



Master of Arts Thesis
Euroculture

University of Groningen (Home)

Palacký University Olomouc (Host)

August 2018

**Framing the Crisis of EU Fundamental Values: Levels of
Europeanization in Dutch Newspapers**

Submitted by:

Pim Muller

Student number first university: 3275302

Student number second university: F160942

+31628599646, muller.paa@gmail.com

Supervised by:

Prof. Dr. Lars Rensmann (University of Groningen)

Dr. Radomir Sztwiertnia (Palacký University Olomouc)

Tilburg, 30.07.2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Pim Muller", written in a cursive style.



MA Programme Euroculture Declaration

I, Pim Muller, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Framing the Crisis of EU Fundamental Values: Levels of Europeanization in Dutch Newspapers”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

I declare that the written (printed and bound) and the electronic copy of the submitted MA thesis are identical.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

Date: 30.07.2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials "PM" followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Abstract

There is an ongoing political debate in the European Union about the state of democracy and the rule of law in two of its member states: Poland and Hungary. Since these issues do not only pertain to the rule of law, but to the fundamental values of the EU in general, it is argued that a “Crisis of EU Fundamental Values” is a more appropriate term than a “Rule of Law Crisis”, which is often used. The issues that the governments of Poland and Hungary pose for the EU raise critical questions about the development of the European integration project. This thesis therefore relates this crisis to two important theoretical concepts in the field of European Studies: Europeanization and the European Public Sphere. Through a qualitative framing analysis of 49 opinion articles in Dutch quality newspapers, it is shown that there are fundamental differences in the understanding of the crisis of EU fundamental values between, in this case, a center-leftwing oriented newspaper (*De Volkskrant*) and a center-rightwing oriented newspaper (*NRC Handelsblad*). In discussing the issue, *De Volkskrant* related its readers to Poles and Hungarians through their shared European citizenship and published fundamental criticisms on the European Union, while *NRC Handelsblad* emphasized differences between Eastern- and Western Europe and urged the EU to defend the liberal democratic status-quo. These differences could have important implications for future research on Europeanization and the European Public Sphere. These implications will be assessed and discussed.

Keywords: Europeanization; rule of law; European Public Sphere; national mass media; framing

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	6
<hr/>		
2.	Nationalist-populist governments in the EU: a crisis of EU fundamental values	10
<hr/>		
	2.1. Nationalists in government: Hungary and Poland	12
	2.1.1. Hungary: towards illiberal democracy	13
	2.1.2. The Polish case	16
	2.1.2.1. The Constitutional Tribunal crisis in Poland	17
	2.2. EU mechanisms against breaches of its fundamental values in member states	19
	2.2.1. Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union	20
	2.2.2. The European Commission's Rule of Law Framework	21
	2.2.3. Alternative measures	22
	2.3. Protecting EU fundamental values: shortcomings and implications	23
<hr/>		
3.	A European Public Sphere and Europeanization of national public spheres	26
<hr/>		
	3.1. Establishing a European Public Sphere	27
	3.2. The role of national mass-media in Europeanization of national public spheres	29
	3.3. What qualitative framing research can tell us about Europeanization	30
<hr/>		
4.	Framing European issues in national mass media	34
<hr/>		
	4.1. Framing European integration	35
	4.2. Framing the crisis of EU fundamental values	36
	4.2.1. Rhetorical framing analysis	37
	4.2.2. Dutch newspapers: <i>NRC Handelsblad</i> and <i>De Volkskrant</i>	38
<hr/>		
5.	Methodology and Analysis: Framing of the crisis of EU fundamental values in two Dutch newspapers	40
<hr/>		
	5.1. The crisis of EU fundamental values in <i>NRC Handelsblad</i>	41
	5.1.1. How are the political issues in Poland and Hungary framed?	41
	5.1.1.1. The inclusive approach	41
	5.1.1.2. The exclusive approach	43
	5.1.1.3. Choice of words	45
	5.1.2. Framing the position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values	48
	5.1.2.1. The inclusive approach	49
	5.1.2.2. The exclusive approach	50
	5.2. The crisis of EU fundamental values in <i>De Volkskrant</i>	55
	5.2.1. How are the political issues in Poland and Hungary	

framed?	55
5.2.1.1.The inclusive approach	55
5.2.1.2.The exclusive approach	59
5.2.2. Framing the position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values	60
5.2.2.1.The inclusive approach	60
5.2.2.2.The exclusive approach	65
5.3.Main differences in framing the crisis of EU fundamental values	66
5.3.1. Differences in framing the political situations in Poland and Hungary	66
5.3.2. Differences in framing the position of Poland and Hungary in Europe	67
5.3.3. Framing of the position of the EU vis-à-vis Poland and Hungary	68
6. Discussion	71
7. Conclusion	73
Bibliography	76

1. Introduction

The emergence of *illiberal democracies* in the European Union (EU) has reached the forefront of political- and scholarly debates in Europe.¹ Most notably in Poland and Hungary, the governments in recent years have sought to increase their control on the political system by weakening constitutional checks and balances, adopting laws that are arguably not in line with the EU's liberal democratic requirements.² Attempts by the EU - mainly by the European Commission - to counter these developments have showed little success so far, leading to the situation now often being referred to as a "Rule of Law Crisis" or "The Great Rule of Law Debate" in the EU.³ Taking into account that the political struggles between the EU and the governments of Poland and Hungary concern not only the rule of law, but the EU's fundamental values enshrined in Article 2 TEU in general,⁴ this thesis proposes to refer to the issues more broadly as a "crisis of EU fundamental values".

In the previous eight years under Prime-Minister Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian government adopted laws limiting the freedom of the press, adapting the electoral system in favor of the party in government FIDESZ and curbing the independence of the judiciary;⁵ also it allegedly violated human rights in its treatment of refugees and adopted a new constitution in a controversial manner.⁶ The EU's allegations against the Hungarian government therefore do not only concern the rule of law. The same goes for Poland,

¹ See for instance: Dimitry Kochenov, Amichai Magen, and Laurent Pech, "Introduction: The Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1045–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12399>.

