti-European popular mass publics. The media's defense of reason and objectivity alienated substantial parts of the public who felt that their concerns were being marginalized. The recognition of the people's deeply rooted Euroskepticism entails the need for more popular news formats, which will inevitably enter a trade-off with deliberative reasoning.

If the French case stood for a temporary decoupling of politicization and mediatization through quality newspapers, the opposite relationship was found in other European countries. The general impression based on our data is that journalists promoted mediatization of constitutional debates in absence of domestic contention. They thereby raised the voice of their respective publics against domestic governmental or partisan actors who were still reluctant to become engaged in the constitutional debate.

Facing the lack of domestic contention, the French and Dutch referenda generated much more media commenting than the respective national ratification debates. Subsequently, the French debate functioned as a surrogate debate, allowing the newspapers to raise some fundamental questions with regard to the present and future of European integration and the normative options implied in it. Although it remains clear that the majority of the journalists in our sample were supportive of the European integration project and by and large also of the Constitutional Treaty, the way the EU and the member states handled the constitutional ratification process was subjected to rather massive criticism.

In most newspapers, the critical and the representative voice of the media are combined with an anti-elitist attitude of blaming the technocratic character of European integration. However, the amplification of popular discontent and contention through journalists remained restricted to the single and unique opportunity of referenda, which resonated across the European space and took a substitutive function for politicization in other member states. The voice of the people against the constitutional project imposed from above was articulated and amplified at one short moment in time and linked to parallel and interconnected debates across the European space.

The question is whether this short-term commitment of political journalism in making and representing public opinion on European integration will also predominate in debates to come. Is political journalism ready to challenge

European governance and give popular discontent a regular voice? Will mediatization and politicization of European integration converge and in the long run lead to regular debates and contention about the EU? The low intensity of the debates that followed in the so-called reflection period gives reason for skepticism. The negative votes in the French and Dutch referenda might therefore not be seen as the beginning of the belated and long expected politicization of the EU (Mair 2005; Zürn 2006). In light of our research findings, they rather mark the endpoints of the relatively short and still exceptional politicization of the EU.

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Annex

Codebook used for entire article coding and for coding quotation units through atlas.ti

A. Entire article coding

Type of article

- 0101 Editorial
- 0102 Commentary
- 0103 Background opinion article

Operational definition:

Editorial: expressing the collective opinion of the newspaper, not signed by individual journalists and usually given a prominent position in the newspaper (e.g. frontpage)

Commentary: expressing the individual opinion of the journalist who signs the article. Usually to be found in a particular section of the newspaper (e.g. opinion or commentary page) and clearly made visible as different from the ordinary news article

Background opinion article: providing explanations and evaluations to the reader on a particular topic, not necessarily sharply distinguished from the ordinary news article and not necessarily signed by a particular author. The practice between different newspaper to include such articles might differ considerably

Author

- 0201 full name of author

Triggering off event (up to two per article)

- 0301 Signing of the Treaty
- 0302 EP affirmation of the newly appointed Commission (Oct. 2004)
- 0303 Spanish referendum
- 0304 French referendum
- 0305 Dutch referendum
- 0306 European Council meeting
- 0307 EP approval of the Constitutional Treaty
- 0308 NATO top-meeting (22.2.05)

0398 Other

0399 non identifiable/more than two

Operational definition:

Triggering off event/motive/cause that underlies the comment and that has motivated the author to express his/her opinion (the assumption is that the journalist's attention on an issue is drawn by a particular event/political happening or action that is considered as particularly relevant and merits further reflection. The alternative is that the journalist decides to reflect directly upon an issue and leaves it open what kind of event has motivated his/her reflection.

Focus

0401 Clearly issue focused

0402 Predominantly issue focused

0403 Same degree of issue and actor focus

0404 Predominantly actor focused

0405 Clearly actor focused

0406 Unclear/ non-determinable

Operational definition:

Personalised versus issue oriented coverage: are issues related to actors positions, are they treated as independent from actors positions, or are competing actors treated as self-sufficient?

