

# NATIONALIZATION VS. EUROPEANIZATION VS. GLOBALIZATION OF ISSUES THAT SHOULD BELONG TO THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

## The Berlusconi-Schulz Case

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Recently it has been argued that, despite the absence of European-wide mass media, a European public sphere is emerging, as some issues of European relevance become debated at same time with the same intensity and with recourse to the structures of meaning throughout the entire European Union.

We have examined the media framing of Silvio Berlusconi's controversial address as President of the European Council of Ministers to the European Parliament on July 2, 2003, in which he compared the Social Democrat MEP Martin Schulz to a *kapò*, an auxiliary Concentration Camp guard. Our data from six European Union, two North American, and Swiss sources show that while the reporting of the address do satisfy two of Schlesinger's three criteria for the development of a European public sphere – the existence of a Europe wide news agenda that is part of everyday media consumption of large audiences across nation-states, the data does not indicate a European transcendence of national public spheres. The different framings are neither evenly distributed across EU countries, nor are structurally equivalent actors carriers of the same framings, nor is the intensity of the debate similar across countries. What is more, intra-European variances are larger than the variances between European and non-European, or EU and non-EU countries. Thus, if there exists any transcendence of national public spheres, it appears more as a move towards a Western, or even global, public sphere than one that is European.

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## **The Idea of a European Public Sphere**

It is a widely shared belief that modern media such as newspapers, radio, and television have played, through the stories that they tell, a central role in the construction of national identities, in the composition of an *imagined community* of people who believe that they resemble one another and are different from others who are not seen as belonging to the nation (Anderson 1983). There were two essential aspects of this process according to Anderson: the existence of national media institutions; the dissemination of stories that encourage individuals to see themselves as belonging to a community of fate. As well as being central to the process of national identity construction, Habermas (1989) has argued that such a process of public sphere formation was crucial for the development of democracy.

The public sphere that is constituted in part by mass media institutions and narratives is seen historically as a national space but not one that is necessarily restricted either empirically or philosophically to the nation-state (Habermas 1989; Fraser 2002: 3). This gives rise to the possibility in a changed technological and geopolitical environment of a transnational public sphere that may help to engender transnational political identities. Such an idea is hardly new but is now seen as increasingly important in an economic, political and media environment marked by globalization where it is often argued that nation-states and, therefore, national citizens are losing control over their lives and that the only way to regain this is to invent transnational democratic structures and cosmopolitan forms of citizenship. While the European union is regularly presented as the leading example of cosmopolitan citizenship, it is also commonly asserted that a ‘democratic deficit’ exists in the EU because system integration has greatly outpaced social integration. One way in which this democratic deficit might be addressed, it is claimed, is if media institutions could play a similar role in the development of the EU as they did in the development of nation-states (Eder 2000; Gerhards 1992; Kevin 2003). The creation of a European public sphere is thus seen as essential in order to address the ‘democratic deficit’ both within European nation-states and within the European Union.

The construction of a European public sphere is often seen, therefore, to be a ‘good thing’ for democracy (for example, Koopmans and Pfetsch 2003: 3). Of course, the development of a European identity may prove to be just as exclusionary and uncivil as national identities have been historically. One needs only to consider the possible implications of the present rhetoric of a ‘clash of civilizations’ for the prospects of democracy both within a multicultural European Union and between the European Union and other states (Huntington 1996). While

a European public sphere may or may not be desirable depending upon how inclusive it is, there are good reasons to be cautious about claiming that a European public sphere actually exists either in a mature or fledgling form.

While proponents of an actually existing European public sphere based on traditional criteria are difficult to find due to the absence of European-wide media institutions and the generally low profile of European news in national media institutions, there are some who argue for the existence of a fledgling European public sphere of *Europeanized* national publics. Philip Schlesinger argues that while ‘national editorial values influence coverage and that national governmental sources are still of key importance for journalists covering European Union issues’ (1999: 27), elements of a European civil society have begun to emerge, particularly within political and business elites. He believes that the development of the European Union has led to the emergence, for example, of an *Economist* reading transnational European political and business elite that indicates how a European public sphere, or more precisely, a complex sphere of connected national publics, might develop. To become mature, according to Schlesinger, such a sphere of publics would have to have three essential properties: the dissemination of a European news agenda, that such an agenda would become an important part of everyday media consumption, and that the audiences living within the EU begin to think of their citizenship to a certain extent ‘as transcending the level of the member nation-states’ (Schlesinger 1999: 277). He recognizes that a European agenda is likely to be *domesticated* in different ways according to nation, region or language but argues that such domestication does not rule out the transcendence, to a certain extent, of exclusively national identities.

Schlesinger’s third criterion of assessment depends to a certain extent on how national media frame their account of events as individuals will only be encouraged to see themselves as belonging to a European community of fate if media institutions amongst other cultural institutions provide such a way of organising the world. We will argue that it is helpful for the purposes of this article to group the frames used in three ways: nationalization, Europeanization and globalization. We define nationalization as a process whereby national news sources, national perspectives and national interests are privileged over others. Europeanization is where European sources, perspectives and interests are asserted over, for example, national interests or global interests. Globalization is where global sources, perspectives, and interests are presented as paramount. If we relate this to the question of the existence of a *European* public sphere, then we can see that as well as the possibility of there not being enough transcendence (the predominance of national interests) there is the

possibility of there being *too much* transcendence. A European leader, for example, may be criticised by Europeans for his abuses of democracy, but it makes no sense to claim that this is an example of Europeanization when the values upon which this judgment are based are universal.

A number of recent empirical studies working in a manner similar to the approach suggested by Schlesinger claim a surprising degree of movement towards a Europeanization of institutionally separate public spheres within the European Union (Van de Steeg et al. 2003; Eder and Kantner 2000; Trenz 2004a). Partially, the newly found European public sphere is a result of a shift in its empirical measurement. Traditionally, the existence of a European public sphere had been measured by the absence of a European media system (Kielmansegg 1996: 57; Rucht 2000: 10). Lately this approach has been contested by a more culturalist approach that claims a public sphere exists if the same topics are discussed "at same time with the same intensity and structure of meaning" (Van de Steeg et al. 2003). Although we think that it is also important to follow the development of the institutional underpinnings of media discourses, we would agree that such measurement is suitable for the concept of a European public sphere, if we add the condition that the structures of meaning must be logically compatible with the notion of a *European* public sphere i.e. they must employ a European frame.