² Jan-Werner Müller, "Defending Democracy within the EU," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 138–49; Agnes Batory, "Populists in Government? Hungary's 'System of National Cooperation,'" *Democratization* 23, no. 2 (February 23, 2016): 283–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1076214>; Sava Jankovic, "Polish Democracy Under Threat? An Issue of Mere Politics or a Real Danger?," *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 9, no. 1 (June 1, 2016): 49–68, <https://doi.org/10.1515/bjlp-2016-0003>.

³ Kochenov, Magen, and Pech, "Introduction"; Gianluigi Palombella, "Illiberal, Democratic and Non-Arbitrary?: Epicentre and Circumstances of a Rule of Law Crisis," *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 10, no. 1 (April 2018): 5–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-017-0059-9>; Amichai Magen, "Cracks in the Foundations: Understanding the Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1050–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12400>.

⁴ Magen, "Cracks in the Foundations"; Kochenov, Magen, and Pech, "Introduction."

⁵ Batory, "Populists in Government?"

⁶ Sonja Priebus, "Hungary," in *Constitutional Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft (Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2016), 101–43, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13762-5_5.

where basic citizens' freedoms are being limited and the media is put under increasing government control, besides the issue that currently causes most concern: the attack on the independence of the judiciary.⁷

This thesis' general aim is to increase our understanding of how the crisis of EU fundamental values relates to broader questions concerning the European integration process. In order to do that, the question why this crisis can be described as a general and urgent problem for the current institutional structure of the EU needs to be answered, which is done in the second chapter of this thesis. This chapter contains a description of the most important political developments of the previous years in subsequently Hungary and Poland, that have created the recent struggles with the EU. Then it moves towards the position of the EU in this debate, analyzing how the mechanisms it has in place to go against breaches of its fundamental values in member states do not suffice, and what type of problems are arising as a consequence.

The theoretical framework in the third chapter focuses mainly on two important strands of research in scholarly literature on European integration: research on the possible emergence of a European Public Sphere (EPS) and on Europeanization in national public spheres. The concept of the public sphere was first described by Jürgen Habermas,⁸ and the development of a EPS is widely regarded as an essential requirement for the advancement of the European integration process.⁹ Empirical research on the emergence of a EPS, however, is largely focused on national mass media, because these are the platforms where citizens get most of their information on European affairs from.¹⁰

⁷ R. Daniel Kelemen, "Poland's Constitutional Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, August 25, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/2016-08-25/polands-constitutional-crisis>; Jankovic, "Polish Democracy Under Threat?"

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, Thomas. Burger, and Frederick G. Lawrence, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

⁹ Leonhard Hennen, "The European Public Sphere and the Internet," in *Electronic Democracy in Europe* (Springer, Cham, 2016), 21–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27419-5_2; Jos de Beus, "The European Union and the Public Sphere," in *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511761010.003>.

¹⁰ Jürgen Maier and Berthold Rittberger, "Shifting Europe's Boundaries: Mass Media, Public Opinion and the Enlargement of the EU," *European Union Politics* 9, no. 2 (June 2008): 243–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116508089087>.

Questions about the degree of Europeanization in national public spheres has therefore received much scholarly attention as well.¹¹

Much of the research on Europeanization focuses on the visibility of European affairs and actors in national mass media,¹² and the importance of adding a qualitative dimension to this field is proposed in this thesis. Especially when looking at complex topics like the crisis of EU fundamental values, qualitative analyses can help identifying *how* these topics are debated in the public sphere and how different views can influence people's perceptions of these issues and their attitudes towards Europe. This thesis consists of a qualitative framing analysis, identifying differences in the portrayal of the crisis of EU fundamental values in national mass media- more specifically, national mass media as political actors.¹³ The main research question in this thesis is: "how is the crisis of EU fundamental values framed in Dutch newspapers?"

The concept of framing is explained in chapter four, focusing on why this is an important empirical concept for studying European integration. Since the aim of this thesis is to provide in-depth information on how the crisis of EU fundamental values can be framed by national media, the method of a rhetorical framing analysis is used. This type of analysis is not systematic, because it is focused on identifying new frames that are specific to the issue, therefore including necessarily the views of the researcher.¹⁴ However, it can provide important insights into understanding complex issues and thereby provide relevant material for future research.

In chapter five the methodology is further explained, followed by the analysis. It focuses on the opinion pieces and editorials of two quality Dutch newspapers in 2017 that

¹¹ Ruud Koopmans, "How Advanced Is the Europeanization of Public Spheres? Comparing German and European Structures of Political Communication," in *European Public Spheres*, ed. Thomas Risse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963343.005>; Barbara Pfetsch, Silke Adam, and Barbara Eschner, "The Contribution of the Press to Europeanization of Public Debates," *Journalism* 9, no. 4 (2008): 465–92; Donatella della Porta and Manuela Caiani, "The Europeanization of Public Discourse in Italy," *European Union Politics* 7, no. 1 (2006): 77–112.

¹² Thomas Risse, "An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators," n.d., 11.

¹³ Pfetsch, Adam, and Eschner, "The Contribution of the Press to Europeanization of Public Debates"; Barbara Pfetsch, "Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe: The Press in Emerging European Public Sphere," *Javnost - The Public* 15, no. 4 (January 2008): 21–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2008.11008980>.

¹⁴ Jim A. Kuypers, "Framing Analysis from a Rhetorical Perspective," in *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, by D'Angelo, Paul and Kuypers, Jim A. (Routledge, 2010), 286–311.

at least refer to issues connected to the crisis of EU fundamental values. The analysis shows that there are structural differences between the way *NRC Handelsblad*, a politically centre-right newspaper and *De Volkskrant*, a politically centre-left newspaper, view the crisis of EU fundamental values. The analysis is not only aimed at identifying these differences, but also at defining them into categories of issue-specific frames.