Main topic

Comment:

What is the main topic of the commentary, what issue is commented on, what issue is debated? Note that the commentary might be also structured around several issues. In this case code only secondary issues

0500 Constitutional Treaty/Process General/Unspecified

The form of the Constitutional Treaty

0501 Form of the Constitutional Treaty, General/Unspecified

0502 Treaty, no constitution

0503 Constitutional Treaty/Mixed format

0504 Full Constitution
0505 Working document
0506 Binding document

0515 Other Issues referring to the form of the Constitutional Treaty

Issues relating to collective and individual rights, duties, obligations and the Constitution

0550 Identity and Values
0551 Democratic deficit/ transparency and citizenship (i.e. political rights)
0552 Social rights and welfare
0553 Human rights

Comment:

Identity etc.: e.g. the Constitution should contribute to a European identity
Democratic deficit, etc.: e.g. the Constitution will not enable the EU to remedy its democratic deficit.
Social rights etc.: e.g. the effect on the Constitution on employment law, or models of the welfare state.

Institutional system spelled out in the Constitutional Treaty

0600 Institutional system spelled out in Constitutional Treaty General/Unspecified
0601 EU President (creation, competences, meaning)
0602 EU Commission (number of commissioner, meaning, status)
0603 EU Foreign Minister
0604 European Council
0605 Council of Ministers
0606 European Parliament (more rights, co-decision, etc.)
0607 National Parliaments
0608 Team-Presidency
0609 European Congress
0610 Balance of power between institutions

0625 Other, Institutional System spelled out in the Constitutional Treaty

Procedures of decision making in the Constitutional Treaty

- 0700 Procedures of decision making General/Unspecified
- 0702 Qualified Majority Voting/Veto
- 0703 Weighting of Votes in the Council
- 0704 Subsidiarity
- 0705 Division/Catalogue of Competences
- 0706 Legal Personality
- 0707 Legal supremacy
- 0708 EU Exit clause
- 0709 Flexibility or Enhanced/Structured cooperation clause
- 0710 Revision procedures of the Constitution/of Treaties
- 0711 Possibility of Referendum on European Issues
- 0712 No IGC revision of draft Constitutional Treaty (unbundle the package, Pandora's Box)
- 0713 Pro IGC revision of draft Constitutional Treaty

- 0725 Other, Procedures of decision making

The Content of the Constitutional Treaty

- 0800 Content of the Constitutional Treaty General/Unspecified
- 0801 Charter of Fundamental rights
- 0802 Preamble/Reference to God
- 0803 Common Foreign and Security Policy
- 0804 Relation CFSP and NATO
- 0805 Justice and Home Affairs
- 0806 Economic Policy
- 0807 Agricultural and Structural Policy
- 0808 Environment-/Social- and Health policy
- 0810 Culture-/Research- and Education policy
- 0811 European social model
- 0812 In/ flexible union: Constitutional arrangements to allow different levels of integration/ participation
- 0813 Reform of voting rules
- 0814 Relationship between EU and national/ regional levels

- 0825 Other, Content of the Constitutional Treaty

The Convention method/ organisational structure

- 0900 The Convention method/ organisational structure, General/ Unspecified
- 0901 Convention composition/Particulars
- 0902 Competences of the Convention
- 0903 Presidium/Steering committee of the Convention
- 0904 Person and leadership skills VGE
- 0905 Agenda, timetable, working groups
- 0906 Cost and fees
- 0907 Presentation of drafts
- 0908 Position of accession countries
- 0909 Criticism of the performance of the Convention
- 0910 Interventions from outside (how to deal with)
- 0911 Role of Governments
- 0912 Role of the Commission
- 0913 Role of the European Parliament
- 0914 Consultation with civil society/interest groups
- 0915 Timetable Convention/IGC
- 0916 Search for a compromise on the treaty as a whole
- 0917 Danger of convention-failure
- 0918 Danger if IGC-failure
- 0919 Disapproval/rejection of the convention method
- 0920 Approval/support for the convention method
- 0921 Disapproval/rejection of the constitution
- 0922 Approval/support for the constitution
- 0923 Impact of the constitution on the regional/local level