To further our understanding of the extent to which there is evidence for the existence of a European public sphere we have examined the framing by national newspapers within and beyond the European Union of Silvio Berlusconi's controversial address as President of the European Council of Ministers to the European Parliament on 2 July 2003 in which he likened a MEP to a *kapò*, an auxiliary concentration camp guard. The reporting of the address satisfies two of Schlesinger's three criteria for the development of a European public sphere – the existence of a Europe wide news agenda that is part of everyday media consumption of large audiences across nation-states – but, we argue, fails to indicate that a Europeanization of national public spheres has occurred. Obviously there are drawbacks of our research concerning its scope and synchronic character. Ideally, the method adopted in this paper could be applied to more national environments and to subsequent media events in order to gauge the growth or decay of such a post-national media sensibility.

### **The Context**

At the beginning of July 2003 the biannually rotating Presidency of the European Council of Ministers passed to Italy and Silvio Berlusconi. This occurred at an important time for the

European Union as it coincided not only with negotiations concerning the development of a European Constitution, prompted by the imminent accession of ten Central and Eastern European states to the Union, but also with the occupation of Iraq that had provoked deep divisions between member states of the Union.

One of the distinguishing features of Berlusconi's second administration from May 2001 onwards in contrast to previous Italian governments has been its critical stance towards the European Union and particularly the dominance that it sees the French and German states as jointly exercising over decision-making. Berlusconi presents himself as robustly defending Italian interests in Europe in the face of Franco-German domination, a policy that led to the resignation in protest of widely respected Foreign Affairs Minister Renato Ruggiero and to Berlusconi adding the Foreign Affairs portfolio to his sphere of responsibility. Another feature of Berlusconi's repositioning with respect to the Union has been to closely ally Italy with the USA. Not only does Berlusconi frequently praise US economy and society but also the policies of the Bush administration. Berlusconi, for example, supported the invasion of Iraq in opposition both to France and Germany but also the vast majority of Italian public opinion.

The Italian assumption of the European Presidency was greeted by some of the European press with much scepticism. This was less to do, however, with Berlusconi's position with respect to the Iraq War and more to do with questions concerning possible conflicts of interest relating to Berlusconi's media power and to investigations into the probity of business dealings. Such concerns were not new. The influential liberal capitalist weekly magazine *Economist* had campaigned against Berlusconi in the 2001 Italian election. *The Economist* was joined by prestigious European newspapers of both liberal and conservative persuasion such as *Le Monde* and *El Mundo*. Paul Ginsborg sees such an intervention as highly significant:

For the first time, an Italian election had become the object of heated discussion at the level of a newly-formed European public opinion; and one part of it clearly felt deeply alarmed that a fresh Italian anomaly was being created, which could serve as a model for the rest of Europe. (2001: 319)

While such an international press did hurt Berlusconi, Ginsborg argues, it did not hurt him enough for his coalition to lose the election.

Whether such internationally hostile press comment is indicative of the existence of a *newly-formed* European public sphere or not, a similar press environment greeted Berlusconi as he took on the mantle of the European Presidency. Doubts about whether he was fit to lead

Italy were transferred onto the European stage ready for his symbolic address as President to the European Parliament on 2 July.

As Berlusconi rose to set out the agenda of the six months of the Italian Presidency he was met by a protest from left-wing members of the European Parliament protesting against the law recently passed in Italy that granted leading public officials immunity from prosecution during their period in office. To his critics this was a clear instance of Berlusconi using his political power to further his own personal interests and a further indication of his abuse of democratic values and procedures. Further criticism followed his speech from a number of members of the European Parliament but the comments from one MEP Martin Schulz, the Deputy Head of the Social Democrats in the European Parliament, particularly displeased Berlusconi.

Schulz criticized Berlusconi on two points. The first point related to the presence of the Lega Nord and Umberto Bossi in particular as part of the Italian coalition government. Schulz referred to recent comments made by Bossi on the subject of illegal immigration when he suggested that the Italian navy should attack the boats bringing immigrants to Italy, compared him unfavorably to Jörg Haider the Austrian right-wing populist, and argued that these comments were at odds with the principles of the European Charter of Rights that it was now Berlusconi's responsibility as President to defend:

Die kleinste Äußerung, die dieser Mann [Bossi] macht, ist schlimmer als alles, worüber dieses Parlament gegen Österreich und die Mitgliedschaft der FPÖ in der österreichischen Regierung Beschlüsse gefasst hat.<sup>2</sup>

The second point related to issues of conflict of interest. After saying that conflicts of interest within Italy were not a matter for the European Parliament Schulz insisted that conflicts of interest on a European scale were. He went on to suggest that the slow progress made by Italy on a number of pan-European judicial measures were indicative of "der Virus des Interessenkonflikts" spreading beyond the borders of Italy.

In response Berlusconi said: "S Signor Schulz, so che in Italia c'è un produttore che sta montando un film sui campi di concentramento nazisti: la suggerirò per il ruolo di kapò. Lei è perfetto!" (European Parliament 2003: 32)<sup>3</sup> After this, there was uproar in the European Parliament. In response to the disquiet, Berlusconi argued that 'Io ho detto con ironia quello che ho detto. Se non siete in grado di capire l'ironia, mi spiace.' Of course, Berlusconi's claim

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<sup>2</sup> "The most insignificant utterance that this man [Bossi] makes is worse than those over which this Parliament passed resolutions against Austria and the membership of the FPÖ in the government."

<sup>3</sup> "Mr. Schulz, I know a producer in Italy who is making a film about Nazi concentration camps. I will suggest you for the role of a *kapò*. You would be perfect!"

that the members of the European Parliament do not understand irony is itself ironic given that Berlusconi's comment about Schulz was not ironic. It was not Berlusconi's grasp of rhetoric that caused uproar however but rather his insult that Schulz was behaving like a *kapò* because he saw fit to address the Italian President in less than reverential fashion.

*Kapòs* were camp prisoners with privileges chosen by the SS to command the work of the other prisoners. The *kapòs* were drawn from the ranks of prisoners who were held captive because they were criminals rather than because they politically opposed the Nazi regime or were Jewish. SS guards were few and outside the camps while the *kapòs* effectively ruled inside the camps (Levi 1979: 39). It is not clear, however, that Berlusconi was aware of what he was saying and he was widely interpreted as intending to say that Schulz's behavior was like a Nazi camp guard.

While intending to offend no-one but Schulz, Berlusconi offended many people for different reasons. Some because the remark trivialized the Shoah, some because the remark drew on the widespread stereotype that suggests all Germans are Nazis (it is difficult to imagine Berlusconi making the same remark about an English MEP for example). Berlusconi's words were quickly and widely condemned by German politicians of varying persuasions. The following day Berlusconi telephoned the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder who interpreted the call as an apology and declared the matter at an end. Berlusconi served to cause further outcry, however, by saying that he did not apologize but merely expressed regret that many Germans had not understood the irony of his remarks and that he had not intended to offend the German people tout court. Berlusconi's strategy was to play the national card and the left-right card simultaneously. He had been provoked by a German who had insulted Italy and by a Social Democrat who had been primed by the Italian left, a veritable fifth column.