In the Discussion chapter (chapter six) the possible implications of these different views in light of the European integration process are proposed. The relevance of this type of research for studying developments concerning the EPS and Europeanization is argued, along with a call for further research in this sphere. The strengths and weaknesses of the methodology and the results are discussed. The Conclusion chapter (chapter seven) emphasizes the most important links between the theory and the research in this thesis, including final remarks of the researcher.

Chapter 2

Nationalist-populist governments in the EU: a crisis of EU fundamental values

Scientific research on the EU's legitimacy issues and increasing politicization (or: contestation) of European integration often focus on, or at least mention, the rejections of the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty in some of its member states as defining turning points. The impact of the financial crisis on these topics has also been often addressed. The current rejection of certain EU policies (regarding immigration, for example) and opposition against further integration expressed by national governments is also strongly present on the research agenda.

However, the national political developments in mainly two EU member states that are threatening certain EU fundamental values has less clearly been connected to these broader questions- even though they pose fundamental challenges to the EU polity. This might be due to the fact that it is a relatively recent issue, at least in Poland. The political situation in Hungary has been problematic for the EU already since 2010, but only after the Polish parliamentary elections of 2015 did the topic of *illiberal democracies* gain widespread attention in Europe.

Although the EU is facing several large and threatening issues, the problem of rising nationalism and Euroscepticism in member state governments could be argued as currently being the one most strongly threatening the EU's central identity. It is a complex issue that by itself is already difficult to explain with regards to what it means for the European integration process. The issue is described here as a complex one because of two main reasons. First, the political developments in Poland and Hungary can be related to similar political developments in many other (European) countries; an increase of features like identity politics, nationalism, populism and Euroscepticism is not a phenomenon that is confined to these two countries. The distinction between Poland and Hungary as opposed to other European countries lies in the amount of influence these features have had in the policy-making or decision-making spheres - even though Italy and Austria could soon be added to these two, and it can also be argued that the political success of nationalism and populism has already had profound effects on the positions and rhetoric of other political parties, including governing ones, in other countries as well.

Second, the issue deals with the question of authority and competences of the EU vis-à-vis the nation-state. This is what makes the issue such a highly relevant one seen from a European integration perspective. Not only is there an ongoing scholarly debate on the question whether the EU has enough legitimacy to intervene in countries that are posing threats to its fundamental values,¹⁵ and the follow-up question of what this intervention should look like;¹⁶ at the same time the issues posed by mainly Hungary and Poland are creating urgency for the EU to rethink its institutional structure. This second reason is also why a framing analysis on national news media regarding this topic is interesting. It is practically impossible for political- and media actors to refrain from criticism on the structures of the EU polity. However, since solutions for these topics appear to necessarily include a shift towards more EU sovereignty (or the breaking apart of the EU), this is politically a highly sensitive topic.

As posed by Gianluigi Palombella: “it appears that a stronger and effective intervention by the EU would require Treaty amendment; one that is not currently planned, not even in the European Commission’s latest White Paper on the Future of Europe of March 2017”.¹⁷ This is the case despite the relatively strong consensus in scholarly debate that the EU, at least technically speaking, has the legitimacy to intervene in countries where the rule of law, or fundamental values in general, are threatened. Looking at the position that the EU currently finds itself in, with nationalism and Euroscepticism on the rise in many of its member states, it is not surprising however that the EU has so far approached the issue with relative caution. Still, at the end of 2017 the European Commission decided to officially trigger Article 7(1) against Poland.¹⁸ This first-time usage of Article 7 TEU, often dubbed the ‘nuclear option’ (this term will be

¹⁵ Jan-Werner Müller, “Should the EU Protect Democracy and the Rule of Law inside Member States?,” *European Law Journal* 21, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 141–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12124>; Cécile Leconte, “The EU Fundamental Rights Policy as a Source of Euroscepticism,” *Human Rights Review* 15, no. 1 (March 2014): 83–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-013-0299-6>; Palombella, “Illiberal, Democratic and Non-Arbitrary?”

¹⁶ Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU: The Limits of Material Sanctions and the Scope of Social Pressure,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 337–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229358>; Konrad Niklewicz, “Safeguarding the Rule of Law within the EU: Lessons from the Polish Experience,” *European View* 16, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 281–91, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-017-0452-8>; Peter Oliver and Justine Stefanelli, “Strengthening the Rule of Law in the EU: The Council’s Inaction,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1075–84, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12402>.

¹⁷ Palombella, “Illiberal, Democratic and Non-Arbitrary?”

¹⁸ Alice Cuddy, “What Is ‘Article 7’ and Why Was It Triggered against Poland?,” euronews, December 20, 2017, 7, <http://www.euronews.com/2017/12/20/what-is-article-7-and-why-was-it-triggered-against-poland->.

explained and the usage of it questioned later in this chapter) is a historic and significant step in the European integration process. At this moment, however, it is still unclear whether it will result in a significant step forward or a significant step back for the EU.

Even though these issues are often referred to as concerning a ‘Rule of Law crisis’ or ‘Rule of Law debate’ in the EU, this invites a narrow understanding of the issues since they actually relate to questions surrounding the EU’s fundamental values in general.¹⁹ When speaking of the EU’s fundamental values, this refers to Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), in which is stated: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail”²⁰.

In order to better understand why threats to the EU’s fundamental values, which in this thesis will thus be referred to as the “crisis of EU fundamental values”, in EU member states are such an important issue for the European integration process, it is necessary to start with describing the recent political developments in the two countries where these threats are the strongest: Hungary and Poland. Populism and nationalism are gaining ground in many other European countries as well, but not in so far as to posing systemic threats to EU fundamental values- which arguably is the case in Poland and Hungary. After describing what the current crisis of EU fundamental values entails in section 2.1 and 2.2 a section will be devoted to positioning the issue in broader terms and questions concerning the European integration process.

2.1. Nationalists in government: from Hungary to Poland

Before moving on to the Polish case in this chapter, some attention will be paid to the political developments in Hungary of the past decade. The main reason for this is that, besides there being clear parallels in the political developments in both countries, the Hungarian government has been creating difficulties for the EU already since 2010. Thus, to understand how and why the EU’s fundamental values are currently being threatened, it is important to have a look at Hungary first.