- 0935 Other. The Convention method/organisational structure

Ratification methods/ results

- 1000 Ratification methods/results General/Unspecified
- 1001 Referendum
- 1002 National referendum Pro
- 1003 National referendum Contra
- 1004 European-wide referendum
- 1005 Danger of referendum failure
- 1006 Ratification in Parliament
- 1007 Voting campaigns: role of parties

- 1008 Voting campaigns: role of governments
- 1009 Voting campaigns: role of EU institutions
- 1010 Result of referendum
- 1011 Impact/consequences of Referendum
- 1012 Consequences of referendum for a group of countries/ balance of power or coalition
- 1013 Consequences of referendum for a specific country
- 1014 Impact of ratification for the constitution process/ building
- 1015 Impact of ratification for European integration and/ or the future of Europe
- 1016 Implications of ratification for specific EU competences
- 1017 Dynamics of voting campaigns (e.g. wording)
- 1018 Ratification and public opinion

1025 Other, Ratification methods/ results

Position of the author on the constitution

- 1100 Overall critical
- 1101 Rather critical
- 1102 Neutral
- 1103 Rather supportive
- 1104 Overall supportive

Agenda-setter

- 1200 European Parliament
- 1201 Domestic government
- 1202 Government or Member State
- 1203 Council/ IGC
- 1204 Commission
- 1205 Civil society actor
- 1206 National parliament
- 1207 Political party
- 1214 Other
- 1215 Non-determinable

Style of commenting

- 1300 Objective-analytical
- 1301 Negative
- 1302 Affirmative

B. Quotation coding

Quotation unit 1

Mark the specific text in which author justifies/gives an opinion with regard to the main topic of the article.

Justifications given by the journalist/author with reference to the main constitutional issue of the article (up to three for each commentary)

1400 Interest based

→ Does the author justify his/her statement on the constitutional main issue of the article on the grounds of instrumental costs, benefits or efficiency)

1401 Value based

→ Does the author justify his/her statement on the constitutional main issue of the article on the grounds of contextualised values, identities or belongings?)

1402 Rights-based

→ Does the author justify his/her statement on the constitutional main issue of the article on the grounds of general rights and principles of justice?)

Comment:

Justification must be linked to the author's claim/opinion how the constitutional issue should be/should not be, what it stands for etc.. Is only coded if the author makes an own claim/expresses his/her own opinion (if the author supports/disagrees with somebody else's claim/opinion code below within quotation unit 2).

Quotation unit 2

Mark the specific text in which another actor is directly/indirectly quoted by the author and (if at all) the author comments on this statement (up to three for each article). Remember to use same quotation for entire quotation unit.

Actors whose statements are commented on (mentioned through direct or indirect statements).

- 1500 European Parliament
- 1501 Domestic government
- 1502 Government other Member State
- 1503 Council/IGC
- 1504 Commission
- 1505 Civil society actor
- 1506 National parliament
- 1507 Political Party
- 1508 Other media voices
- 1509 Domestic no-camp/ opponents of the CT
- 1520 other

Issue raised by actor's statement

Refer to issue list under quotation unit 1

Justification given by actor

3100 Interest based

→ Does the actor justify his/her statement on the grounds of instrumental costs, benefits or efficiency?

3101 Value based

→ Does the actor justify his/her statement on the grounds of contextualised values, identities or belongings?

3102 Rights-based

→ Does the actor justify his/her statement on the grounds of general rights and principles of justice?

Author's stance towards actors' statement (always to be coded)

3200 Supports actor's statement

3201 Neutral/ambivalent towards actor's statement

3202 Opposes/criticizes actor's statement

Quotation unit 3

Mark the specific text in which secondary issues are raised by the author and in which these issues are discussed/evaluated by the author. Up to three for each article.

Secondary topics raised by the author

Comment:

To which other topics is the main (constitutional) topic directly or indirectly related by the author? Give preference to constitutional topics.

Refer to issue list under quotation unit 1

Quotation unit 4

Mark the specific sentence(s) in which the author makes use of stylistic tools.