The flames were fanned by Stefano Stefani, a *Lega Nord* undersecretary for tourism in Berlusconi's government, who wrote a letter to *La Padania*, the Leagues' party newspaper, supporting Berlusconi, whose words were being condemned by the politicians of all parties (including Fini, Berlusconi's deputy, and leader of AN) apart from *Forza Italia* and *Lega Nord*. According to Stefani, Berlusconi was standing up for Italy against the combined might of France and Germany and in the face of an intolerable provocation from Schulz. Such comment was not unusual from either *Forza Italia* or *Lega Nord* politicians in Italy. What distinguished Stefani's contribution to the debate was his depiction of the Germans as "stereotipati biondi dall'orgoglio ipernazionalista indottrinati da sempre a sentirsi a ogni costo i primi della classe [... e] che mangiano i nostri spaghetti e invadono rumorosamente le nostre

spiagge"<sup>4</sup> (a reference to German holiday makers who spend around 11bn Euro per annum while in *Bella Italia*). The German government and the Italian tourism industry were not best pleased by the letter. Schröder cancelled his imminent holiday in Marche in favor of the beauty of his residence in Hannover and it was suspected that other Germans would follow suit. Berlusconi initially acted with indifference to this decision, expressing sorrow that the Chancellor would miss out on the delights of Italy, before eventually forcing Stefani to resign in an attempt to bring the diplomatic row to an end.

As many commentators noted at the time, this was a *Sommerloch* story that received more attention than it might have done at a different time of year. However, while it may have been a trivial story, the media reactions to the events are helpful in analyzing whether a European public sphere exists.

## Data

Using the keyword search "Schulz AND (Berlusconi OR Stefani)" in LEXIS/NEXIS, we collected data from the two countries whose representatives were directly involved in the incident (Italy, Germany), four further EU countries (the U.K., France, Belgium, and the Netherlands), a non-EU European country (Switzerland), and two North American countries (USA, Canada). Since we were interested in structures of meaning at times regardless of the frequency of their use, we utilized all sources offered by LEXIS/NEXIS, which includes wire services and various types of print media. To a lesser extent, primarily with respect to the Italian papers, we also drew on internet searches and data from newspapers' web archives. Table 1 shows our sample size with respect to the national origin of the data.

	Frequency
Belgium	34
Canada	16
France	126
Germany	1092
Italy	209
Netherlands	135
Switzerland	208
United Kingdom	138
United States	146
Total	2104

<sup>4</sup> "Stereotypical blondes with ultra-nationalist pride, indoctrinated since times immemorial to feel top of the class at any price, [... and who] rowdily invade our breaches," quoted in *La Repubblica* July 4, 2003 (<http://www.repubblica.it/online/esteri/semestrecinque/padania/padania.html>, last accessed: November 3, 2004).



**Table 1** Sample Frequencies

For statistical comparisons, we restricted our data set to broadsheets. While ‘quality’ newspapers vary in a number of key variables -- such as editorial policies, readership scope, or average print space -- they have been judged to be sufficiently similar to allow for some quantitative comparisons (Trenz 2004a). Additionally, these are the media which are believed to be at the forefront of the Europeanization of the public sphere (Trenz 2004a; Trenz 2004b).

### **Identifying Frames in Textual Data**

We analyzed the data using a type of frame analysis that draws at the theoretical level on Todd Gitlin's interpretation of Goffman's concept. At bottom, for us "frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters." (Gitlin 1980: 6). This concept is distinguished from other popular interpretations of Goffman in media studies, which assume that frames are frequently intentionally selected or even manufactured by journalists (Entman 1993: 52; Tankard 2001: 97; Reese 2001: 7).

While this definition is closer to the Goffmanian original in that it treats frames as "conceptual scaffolds" (Snow and Benford 1988: 213), it compounds the perennial problems in the identification and measurement of frames. Precisely because frames consist of tacit rather than overt conjectures, notorious difficulties arise when attempting to identify frames empirically (Maher 2001: 84).

Unfortunately, little advice on how to measure systematically frames exists. In most cases, where the measurement model for frames is clarified, the reader is presented with a list of more or less parsimoniously identifiable frame terms, "attributes" or "devices," which were used as manifest indicators for the identification of frames (e.g., Ferree et al. 2002; Koella 2003; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000; Ullrich 1998). Usually the empirical indicators for these devices are *keywords* (Entman 1993: 53; Triandafyllidou and Fotiou 1998: 3.7; Miller and Riechert 2001: 61ff). This might come as a surprise because on a conceptual level frames, more often than not, are latent, i.e. not spelled out in their entirety. Yet, it seems reasonable to assume that *parts of* frames become manifest in speech.

The question now becomes, how to identify such keywords. To further systematize the identification process we draw on a familiar frame taxonomy, which distinguishes *structural* schemes or *generic* frames from frames that focus more on *content* (Benford 1997: 413; de Vreese 2002: 27ff).

Three *generic* frames are known to dominate media discourses: Human interest, economic consequences, and conflict (Håkansson 2000: 9ff; Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997: 484; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000: 95f; de Vreese 2002).

Within the list of *content* frames, we can further distinguish between so-called "master frames" or "metanarratives" that

- (1) are so pervasive that they can be used in almost any situation, and
- (2) possess a superior credibility, in that it has moved beyond empirical scrutiny.

Three master frames surface repeatedly in the literature: the *ethno-nationalist* frame (Billig 1995; Brubaker and Laitin 1998: 428; Eder 1995: 4; Eder and Schmidtke 1998; Greenfeld 1999: 39; Statham and Mynott 2002: 13); the *liberal-individualist citizenship* frame (Berger 1971: 97f; Eder 1995: 4; McAdam 1996: 347; Somers 1995; Statham and Mynott 2002: 13), and the *harmony with nature* frame (Eder 1996: 191; Gamson 1992: 136).

We took these master frames as guidance in the interpretation of our data and connected them a subset of the data with relevant keywords. Using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS, Fielding and Lee 1995), namely MAXqda, we then coded the remainder of the data semi-automatically and subsequently performed a latent class analysis to validate our framing model. In a first step, we checked the plausibility of our measurement model, estimating latent class models that contained selected contained all keywords assigned to a single frame (the best fitting frame model in this case should have two classes). Subsequently, we validated the number of frames using all keywords.<sup>5</sup>

## Results

If a nascent European (EU) public sphere integrating still strong national public spheres exists, we would expect that the same frames could be observed throughout the European media. We also would expect the relative frequencies of these frames to be evenly distributed throughout Europe (Trenz 2004b: 297). National variations might exist, but these variations would be distributed randomly throughout Europe. Framings should also vary less within Europe than between EU and non-EU nations. Ideally, the same or at least structurally equivalent actors would voice these throughout Europe.