¹⁹ Magen, “Cracks in the Foundations.”

²⁰ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [2], 2010 O.J. C 83/01 [hereinafter TEU post-Lisbon]

2.1.1. Hungary: towards illiberal democracy

In Hungary, issues pertaining to violations of liberal democratic principles have been developing for more than 7 years now. They go together with numbers showing large dissatisfaction with democracy amongst Hungarians. To illustrate, during a speech at a Hungarian university, Hungarian prime-minister Viktor Orbán stated: “We want to organize a work-based society that ... undertakes the odium of stating that it is not liberal in character ... we must break with liberal principles and methods of social organization, and in general with the liberal understanding of society”.²¹ This clear language of Orbán in explaining what he wants for Hungary is a direct criticism towards the EU, and it reveals the weaknesses of the EU on the political level.

In 1989, then 25 year-old Viktor Orbán gained enormous national recognition by openly demanding Soviet troops to leave Hungary, an event that is seen as an iconic moment in Hungary’s transition to democracy. He did so at the reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy, the former Hungarian prime-minister who was sentenced to death in a secret process after choosing the side of Hungarian protesters against the Soviet regime in 1956. Orbán was one of the leaders of the “Alliance of Young Democrats”, shortly called FIDESZ. Fidesz’s important role in the opposition to the Soviet regime gained it the position as one of the six parties represented in the new 1990 parliament. When in 1994 Orbán’s party gained only 7% of the votes, its leadership decided to turn the youth movement into a conservative mainstream party. Four years later, Fidesz gained the most seats in parliament and formed a government with its Christian-conservative partners on the right, marking the start of a period of increasing polarization and populist rhetoric between them and the left/liberal camp. The financial crisis combined with a political scandal in the Socialist camp led Fidesz to gain a constitutional majority in parliament in 2010. Up until then, political actors in Hungary had followed the rules of a constitution that they had already sought, though failed to renew. But: “after 2010, the ruling majority increasingly played *with* the rules, thus destabilizing democracy in Hungary”.

Coming from a party which was indeed right-oriented in supporting excellence and a sense of liberal individualism, Fidesz and Viktor Orbán moved towards a

²¹ “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp,” Government, accessed July 13, 2018, <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp>.

countryside-oriented, anti-establishment party, targeting the supposed elite in the Hungarian government; thereby basically adopting the strategy that the Socialist party had used in 2002. Both camps used arguments of there being elitist, corrupt practices in the other camp, focused on gaining personal wealth. In that light, it is no surprise that after a leaked speech of Socialist prime-minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, in which he admitted that the government had been lying to the people about the state of the economy, and the following years of financial turmoil in which he and his government tried to hang on to power, Fidesz came and took a constitutional majority in 2010. The state of Hungary's democracy at that time was abominable.

“In the eyes of Hungarians, what unfolded in the twenty years since state socialism was liberal democracy – and it has failed”.²² A 2009 Pew Research Center survey showed that 72% of Hungarians thought that the economic situation was worse than under communism, the highest percentage of all Central and Eastern European countries in that survey (including Poland). 77% of Hungarians were dissatisfied with how democracy was working, higher than all other countries in the survey, and unlike in other post-communist countries, the post-1989 generation did not hold a more positive attitude than the generations before it.

Orbán builds on these sentiments in Hungary. He portrays the electoral outcome in 2010 as a clear step taken by the Hungarian people to free themselves from oppressors and opportunists. The developments since 2010 he describes as a “system of national cooperation” and he states, for instance: “we are building a country where the people do not work for the profit of foreigners”.²³ What he appears to be building, is a system which makes him stay in power. The most notable and strongly- both domestically and internationally- contested changes that have been made by the Hungarian government since 2010 concern the judiciary, the media and the electoral system. Important to note is that the large portion of Hungarians that voted for Orbán wanted to see a radical change in their country; politically, socially and economically. And this is also what Orbán had promised. Therefore, the new government enjoyed a certain freedom in adopting new laws.²⁴

²² Jan-Werner Müller, “The Hungarian Tragedy,” *Dissent* 58, no. 2 (March 27, 2011): 5–10, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2011.0048>.

²³ Batory, “Populists in Government?”

²⁴ Batory.

Adopting a new constitution

The Fidesz-KDNP government quickly started amending the constitution and did so twelve times before they drafted a new constitution. Three of these initial amendments were particularly controversial. First, the government changed the composition of the parliamentary committee which elects the eleven judges of the constitutional court from one with equal representation of all parties in parliament, to one with proportional representation, thus creating a Fidesz-KDNP majority in the committee. This was the first in a series of changes that would go on curbing the power of the judiciary. Second, the basis for a new media constitution was laid by an amendment in which articles on the freedom of press and opinion were reformulated, and the installment of a new media authority was projected. Third, the amendment that changed the parliamentary committee appointing judges also annulled an article important in the constitution-making process. This article, Art. 24-Sec. 5, stated that a four-fifth majority in Parliament needs to approve the rules of constitution-making before it starts.²⁵ However, this article was designed as a temporary requirement during the constitution-making process in the late 1990s, and therefore deleting it was unnecessary. This government action clearly showed their intentions to try and single-handedly adopt a new constitution, and therefore created a lot of controversy in Hungary. In order to speed up the process, most of the twelve amendments were proposed as private bills, thereby encompassing the standard procedure of parliamentary consultation.

The process of adopting a new constitution was controversial as well. First, in order to create a framework for drafting the new constitution, the government established a committee consisting of 45 seats, proportionally distributed. Within a few weeks after the Fidesz government curbed the power of the judiciary, all opposition parties had left this committee. In a final effort to try and influence the process, the opposition asked for a referendum on the new constitution. The government refused, and instead created a “National Consultation” by means of sending out a questionnaire to the Hungarian people. Unsurprisingly, this questionnaire was strongly biased; it was sent out when the debate in parliament was already ongoing, and it excluded the more important topics of the new constitution as well as the option to respond to any proposal with a hard no. Only 11% of the questionnaires were sent back.²⁶

²⁵ Priebus, “Hungary.”