Stylistic tools for evaluation (code up to three for each commentary)

- 5000 Irony, satirical-entertaining
- 5001 Dramatisation
- 5002 Polemical-scandalising
- 5003 Advisory-pedagogical
- 5004 Populist/Demagogical
- 5005 Glorification

Quotation unit 5

Framing

5100 The adversarial frame

→ This frame centres on the diversity of actors' interest that give rise to conflict. Such conflict is seen as fundamental, as the constituting feature of the EU. Actors are principally motivated to defend their particular interests against the other actors as adversaries in the European power play- The Convention or other arenas (such as IGC) are seen as a strategic game. Ratifica-

tion as a strategic game made up of purposeful actors, constitution-making as a power play between top politicians.

5101 The heroic frame

→ This frame focuses on the high value of the constitutional project. Constitution-makers are the heralds of a better future that fight for the public goods, they are the heroes that stand up and fight for the common European cause. The project of European integration assumes here a value of its own; it is portrayed as something that it is worthwhile to fight for.

5102 The citizenship frame:

→ This frame emphasises the constitution as a framework for individual or collective rights. Europe is seen as a space for participation of European citizens. Constitution as promoting a European citizenry, citizenship, rights, participation

5103 The social rights/welfare frame

→ This frame emphasises the constitution's role for providing a framework for welfare, the fight of unemployment, as a guarantee for economic stability and growth. The EU is seen basically as a service provider for European citizens, it protects citizens from economic risks in the context of unbound competition and globalisation

5104 The neo-liberal, economic competition frame

→ This frame sees the EU basically as a market for competition and for the exchange of goods and explicitly not as a political Union. This can be seen as good or bad and the constitution can be seen as providing insufficient solutions to it can be simply seen as unnecessary for the completion of the market

5105 The destiny (no choice) frame.

→ This frame focuses on the constitution as a necessity, as something automatic, inevitable that is needed for functional reasons or as an absolute normative priority. The support of all partisan coalitions presents the Constitutional Treaty as the only viable option for Europe. This is our straight way, and there can be no aberration or detour.

5106 The elite against the people frame

→ This frame emphasizes the conflict elite versus people and is based on the assumption that the people's will is different from the one expressed by European elites. The people are not represented by the EU. "We the people" united against the elites. Expected to express a negative attitude

5107 The compromise-equilibrium frame.

→ This frame is the counterpart of the adversarial frame. It conceives the EU and its constitutional project as a reconciliation of different interests, a balance of power, a fragile compromise, an outcome of complex bargaining,. The legitimacy of the EU stems from its heterarchical structure and is based on a mixture of different legitimacy principles (contributions of European Parliament, national Parliaments, governments, etc.). Ratification procedures risk to undermine this complex architecture of the EU and put at risk the fragile equilibrium on which the EU is based.

Position of the author towards the frame:

5200 Should not be/should not stand for/should not lead to

5201 Is not/does not stand for/ does not lead to

5202 Neutral/ambivalent

5203 Is/ stands for/ leads to

5204 Should be/should stand for/should lead to

Media coverage is often held responsible for the erosion of public support for European integration. At the same time, a well-functioning political journalism is also held up as an important requirement for EU democracy. Set against this background of conflicting perceptions of the media, this report analyzes political journalism's critical performance in the realm of EU constitution-making. The ratification stage, when the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe was submitted to public scrutiny and popular referenda, can be seen as a critical juncture wherein political journalists should be expected to step forth as active players in European integration. The present study draws on commentaries in two quality newspapers selected from each of six European countries (Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and Denmark). Newspaper commentaries speak to journalism's watchdog role, its critical and representative function, but can also serve a promoting role, to promote European democracy. Were quality newspapers also at the forefront of popular contention about the project of EU constitution-making?

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RECON – Reconstituting Democracy in Europe – is an Integrated Project supported by the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme for Research. The project has 19 partners in 12 countries across Europe and is coordinated by ARENA – Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo. RECON runs for five years (2007–2011) and focuses on the conditions for democracy in the multilevel constellation that makes up the EU.