As will be shown, our data refute these hypotheses. The same framings do exist across all EU states in the sample, but they also exist in North America and Switzerland, not least because European and non-European papers quote each other. Each national media system contains a distinct bias for certain framings with a larger variation within Europe than

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<sup>5</sup> For details of this methodology, see Koenig 2004: 4ff.

between Europe and North America. Worse for the advocates of a the existence of a Europeanized public sphere, the carriers of the different frames occupy different political positions across the countries. While Berlusconi apologists in Germany are primarily found on the political left and in so-called quality papers, in Italy it is the political right that defends Berlusconi. Let us examine the frames in detail.

### **Discourse Intensity**

Perhaps the most encouraging result for proponents of a European public sphere comes from the intensity of the discourse. As Table 2 shows, European broadsheets have published three to ten times more articles on the Berlusconi-Schulz debate than their US-American counterparts. However, there are two reasons that let us believe that this reflects a regional bias rather than a genuine public sphere effect. First, the Swiss debate is, if anything, *more* intense than the debate in most EU countries, even though, Switzerland does not share a common polity with any of the EU states. Far more problematic for the idea of a public sphere, however, is the fact that German and Italian papers report on average thrice more frequently on the case than the remaining EU countries in the sample. The reason for this is, of course, that the dispute has predominantly been framed as a bilateral German-Italian, not an intra-European issue, as we will see in the following sections.

	Country	Paper	Articles	Ø Articles
"Involved" Countries	Germany	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	84	50
		<i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i>	45	
		<i>Financial Times Deutschland</i>	43	
		<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	90	
		<i>die tageszeitung</i>	57	
		<i>Welt</i>	21	
	Italy	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	13	
		<i>Il Sole 24 Ore</i>	45	
		<i>L'Unita</i>	35	
		<i>La Repubblica</i>	35	
<i>La Stampa</i>		80		
EU	Belgium	<i>De Financieel-Economische Tijd</i>	9	16
		<i>De Standaard</i>	18	
	France	<i>Le Figaro</i>	13	
		<i>Le Monde</i>	10	
		<i>Libération</i>	6	
	Netherlands	<i>De Telegraaf</i>	15	
		<i>Het Financieele Dagblad</i>	13	
	U.K.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	19	
		<i>Guardian/Observer</i>	24	
		<i>The Independent</i>	28	
		<i>The Scotsman</i>	4	
<i>The Times</i>		29		
European	Switzerland	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>	21	23
		<i>Tages-Anzeiger</i>	25	
Non-European	US	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	5	5
		<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	2	
		<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	3	
		<i>The New York Times</i>	8	
		<i>Washington Post</i>	6	
		Total	808	

**Table 2 Sample Composition - Newspapers**

### Framing Models

Mapping the structures of meaning in our data, we arrived interpretatively at 13 framing devices, each represented by one to twenty keywords or phrases, which appear to represent five major frames: three conflict frames, and one economic consequences and human interest frame each. The framing devices are displayed in Table 3.

The three conflict frames pit the Left versus Right, democratic Europeans versus overzealous nationalists, and, most often, two nations, however defined, against each other. Two of these conflict frames are linked to one other generic frame each: Nationalist frames are frequently coupled with an economic consequences component, which discusses potential income losses to the “Italian” tourism industry, while the questioning of Berlusconi’s democratic values is coupled with a human interest component that characterizes Berlusconi

and Stefani as hot-headed Italians and sometimes Schulz as a stubborn and pretentious bureaucrat, all with little diplomatic abilities.

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Class probabilities	51%	37%	12%
Human Interest	<b>1.94</b>	0.32	0.75
Left versus Right	<b>1.91</b>	0.17	0.91
Berlusconi Empire	1.44	0.07	1.49
Insult to Europeanness	<b>2.30</b>	0.20	0.50
Insult to Democratic Values	<b>3.00</b>	0.00	0.00
Eurocracy	<b>2.78</b>	0.22	0.00
Hot nationalism	1.42	0.00	<b>1.58</b>
Family of European Peoples	<b>1.60</b>	0.00	1.40
Unspecified national otherness	0.39	0.72	<b>1.89</b>
Unspecified national sameness	0.44	0.60	<b>1.96</b>
Quasi-Primordial Nationhood	0.36	0.00	<b>2.64</b>
Economic Nationalism	0.33	1.47	1.20
Popular Culture Nationalism	0.11	1.10	<b>1.80</b>
Historical Conflicts	1.04	0.44	<b>1.53</b>

**Table 3** Standardized Class Probabilities (strongly overrepresented terms in boldface, underrepresented faded)

The latter already characterizes the framing device of the human interest frame. Let us have a look at the remaining devices. The Left-Right conflict has been derived straightforward from the familiar political terminology, pitting pro-Schulz socialists, communists, Greens, and social-democrats against conservatives, with centrist liberals not mentioned in this frame.

The frame that puts "European democrats" versus (populist) nationalists, we find the following framing devices:

- *The Berlusconi Empire*: This device discusses Berlusconi's stake in media companies and his wealth at length, implying that he holds an unfair political advantage that runs against the democratic value of citizen equality. Frequently, parallels to the Mafia are drawn.
- *Insult to Europeanness*: This rather equivocal argumentation figure alleges that Berlusconi and Stefani have violated a European consensus, whose substantive contents are not spelled out, however.
- *Violation of Democratic Values*: This framing device calls into question the democratic convictions of Berlusconi, characterizing him as a populist.
- *Eurocracy*: This counterframe justifies Berlusconi's attack as a legitimate rebuttal of the undemocratic EU decision making process, which has been usurped by career politicians.
- *Hot Nationalism*: Banal nationalist framings can be found throughout almost all articles, but this framing device paints Berlusconi and especially Stefani as anti-European nationalist radicals and compares him to other rogue politicians like Jörg Haider or Pim Fortyun.
- *Family of European Nations*: This subframe, which essentially rests on a remark by French Interior Minister Villepin, draws on the family metaphor to distinguish between separate nations, which at the same time are bound for harmony rather than conflict.

The last framing device is already very close to ethno-nationalist framings, and indeed sometimes surfaces without any reference to a democratic European consensus. Generic nationalist framings were quasi omnipresent, as a specification of the national affiliation of the actors is made in almost all cases. Therefore, we only analyzed those nationalist framing devices, which either spelled out the nature of national essences, or which were evoking the presumed nationality of the reader in typical cases of unconsciously adopted nationalism, as in cases of collectivization through using first or third person plural (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 53).