²⁶ Priebus.

Hungary and Poland: parallel developments

Interesting parallels can be drawn between the recent years' political developments in Hungary and Poland. First, in recent years Poland has seen a strong increase in polarization between a nationalist-conservative oriented political party (Law and Justice) and an internationalist-liberal oriented one (Civic Platform). As in Hungary, this polarization has culminated into the nationalist-conservative side gaining a constitutional majority in the parliamentary elections (in 2015, red.). Second, the current Polish government has also adopted controversial laws in fields such as media (freedom) and the judiciary. Third, in both Poland and Hungary the communist past was used strongly in the elections by the political parties that are now in power. And lastly, both governments use the same rhetoric when counterarguing against complaints and sanctions coming from the EU.

2.1.2. The Polish case: why the European Commission has triggered the Article 7 procedure.

“The party has not only kept its campaign promises and filled the highest positions with its own political dignitaries, but also, according to many domestic and foreign analysts, encroached upon the fundamental values of the modern European State: by undermining democracy, the rule of law and the principle of sound governance”.²⁷ In this contrast described by Sara Jankovic principally lies the heart of the ongoing conflict between the current Polish government, led by the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, hereafter: PiS), and the European Commission. Indeed, it can be argued that several new laws adopted by the Polish government do not adhere to the rule of law and the fundamental values of the EU. However, the party PiS of leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski has time and again put forward that it has a strong democratic mandate to make changes and that it does not always want to adhere to the EU's principles.²⁸

While new legislation giving the Polish government control over public media was also one of the reasons for the European Commission to launch its Rule of Law Framework procedure against a member state for the first time, and Poland going into the EU's history books as the first country ever to openly ignore an injunction issued by the Court of Justice on the European Union (CJEU),²⁹ the most important issue creating

²⁷ Jankovic, “Polish Democracy Under Threat?”

²⁸ Jankovic.

²⁹ Niklewicz, “Safeguarding the Rule of Law within the EU.”

tension in Poland itself and between the Polish government and the EU, concerns the Polish Constitutional Tribunal.

2.1.2.1. The Constitutional Tribunal crisis in Poland

The Polish government has adopted several controversial laws over the past two to three years, involving media-, civil service-, police- and prosecution laws. The most controversial events concerned the appointment of judges for the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, which has already been dubbed a “constitutional crisis”. It is mainly because of the developments surrounding this particular issue, that the European Commission has decided to trigger Article 7(1) against Poland. This does not come as a surprise, for instance when looking at the relatively strong consensus among scholars that the EU should take action- resulting in statements such as the following one:

“When Orban became prime minister, in 2010, he had a parliamentary majority large enough to legally rewrite Hungary’s constitution to help cement his grip on power. But in Poland, where the procedures for amending the constitution are more demanding, the PiS does not have that option, and many of its initiatives—including laws designed to control the media, limit civil liberties, politicize the civil service, and attack judicial independence— risk being declared unconstitutional. As a result, the government is engaged in a blatantly illegal effort to subjugate the Constitutional Tribunal”.³⁰

The manner in which the Law and Justice party and the Polish president Andrzej Duda have dealt with the issue is indeed highly controversial, and this article does not argue against the validity of EU intervention regarding this particular issue. Nevertheless, it was a faulty decision made by the then Civic Platform (PO)-dominated Sejm (the Polish Parliament) that created an issue in the first place. In order to get a clear picture of the developments surrounding the crisis of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, its most important aspects will be described here before moving on to the broader question of whether the EU’s fundamental values are threatened in Poland.

The issue surrounding the Constitutional Tribunal started when President Andrzej Duda (from the Law and Justice party) denied the election of five judges, elected by the at the time Civic Platform-dominated Sejm (the Polish Parliament) for the Constitutional Tribunal by refusing to take their oath- an event that is normally a formality in Poland. He and the Law and Justice Party argued that two of those five judges should not have

³⁰ Kelemen, “Poland’s Constitutional Crisis.”

been elected, since the terms of the two judges they were supposed to replace would end only after the next Parliamentary elections. According to them, and according to two later Constitutional Tribunal rulings on the issue as well, judges of the Constitutional Tribunal have to be elected by the Sejm that is in place on the date of the commencement of the judges' terms. The election of the other three judges, on the other hand, was fully legitimate and subsequently President Duda's decision to not take their oaths was not. This was ruled by the Constitutional Tribunal, but just the day before the Tribunal had issued its ruling President Duda had taken the oaths of five new judges elected by the PiS-lead Sejm.

After this, according to Sava Jankovic:

(...) the tribunal refused to hear cases together with the illegitimate replacement judges and a standoff with the government ensued. Since then, the PiS has passed laws designed to curtail the tribunal's authority and make it subservient to the current parliamentary majority. The tribunal has judged the new laws unconstitutional, but the government has in turn refused to recognize those judgments. Quite simply, the democratic constitutional order in Poland has broken down.³¹

The democratic constitutional order can indeed be said to have broken down, because a conflict had been created between the Constitutional Tribunal and the governing political party. On the one hand, the PiS-lead government had already officially sworn in five new judges and ignored the Tribunal's ruling concerning the three previously legitimately elected ones; on the other hand, the President of the Constitutional Tribunal admitted only two of the five new judges elected by PiS. Basically, PiS and the Tribunal found themselves in a stalemate by both refusing to acknowledge the laws and judgements proposed by the other. "In her almost 'thirty years old democracy', Poland has never been confronted with such an unprecedented situation in which the government refuses to publish the Constitutional Tribunal judgements (to which it is obliged under Art 190.2) and the president of the Tribunal is entangled in a political dispute".³²

A solution for the dispute has still not been found, and after having threatened with triggering Article 7 several times, in December 2017 the European Commission

³¹ Jankovic, "Polish Democracy Under Threat?"