- *We*: This framing device uses unspecified “we” in the article that implies that the readers of the article are part of a common nation.
- *Them*: This framing device uses an unspecified “them” in the article that implies that the readers of the article are not part of a foreign nation.
- *Primordial Nationhood*: An argument that characterizes the Berlusconi-Schulz conflict as an outgrowth of a historical conflict between nations that has evolved over millennia.
- *Popular Culture Nationalism*: This framing device links the conflict to essential differences in national cultures such as eating habits or typical argumentation styles.
- *Economic Nationalism*: The economic implications of the conflict for the Italian tourism industry are made.
- *Historical Conflict*: This frame makes references to historical conflicts, presumably the two World Wars, but avoids a long-term explanation of these conflicts with quasi-primordial speech figures.

After validating the “one-dimensionality”<sup>6</sup> of the framing devices, we estimated latent class models with all thirteen devices. A three-class model yielded the best Bayesian Information criterion (BIC) value, with BIC improving 72 over the 2-class model and 18 over the 4-class model. The class probabilities show that the first class combines human-interest, left-right, and frames that discuss European and democratic values into one prevalent argumentation structure. Since banal nationalism is almost unavoidable, there are frequently also traces of explicit nationalist framings, too (class 1). A second framing strategy relies almost exclusively on the national economic consequences of the incidents (class 2). This strategy is largely silent on issues of democratic Europeanness. The third strategy, finally, focuses on the presumed ethno-nationalist roots of the conflict (class 3).

Table 4 shows that the frames appear with quite different distributions throughout all countries. The conflict is overwhelmingly framed as one between Germans and Italians, but while in Italy we find a discussion about the liberal conception of the ethnic nation, in all

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<sup>6</sup> We are using the language of factor analysis, since we believe most readers to be familiar with that methodology. “One-dimensionality” in this context means that a two-class model displays the best fit.

other countries the ethnic conceptualization prevails. Let us have a closer look at the frames in question.

		Italy	Germany	UK	France	Switzerland	US
Germany vs. Italy	primordialist variety	25%	15%	20%	17%	13%	17%
	popular culture variety	9%	18%	26%	24%	26%	29%
	statist variety	86%	86%	91%	94%	94%	92%
	economic variety	34%	28%	30%	48%	22%	33%
Left vs. Right		30%	16%	15%	52%	20%	18%
Europeans vs. Nationalists	democracy variety	29%	36%	57%	48%	41%	58%
	eurocracy variety	0	0	4%	0	0	4%
Anti-Fascism		½%	0	0	0	0	0
Human Interest		23%	20%	26%	21%	33%	33%

**Table 4** Distribution of framings in broadsheets across selected countries

### **Nationalization: Germans vs. Italians**

Despite the fact that Berlusconi attacked Schulz primarily because of his party affiliation, almost all papers in our sample frame the incident as a (potential) conflict between the German and Italian states, and often indeed between the peoples. The specification of this frame, however, varies systematically with the national origin of the media.

#### *Liberal Italy*

Within Italy, a state-centered framing of the incident is prevalent. Apart from support for Berlusconi from *Il Giornale* (owned by Berlusconi's brother) criticism of the President of the Council of Ministers was consistent. Here the focus is upon Berlusconi's political "*dilettantismo*," his unwillingness to settle conflicts of interest, and the presence of *Lega Nord* in his coalition government that place him beyond the bounds of liberal values. Significantly, however, concerns are expressed that such behavior will harm Italy's image abroad or Italy's interests. Such a concern can be found across most of the political spectrum from *Corriere della Sera* to *L'Unita*. Opposition leader Rutelli is widely quoted as being embarrassed by Berlusconi's remarks:

"Sono desolato perché Berlusconi ha esposto l'Italia a una figura che non avremmo mai dovuto fare. Siamo qui per unire l'Europa, non per fare risse."<sup>7</sup>

Papers otherwise supportive of Berlusconi, particularly in the field of economic and social reform (such as *Corriere della Sera*), criticize the Italian prime minister for his lack of statecraft in responding to Schulz and for his unwillingness to resolve conflicts of interests (such as his maintenance of control of a substantial section of the Italian media). Both are seen as damaging the national interests of Italy in that they hinder the advancement of Italian aims in the European Union. The event "porta a noi italiani una notizia importante. La campagna elettorale per liberarci di questa umiliante immagine dell'Italia nel mondo è cominciata oggi."<sup>8</sup> Ezio Mauro in *La Repubblica* wrote that the result of Berlusconi's outburst "e amarissimo per il nostro Paese, che paga un prezzo ingiusto e sproporzionato agli errori e alla natura di Berlusconi."<sup>9</sup> Italy will pay an unjust price because Berlusconi's behavior does nothing to "cancellare quell'antico pregiudizio anti-italiano che riaffirma implacabile in ogni momento die debolezza della nostra immagine e della nostra politica."<sup>10</sup> Ernesto Galli della Loggia wrote on the same day in *Corriere della Sera* "per Italia...il semestre europeo non potera cominciare peggio" citing the inclusion of the xenophobic *Lega Nord* as a central reason why Italy's standing has suffered in the international arena.

What unites left, centre and moderate right of the national newspaper spectrum in Italy, despite their contrasting attitudes towards economic and social reforms, is that Berlusconi has disgraced Italy by not being politically liberal in his use of ethnic stereotypes in the European Parliament. If this is the bad image of Italy, then the implicit good image is one of a nation of liberal and tolerant individuals that does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity either within or beyond its borders. The good Italian is a liberal citizen.

### *Italy's Pride Defended Against Authoritarian Germans*

For the Italian right, the idea of what constitutes Italian nationality is not at stake. On the whole, papers that are associated with Berlusconi or the Leagues do not question the authentic

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<sup>7</sup> "I am disappointed because Berlusconi has embarrassed Italy in a way that never should have happened. We are here to unite Europe not to start fights." (e.g., Enrico Singer: "Il presidente della Commissione seduto davanti a Berlusconi, ma dalla parte opposta dell'emiciclo", *La Stampa*, July 2, 2003, p. 2).

<sup>8</sup> "Carries an important message to us Italians. The electoral campaign to liberate ourselves from this humiliating image of Italy in the world begins today" (Furio Colombo: "Il lodo Schulz," *L'Unita*, July 2, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> It "is most bitter for our country that will pay an unjust and disproportionate price for the errors and character of Berlusconi" (Ezio Mauro, "Il fattore B che ci allontana dal resto dell'Europa," *La Repubblica*, July 3, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> "Counter the ancient anti-Italian prejudice that reaffirms implacably at every turn the weakness of our image and politics" (*ibid.*).