³² Jankovic.

decided to follow up on its threats.³³ The Polish government's infringements on the Constitutional Tribunal's independence also sparked national protests and recently, the Legal Expert Group (operating since 2016 and consisting of 11 Polish legal scholars) of the Stefan Batory Foundation delivered a report highlighting "the gravest threats" following from "changes implemented in Poland in 2015-2018 in the realm of judicial authority".³⁴

2.2. EU mechanisms for going against breaches of its fundamental values in member states

This section is dedicated to clarifying why this thesis speaks of a "crisis of EU fundamental values", arguing for what reasons the political struggle between the Polish and Hungarian governments and the EU could indeed be referred to as a crisis, at least from the EU's- and a European integration perspective. First, some attention is paid to the mechanisms that the EU has in place to deal with breaches of the fundamental values enshrined in Article 2 TEU. Because it can generally be concluded that the mechanisms in place have not been able to realize the desired effect, it raises the question what the next step of the EU and EU member states is going to be. This question will be dealt with in section 2.3.2.

In order to prevent member states from breaking EU law, centralized monitoring and enforcement by the European Commission are the standard mechanisms of the EU.³⁵ On the one hand, these mechanisms, most importantly the infringement procedure that the Commission can initiate, do not suffice for dealing with systemic violations of EU fundamental values.³⁶ On the other hand, judicially, there is not much more the EU can do. It has mechanisms in place when faced with systemic violations of its fundamental values, most notably Article 7 TEU, which has been used for the first time in December 2017 against Poland but of which it is not likely that the required unanimity in the

³³ "European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Rule of Law: European Commission Acts to Defend Judicial Independence in Poland," accessed July 20, 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5367_en.htm.

³⁴ "Statement on the Constitutionality of the Provisions in the New Law of the Supreme Court - News - Stefan Batory Foundation," Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, accessed May 29, 2018, http://www.batory.org.pl//news/statement_on_the_constitutionality_of_the_provisions_in_the_new_law_of_the_supreme_court.

³⁵ Michael Blauberger and R. Daniel Kelemen, "Can Courts Rescue National Democracy? Judicial Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU," *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 321–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229357>.

³⁶ Blauberger and Kelemen.

European Council will be reached.³⁷ Furthermore, both the ‘New Rule of Law Framework’ adopted by the Commission in 2014 and the subsequent response by the Council of Ministers entitled ‘Ensuring Respect for the Rule of Law in the EU’, which proposes an alternative mechanism, have significant shortcomings.³⁸³⁹ This leaves the EU with non-judicial instruments and the usage of infringement procedures for larger purposes, both of which the legitimacy could be questioned, and other possible alternative mechanisms, of which some will be discussed in this chapter.

2.2.1. Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union

Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) is, in principle, the most important tool of the EU against breaches of its liberal democratic values enshrined in Article 2 TEU. On May 17th 2017, the European Parliament took a historic step by adopting a resolution that proposes sanctions against Hungary because of rule-of-law concerns, requesting the launch of Article 7 procedures for the first time in EU history. Even though it is still highly unlikely that Article 7 will actually enter into force because of the required unanimity in the European Council, leaving the EU’s powers confined to exerting influence on ‘disobeying’ member states by means of social pressure and persuasion. At the end of 2017 the next historic step was taken by the EU when the European Commission officially triggered Article 7. Only this time the targeted member state was Poland. Later in this chapter will be elaborated on the question why Article 7 has been triggered against Poland and not Hungary. First, however, the focus will lie on similarities between the political developments in Poland and Hungary before moving on to describing the Polish case.

Article 7 can be used by the EU to sanction Member States against democratic backsliding. It is a measure against systematic breaches of the liberal democratic values enshrined in Article 2 TEU. The main sanction included in Article 7 the suspension of a member state’s voting rights in the EU Council, but it can also include sanctions such as withholding EU funding.⁴⁰ However, there are three main reasons why Article 7 will

³⁷ Sedelmeier, “Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU.”

³⁸ Sedelmeier.

³⁹ Judith Sargentini and Aleksejs Dimitrovs, “The European Parliament’s Role: Towards New Copenhagen Criteria for Existing Member States?,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (n.d.): 1085–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12403>.

⁴⁰ Sedelmeier, “Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU.”

probably not be fully employed in the near future, even though it has now been launched for the first time by the Commission. First, using Article 7 requires a two-thirds majority in the European Parliament and unanimity minus one in the European Council. This high threshold also disinclines politicians to even consider formally proposing the usage of Article 7; they fear it will be voted down, which could be interpreted as there not being a breach of liberal democratic values.⁴¹ Although it is indeed highly unlikely that it will *not* be voted down, this is a remarkably defensive point of view. Second, particularly because of sovereignty concerns, governments of EU member states are generally against using sanctions against individual member states. Especially now that there are two illiberal governments in the EU (Poland and Hungary), chances of Article 7 being used are minimal.⁴² Indeed, Orbán has already publicly stated that Hungary “will never support any sort of sanctions against Poland”.⁴³ Third, Fidesz’ membership of the biggest political party in the European Parliament, the European People’s Party (EPP), is an important factor in keeping Article 7 from being used. The EPP does not want to lose its majority in Parliament by going against one of its members. This raises concern, because this would mean the silencing of “the most vocal advocate of liberal democracy in the EU”.⁴⁴

2.2.2. The European Commission’s Rule of Law Framework

The Rule of Law Framework was presented by the Commission in 2014 as an additional tool for confronting systemic threats to liberal democracy.⁴⁵ It involves three stages: the Commission first sends a “rule of law opinion”. Then, if the response of the member state is not satisfactory, it proposes concrete measures in a “rule of law recommendation”. Finally, the Commission monitors the implementation of the proposed measures and if it does not suffice, it can propose using Article 7. Technically, it is not much more than a pre-Article 7 procedure and an already existing mechanism made more formal.⁴⁶ Still, it is seen as a step forward because this framework has more legitimacy, it

⁴¹ Sedelmeier.

⁴² Sedelmeier.

⁴³ EUObserver, “Orban: Hungary Would Veto Sanctions on Poland,” accessed July 29, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/tickers/131755>.

⁴⁴ Sedelmeier, “Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU.”

⁴⁵ Sedelmeier.

⁴⁶ Sedelmeier.

generates transparency and publicity which are important for exerting social pressure, and it meets the criterion of impartiality.⁴⁷

Where the Commission tried to take a step forward in protecting EU fundamental values, the Council of Ministers arguably denied this effort. In an opinion put forward by the Council Legal Service, two months after the Commission published its Rule of Law Framework, the new framework was stated to be unlawful.⁴⁸ Although this is disputed, the Council also put forward an alternative mechanism, the Rule of Law Dialogue, and already put it to use.⁴⁹ This is a review system that takes the form of a “constructive dialogue” among the member states about the functioning of the rule of law.⁵⁰ However, the vagueness of the proposal was considerable, and the text implied that only a very narrow topic would be discussed each year; concerns which resonated in the actual practice of the instrument which showed to have limited to no considerable effectiveness.⁵¹

2.2.3. *Alternative measures*

Clearly, the mechanisms currently in place for protecting EU fundamental values have severe shortcomings. This does not mean, however, that the EU is completely powerless. Scholars have suggested several possibilities for the EU to increase its influence on member states that threaten EU fundamental values.⁵² In this section these possibilities will be shortly described, followed by an analysis of the limitations they contain.

The infringement procedure, with which the European Commission can bring legal proceedings to individual member states when they are violating EU law, is not being used to its full potential. A telling example is the current infringement procedure regarding Hungary’s asylum law. In December 2015, the Commission opened this infringement procedure with a formal letter of notice.⁵³ In May 2017, in another press release, the Commission announced it has followed up on the procedure initiated in 2015 and that it has done so with another formal letter of notice. This shows a remarkable

⁴⁷ Sedelmeier.

⁴⁸ Oliver and Stefanelli, “Strengthening the Rule of Law in the EU.”

⁴⁹ Oliver and Stefanelli.

⁵⁰ Oliver and Stefanelli.

⁵¹ Oliver and Stefanelli.

⁵² Oliver and Stefanelli.

⁵³ Blauburger and Kelemen, “Can Courts Rescue National Democracy?”

unwillingness of the Commission to follow up on its warnings and take a case like this to court. The Commission makes selective use of the infringement procedure; it tends to avoid politically sensitive issues and refrains from using it when it is not certain whether it will prevail.⁵⁴ This could explain the limited amount of infringement procedures the Commission has pursued against Hungary and Poland in recent years (although 2017 and 2018 are showing a small increase).⁵⁵ If the Commission would significantly increase its personnel working on infringement procedures, it could strengthen its position.⁵⁶

The legally vague nature of EU fundamental values limits the Commission's ability to launch infringement procedures against member states based on them. There are two possible ways in which the EU could get around this problem.⁵⁷ First, within laws that seem to threaten fundamental values, the Commission can search for violations of law in legal areas where it *does* have strong competences. Second, the EU could make originally vague principles and values more legally enforceable by adopting secondary legislation.⁵⁸ Since the opportunities regarding these two options are limited, decentralized enforcement constitutes an alternative option. This is enforcement of EU fundamental values by private parties within member states, through which the EU can influence national governments without using infringement procedures from Brussels.⁵⁹

2.3. Protecting EU fundamental values: shortcomings and implications

An important ongoing discussion concerns the issue that even *if* material sanctions, mainly through Article 7, would be imposed against individual member states that breach EU fundamental values, it might not be effective.⁶⁰ Schlipphak and Treib use the examples of Austria and Hungary to argue that if the EU wants to intervene in individual member states that drift away from principles of democracy and the rule of law, it should do so very carefully.⁶¹ Otherwise, Orbán could play 'the blame game' on Brussels,

⁵⁴ Lisa Conant, *Justice Contained: Law and Politics in the European Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ Blauberger and Kelemen, "Can Courts Rescue National Democracy?"

⁵⁶ Blauberger and Kelemen.

⁵⁷ Blauberger and Kelemen.

⁵⁸ Blauberger and Kelemen.

⁵⁹ Blauberger and Kelemen.

⁶⁰ Sedelmeier, "Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU."

⁶¹ Bernd Schlipphak and Oliver Treib, "Playing the Blame Game on Brussels: The Domestic Political Effects of EU Interventions against Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 352–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229359>.

creating a rally-round-the-flag effect which is likely to be effective.⁶² Blauburger and Kelemen are more optimistic, arguing that the European Commission enjoys more public trust than the national governments in Hungary, which could even mean that if Orbán opposes Brussels' interventions it might backfire on *him*.⁶³ Nevertheless, the EU remains cautious and even careful interventions by the EU have been successfully used on the national level by Orbán in his favor.⁶⁴

Besides the barriers for using material sanctions and the little prospect that usage of material sanctions donates for the EU to counter democratic backsliding, the search for alternative ways highlights a possible larger issue in the EU. "A political system with regular elections, but clear limits on media freedom, on election campaigning and on autonomous activity by civil society is not on the road to being an illiberal democracy; it is on the road to not being a democracy at all".⁶⁵ Although this process is well underway in Hungary and Poland, the EU still appears to be focusing on the current possible means that it has access to in order to turn this process around- instead of proposing ideas for serious change in the future. Reasons for this might be the currently troubling situation that the EU finds itself in generally; due to Brexit, the migration crisis and rising Euroscepticism, the EU does not appear to be in the position to take strong measures against member state governments in fields where it does not have clear-cut competencies. On the other hand, the European Parliament, the only EU institution containing members directly elected by European citizens, has been the one most strongly advocating taking measures and expressing concerns regarding existing mechanisms,⁶⁶ and not much seems to be done with its suggestions.⁶⁷

To sum up, there are three main reasons why the EU is not equipped to deal with the issues raised by the Polish and Hungarian political situations: first, the European Commission has been extremely cautious in dealing with the issues, leaving the threats to the EU's fundamental values to only grow larger; second, and this is partly responsible for the Commission's cautiousness, national political leaders have largely left the issues to the Commission, with the European Council structurally voicing concerns *against*

⁶² Schlipphak and Treib.