Italianness of Berlusconi's remarks. Therefore, there is no need for an explicit discussion about the (cultural) essence of the Italian nation. Instead, Schulz' remarks are attributed to his "German" character traits. Stefano Stefani leads the way with his *La Padania* article on Germans being "stereotipati biondi dall'orgoglio ipernazionalista, indottrinati da sempre a sentirsi ad ogni costo i primi della classe." Schulz' indignation at Berlusconi's remarks is seen as an outflow of the authoritarian German character, eventually paired with the Franco-German alliance. An article by *The New York Post*, later reprinted in translation for *La Padania*, is probably the most outspoken about this authoritarianism. It starts out to explain that Berlusconi's insult was a legitimate act of political speech silenced by political correctness installed by France and Germany: "An Italian to compare a German political hack to a Nazi? Mais non, monsieur! Nein!"<sup>11</sup> It then continues with a narration of several everyday life encounters, in which authoritarian Germans order hospitable Italians with "same voice that Obersturmbahnführer [sic] Schultz [sic] must have used in Rome 60 years ago."

Of course, even among the Italian right few would make such derogatory statements about the German national character, which might jeopardize the Italian tourism industry. But the more conciliatory apologists for Berlusconi still echo the idea that Germans do not consider Italians as equal partners: "Italia e Benelux, vengono considerati da certi tedeschi a volte, come dire, di una categoria minore."<sup>12</sup>

The reconciliation approach that follows from such approach to the German nationality, of course, also remains on the cultural level:

"E la nostalgia dell'Italia serpeggia in tutta la storia e la cultura tedesche. Io sono tra i non pochi tedeschi che cercano di ricordare ai connazionali i grandissimi contributi che l'Italia ha dato alla cultura europea e la complessita' dei rapporti tra il mondo tedesco e il mondo italiano."<sup>13</sup>

For the Italian right, thus the cultural underpinnings of German and Italian nation are thus given and one needs to tap into the compatible resources of both nations to resolve the conflict.

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<sup>11</sup> Ralph Peters: "Let them eat wurst," *New York Post*, July 13, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> "Italy and the Benelux countries are considered by some Germans some of the time as, how shall I put it, part of an inferior category" (Rudolf Lill: "Proviamo a capire." *Il Sole 24 Ore*, July 10, 2003, p. 1).

<sup>13</sup> "Nostalgia for Italy snakes through the whole of German history and culture. I am among a number of Germans who attempt to remind our compatriots of the great contributions that Italy has made to European culture and the complexity of the relations between the German and Italian worlds." (*ibid.*).

*Extra-Italian Framings*

Outside Italy, the dominant framing of the Italian-German conflict assumes a culturalist notion of the nation in the manner feared by Mauro: As a snapshot, 31 non-Italian articles in our sample refer to the Roman opposition leader Francesco Rutelli (32 Italian articles do), while 140 articles outside Italy refer to stereotypical Italian dishes such as spaghetti or lasagne (21 within Italy). Several articles frame the conflict as having been two millennia in the making. Even if we may dismiss some references to Roman figures such as Tacitus or Cicero, or even the Greek Herodot as possibly tongue in cheek, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung's* sober commentary shows that even among elite papers a primordial understanding of the nation is seriously adopted:

"Es wäre utopisch, zu glauben, wechselseitige Reflexe, die in Jahrhunderten eingeübt wurden, würden unter dem Dach des gemeinsamen europäischen Hauses einfach verschwinden"<sup>14</sup>

Similar statements can be found throughout all European and North American presses. The *New York Times* prints, for instance, a guest editorial written by an Italian writer, which claims that "the tension between Germany and Italy, unleashed in recent days by the incautious words of Stefano Stefani, our tourism minister, has played out since ancient times."<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, within Germany it is often the political *Left*, schooled on theories of multiculturalism, which draws on the same frames as Italian right, who calls the gravity of Berlusconi's remarks into question. A letter to the editor of the left-liberal *Frankfurter Rundschau* criticizes Schröder's decision to cancel his holidays in Italy:

"Bestätigt er damit nicht den tatsächlichen Kern der überzogenen und reichlich undiplomatischen Kritik? Wir wissen doch alle seit Jahrzehnten um unsere deutschen Urlauberhorden im Ausland und wollen damit nie und nimmer identifiziert werden."<sup>16</sup>

Unlike liberal nationalist framings, ethno-nationalist framings appear widely across all countries in our sample, roughly two thirds of the articles contain at least one ethno-nationalist framing device.

In addition, there are some implicit differences between the nationalist framings, when the idea of the national antagonists is not spelled. These difference rest, of course, firmly on

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<sup>14</sup> "It would be utopian to believe that reciprocal reflexes that have been practiced over hundreds of years would simply disappear under the roof of a common European house." (Lucio Caracciolo: "Warum Italien nicht normal ist," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, August 10, 2003, p. 11).

<sup>15</sup> Roberto Pazzi: "Germans Are From Mars, Italians Are From Venus," *New York Times*, July 13, 2003, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> "Doesn't he thereby confirm the nub of the overdrawn and extravagantly undiplomatic criticism? We've known for decades about the hordes of German holiday-makers abroad and want never to be identified with them." (Friedrich Lorenz, *Frankfurter Rundschau* July 10, 2003, p. 10).

the different national concepts of the nation. The reporting on Berlusconi's attempt of an apology is a case in point. While the lack of critical appraisal Berlusconi's missing apology to Holocaust victims and the reporting of his apology to the German *popolo* is common to all countries, there are nevertheless some interesting differences in the way it was received in the different countries. Let us have a look of the wordings of his apology:

"Non intendevo offendere i sentimenti di un popolo che hanno una motivazione storica."<sup>17</sup>

"Je m'excuse si j'ai offensé la sensibilité historique du peuple allemand."<sup>18</sup>

"Wenn ich mit dem Vergleich die Gefühle des deutschen Volkes verletzt haben sollte, entschuldige ich mich dafür."<sup>19</sup>

"Ik had niet de bedoeling om de gevoelens van een land te beledigen"<sup>20</sup>

"I did not mean to offend the feelings of a country, feelings that have a historical motivation."<sup>21</sup>

Notice the shift in meanings across languages, on who "Germans" are. The original Italian *popolo* remains out of context ambiguous, as it can signify both the citizenry and the more ethnic people. Since Italy has a strong ethnic conception of the nation, it appears that most Italians would think of ethnic Germans, which in fact is the conflict party Stefano Stefani had later in mind. The translation into French and German thus properly reflects the initial ethnic target group. In the Anglo-Saxon and Belgian contexts, countries with a more civic conceptualization of the nation state, we find that the dictionary based rendered translation of the original apology.

However, as the concept of a public sphere requires a sense of individuals belonging to the same community, these types of common framings appear inherently inimical to a globalization or Europeanization of a public sphere. These uniform transnational framings thus contain a strong nationalization element.

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<sup>17</sup> "I did not intend to offend the feelings of a people that are motivated by history." (e.g., "Il premier replica alle accuse del tedesco Schulz," *La Stampa*, July 3, 2003, p. 1).

<sup>18</sup> "I apologize, if I have offended the historical sensibility of the German people." (e.g., Eléonore Sulser: "En dérapant sur le nazisme, Berlusconi sape sa première apparition européenne," *Le Temps*, July 3, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> E.g., "Außer Kontrolle; Italiens Ministerpräsident Silvio Berlusconi stürzt Europa in eine schwere diplomatische Krise, ringt sich eine Entschuldigung ab - und tritt nach," *Financial Times Deutschland*, July 3, 2003, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., "Duitse Regering Noemt Optreden 'Onaanvaardbaar'," *De Standaard (Antwerp)*, July 3, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Ian Black: "Berlusconi starts Euro presidency with Nazi jibe". *The Guardian*, July 3, 2003, p. 1.

**Universalisation: Left vs. Right**

As Italy is the only country in our sample where the substantive content of Italian identity is contested and Berlusconi is seriously considered both a representative of Italy and a political player in Italian politics, it is the Italian papers that more frequently frame the conflict as one between the political right and left.

On the first day of reporting, we can still find some German conservative politicians arguing that Schulz had provoked Berlusconi, but soon thereafter this fault line gives way to the national *raison d'état*.

The quantitative data in Table 3 would suggest that we would find a substantial number of articles, which frame the conflict on this dimension. However, the left-right frame is usually placed as an add-on onto banal nationalist framings, with the Italian rather than European Left being a witness to the undemocratic strategies of Berlusconi.

Interestingly, it is a US-American paper, which seriously frame the conflict in terms of Left and Right on the European rather than the Italian Level:

In an old gangster movie, actor Edward G. Robinson had a great line. "You can dish it out, but you can't take it," which applies perfectly to the European left.<sup>22</sup>

*Anti-Fascists vs. the Historically Insensitive*

From the standpoint of historians, critical social scientists, and anti-fascist citizens, Berlusconi's remark could undoubtedly be framed as an insult to the victims of the Holocaust in a threefold way: First, however insulting Schulz's rhetorics may have been, their effect cannot be compared in moral terms to the actions of the *kapòs*, who physically threatened the concentration camp inmates. Second, *kapòs* were indeed not ethnic Germans, but Nazi victims themselves, as they were recruited from the ranks of ordinary concentration camp detainees. Berlusconi was apparently unaware of this fact and thus reveals his own knowledge deficit in the history of the Holocaust. Finally, it is Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, which has brought to power the post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale*, which, however its rhetorics may have changed in recent years, still is tarnished by its symbolic connection to Mussolini's Italy, which after all was an ally to Nazi Germany.

Yet, the potential conflict line between anti-fascists and those who belittle the Holocaust hardly ever surfaces in the media. Schulz himself uttered the widely quoted remark "mein Respekt vor den Opfern des Faschismus verbietet mir, darauf auch nur mit einem Wort

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<sup>22</sup> "Euro-Leftists hate Berlusconi," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 7, 2003, p. 30A.

einzugehen" (European Parliament 2003: 34),<sup>23</sup> but this quotation is hardly suited to draw a line between anti-fascists and historically aloof persons, who do not challenge historical revisionism. Instead, it begs the question in how far Schulz himself has come to grips with the Holocaust himself. Respect for the victims of the Holocaust would surely have demanded an articulate rebuttal of Berlusconi's.

Moreover, by using the term *Faschismus* instead of the more historically accurate term *Nationalsozialismus*, Schulz both divorces the Holocaust from its specific German meaning and – most likely unintentionally – connects the Holocaust with Italy for some Italian speakers, who do draw a clearer distinction between Nazism and Fascism than German speakers do.

Berlusconi, on the other hand, is widely quoted as half-heartedly apologizing to the German people, while there is no mention of an apology to the victims of the Holocaust. Not a single non-Italian newspaper in our sample elaborated on the idea that Berlusconi had insulted the Holocaust victims.

In fact, we could find only two instances outside Italy that spell out this argument to some extent. In one instance, head of the German Central Committee for Roma, the most important German Roma organization, accused Berlusconi of cynicism towards Holocaust victims.<sup>24</sup> In the other instance, the Dutch *NRC Handelsblad* simply translated a remark by SPE chairman in the European parliament, Enrique Barón Crespo, sloppily, turning his widely quoted criticisms of Berlusconi's words as violating "los valores que compartimos todos los europeos" (European Parliament 2003: 34) into "een belediging van slachtoffers van concentratiekampen en een belediging van Europa."<sup>25</sup> One might wish that Barón Crespo considered anti-Fascism as the core European value, but no other journalist interpreted the passage in this way.

As the Left-Right conflict line is most pronounced in Italy, it is probably no surprise that at least in the liberal Italian press in its attempt to distinguish their liberal vision of Italy from an "Un-European" Italy at least hints at this potential frame: A small column by Oreste del Buono, himself a former concentration camp detainee, in *La Stampa* even spells out the insult to Holocaust victims:

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<sup>23</sup> "My respect for the victims of *fascism* will not permit me to respond with one word".

<sup>24</sup> "Nach Eklat im EU-Parlament," *German News*, July 3, 2003, <http://www.germnews.de/archive/gn/2003/07/03.html#1> (last accessed: July 7, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Anonymous: "Woede om uitslatingen Berlusconi," *NRC Handelsblad*, July 3, 2003, p. 5.

"La 'sortita' (si fa per dire) del presidente del Consiglio a Strasburgo contro l'eurodeputato Schultz, sortita che un certo benevolo servilismo definisce 'gaffe', ha fortemente offeso le donne e gli uomini martiri dei Lager nazisti, martiri tuttora vivi nella nostra memoria."<sup>26</sup>

But on the whole even those papers critical of Berlusconi focus on a conflict between sensible, read: liberal and therefore European Italians, and Berlusconi's Right, and present the Holocaust as an afterthought:

"[I]l Cavalier barzioletta offende, dopo i tedeschi, anche il nostro popolo. Non gli italiani ma certi italiani amano ridere sulle tragedie altrui."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, there is a conspicuous absence of the conflict line active anti-Fascists would draw across all countries.

### **Europeanization: Europeans vs. Nationalists**

The frames presented until now were not only both altered within each national context and appeared with less variance between all countries than between non-European and European countries, they also did little to strengthen a European identity. The last conflict frame we detected does contribute to such an identity. Alas, it appears only very rarely (in about one tenths of the articles, if we assume that it is represented by Class 3 in Table 3), it again appears outside EU borders with no less relative frequency than within the EU and it defines the European identity in a way that does not support a liberal citizenship model as it makes appeals to a European *ethnie*. The comments of the French foreign minister exemplify this type of framing:

"La vie de famille est parfois difficile, mais nous devons être motivés par le bien commun des peuples européens, a-t-il dit "<sup>28</sup>

Rather than seeing the affair as a conflict between separate nation-states, De Villepin europeanizes the affair characterising it as a family quarrel. If we wish to examine the existence of a Europeanization of national publics in the European Union, then one possible approach is to examine to what extent such European collectivisations are taken up in national newspapers. The greater the occurrence, the greater the evidence of Europeanization.

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<sup>26</sup> "The 'sally' (if one can call it that) of the President of the Council at Strasburg against the Euro-deputy Schultz (sic), a sally that a certain benevolent servility defines as a 'gaffe', greatly offended the martyrs of the Nazi camps, martyrs who ought to live always in our memory." (Oreste del Buono: "Berlusconi e il pranzo 'tricolore'," *La Stampa*, July 15, 2003, p. 22).

<sup>27</sup> "The knight's joke offends in addition to the Germans also our people. Not all Italians, only certain Italians like to laugh at the tragedies of others." (Curzio Maltese: "La Censura Televisa," *La Repubblica*, July 4, 2003.)

<sup>28</sup> "Family life is sometimes difficult, but we must be oriented towards the common good of the European people, he said" (e.g., "Les capitales européennes s'efforcent de dédramatiser l'incident," *Le Monde*, July 5, 2003).

For proponents of the existence of a European public sphere the results are salutary. In our data (including press agencies) there were 15 uses of the Villepin ‘European family’ quotation (in original and in translation): 5 French, 5 Italian, 2 German, 2 French Canadian, and 1 British. The comparative lack of reporting of Villepin’s attempt to europeanize and to mitigate the extent of the affair may be explained in terms of the lack of temporal fit of his remarks with the narrative of a conflict frame (resolution and reconciliation would come later) and also because they do not fit with either of the dominant frames - the liberal-nationalist or ethno-nationalist account of the events. The higher incidence of reporting of Villepin’s comments in France indicates differences within states concerning newsworthiness of sources as well as acceptance of the content of Villepin’s comments. The two references to Villepin’s comments by a French Canadian press agency may indicate either the importance of shared language in terms of deciding the newsworthiness of sources or the importance of colonial ties or both. Indeed the ideas of a transnational public sphere based on common language or on historical relationships are obviously competitors to the notion of an Europeanised public sphere. Nevertheless, there exist thus some minimal evidence for a move towards a European identity, which would facilitate the development of a common public sphere.

## **Conclusion**

Even in a case that would ideally suit itself as an object of a European public sphere, we thus cannot find the same framings at the same time with the same intensity across Europe.

As expected, we found distinct national differences in the reporting, thus a strong nationalization component does exist. In all countries we surveyed, the conflict was primarily framed as a clash of (ethnic) nations; plausible alternative conflict lines such as left vs. right or historically insensitive vs. anti-fascists were largely muted. Even the national conflict was not reported without national bias’ throughout our sample. In Italy, the concept of the Italian nation was at stake, with the Italian opposition accusing Berlusconi of desecrating the *civicness* of the Italian nation. In all other countries, Italy’s *ethnic* nationhood was taken for granted. Italians were usually considered as passionate and at times irrational and these cultural peculiarities were considered as one cause for the conflict. Each country also added its own flavor to the subject. In the Netherlands, Berlusconi was compared to Pim Fortuyn, in Britain and America, one was quick to agree with Stefani’s assessment of the rudeness of Germans, comparing it favorably to the poor image British and American tourists enjoy abroad. On top, the Berlusconi-Schulz affair received almost thrice as much coverage in Italy

and Germany than in the other European countries, a clear indicator, that the case was seen as a bilateral rather than intra-European conflict.

At the same time there indeed were similar, if not the same framings across all nations in the sample, alas not in a way that would encourage deliberation among citizens: The persons involved in the conflict were portrayed as representatives of ethnic nations rather than their respective political parties. Ethnicity, however is seen as largely immutable, and therefore not open to the change of opinion via political and/or communicative persuasion strategies, as would be the actors in a common civil society.

Two small indicators for a nascent European public sphere still exist: One the intensity of the reporting of Berlusconi-Schulz conflict, which is significantly higher in both EU and non-EU Europe than in North America. The other are recurrent nods to a "common history" of the European peoples. Nevertheless, globalization and nationalization tendencies easily outnumber Europeanization tendencies. Appeals to that history are couched in terms of a common family of peoples, a notion that in the age of the nation state does not lend itself to a unified citizenry.

Undoubtedly, our analysis only supplies a snapshot of the situation. Truly longitudinal studies about the emergence of a European public sphere are still missing. But given the scant evidence of European frames in the Berlusconi-Schulz case, it seems that if it were true that a European public sphere existed in fledgling form it appears as if the fledgling has fallen from the nest.

#### *On the genesis of the weak Europeanization*

Indeed, if we take the framing approach to the European public sphere seriously, we arrive at additional material that points to such weakness. Several studies on framing have shown that both the national institutional and cultural opportunity structure have serious consequences for the discourses that evolve within these structures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Ferree et al. 2002; Koopmans and Statham 1999). For a long time, it has been argued that a common public sphere presupposes a preceding institutional setup (Anderson 1983; Grimm 1995). Even if we drop the assumption that such setup is a necessary precondition for a public sphere, we would expect that the absence of such structures would render the convergence of national public spheres, especially, if limited to the European Union unlikely. In fact, the strongest already existing institutional structures for a transnational public sphere, such as the most influential newswire services -- Associated Press and Reuters -- and Hollywood cinema originate in the US and extend far beyond the borders of Europe. The most important shared



ideological frames, liberal individualism, ethno-nationalism, and harmony with nature, are decidedly universalistic. On the backdrop of these institutional and ideological structures, it comes to no surprise that nationalization and globalization tendencies outpace Europeanization.

### *Methodological Implications*

Our study also shows that cross-national research has to take into account that the same empirical indicators are used across different cultural contexts, they might measure very different things. It is true, that the importance of language difference might be exaggerated when it comes to things such as the naming of colors (Van de Steeg 2002), but when key political concepts such as nation, citizen, Fascism, liberalism or even *Obersturmbannführer* have evolved from specific national discourses, then this will have serious implications for trans-national communication.

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