⁶³ Blauburger and Kelemen, "Can Courts Rescue National Democracy?"

⁶⁴ Schlipphak and Treib, "Playing the Blame Game on Brussels."

⁶⁵ Müller, "Should the EU Protect Democracy and the Rule of Law inside Member States?"

⁶⁶ Sargentini and Dimitrovs, "The European Parliament's Role."

⁶⁷ Sargentini and Dimitrovs.

intervention in national political matters, which is best shown by the Council's negative evaluation of the Commission's Rule of Law Framework and its proposal for a largely symbolic alternative measure; third, the European Parliament, that expressed the strongest concern regarding the issues out of the three main EU institutions, cannot exert much influence.

This crisis of EU fundamental values hereby creates an internal stalemate situation in the EU. The member states are all individually looking at the European Commission to bring back the Polish and Hungarian political situation to one that is acceptable for an EU member state, yet the treaties do not provide the Commission with strong enough competencies to do so. This leaves the responsibility with the individual member states and thus the European Council. The political willingness among national governments to openly embark on visions for the future of Europe that entail the further unified integration necessary to deal with a crisis like this, however, is lacking. The other option would be for the countries willing to do so to engage in bilateral diplomatic sanctions against Hungary and Poland, like fourteen member states did in 2000 against Austria, but looking at the very little protest coming from national governments it appears that this will not happen any time soon.⁶⁸ This situation leads to several national political leaders advocating the idea of a *multi-speed* or *two-speed Europe*,⁶⁹ which would mean leaving countries with problematic governments like Poland and Hungary behind; an idea that leads to strong opposition voiced by countries that have made much democratic progress, which they fear could be undone by this idea.⁷⁰ The idea is a logical consequence of the apparent impossibility to improve the democratic level on a European-wide scale, which correlates with the lack of a European Public Sphere. This will be focused on in the next chapter.

⁶⁸ Leconte, "The EU Fundamental Rights Policy as a Source of Euroscepticism."

⁶⁹ "EU's Big Four Back 'multi-Speed' Europe," accessed July 21, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/news/137134>.

⁷⁰ Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "What Does a Multi-Speed EU Mean for Central and Eastern Europe? | DW | 24.03.2017," DW.COM, accessed July 21, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/what-does-a-multi-speed-eu-mean-for-central-and-eastern-europe/a-38016484>.

Chapter 3

A European Public Sphere and Europeanization of national public spheres

The development of Europe-wide public discourses is held among the most important features in combatting the EU's (democratic) legitimacy deficit and for the European integration process in general.⁷¹ The important role of the media in creating these discourses has been widely acknowledged.⁷² While there is evidence that the visibility of European affairs in the media is strongly increasing in the 21st century, this does not necessarily mean that a European view to these European affairs is becoming normalized as well.⁷³ “Despite the numerous studies about the Europeanization of public spheres that have appeared in recent years, we still lack a reliable answer to the question of the shape that the politicization of European affairs is taking”.⁷⁴ This thesis aims to develop answers to tackle this question.

Thomas Risse found empirical evidence to argue against the idea that there is a lack of a European-wide imagined community, of “pre-political social and cultural prerequisites” to engage in supranational democratic, redistributive practices.⁷⁵ There are a number of important statements for this thesis that can be derived from the arguments of Risse. He shows there is reason to be optimistic about the possibilities to engage in European-wide redistributive policies and to develop a democracy on the European level.⁷⁶ In contrast, Scharpf states that the lack of a European ‘demos’ makes this impossible, while at the same time the “output-legitimacy”, deriving legitimacy from showing that policies provide positive results, on which the EU needs to build has been severely damaged by the Eurozone crisis.⁷⁷ However, Risse is optimistic about the

⁷¹ Leonhard Hennen, “The European Public Sphere and the Internet,” in *Electronic Democracy in Europe* (Springer, Cham, 2016), 21–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27419-5_2.

⁷² Sophie Lecheler and Claes H. De Vreese, “Framing Serbia: The Effects of News Framing on Public Support for EU Enlargement,” *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (March 2010): 73–93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773909990233>.

⁷³ Ruud Koopmans, “How Advanced Is the Europeanization of Public Spheres? Comparing German and European Structures of Political Communication,” in *European Public Spheres*, ed. Thomas Risse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963343.005>.

⁷⁴ Koopmans.

⁷⁵ Thomas Risse, “No Demos? Identities and Public Spheres in the Euro Crisis,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 6 (2014): 1207–15.

⁷⁶ Risse.

⁷⁷ Fritz W. Scharpf, “Political Legitimacy in a Non-Optimal Currency Area,” Working Paper (MPIfG Discussion Paper, 2013), <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/87733>.

underlying prerequisites; this means he does not deny the possibility of developing a proper European-wide democracy. According to Meyer the EU's communication deficit, that is "rooted in the lack of an active political public sphere at the European level",⁷⁸ is still present. Since, especially in the current European political climate, it is hard to imagine an increase of European democracy and the establishment of supranational redistributive policies being created from the top-down, it is important to have a closer look at this communication deficit. Meyer's argument can be turned around, arguing that in order to establish an active political public sphere at the European level, we need to overcome this communication deficit.

3.1. Establishing a European public Sphere

Scholarly debates on questions surrounding the emergence or absence of a European Public Sphere (EPS) and its relevance for the European integration process exist both in a broad, normative sense as well as in a more specific manner. Normatively there is general agreement that an inclusive EPS is an important requirement for the advancement and improvement of pan-European democracy.⁷⁹ The debate on how to conceptualize and measure this EPS is, however, still ongoing. Research on mass media plays an important role in this regard; this thesis focuses on mass media as well.

Barbara Pfetsch stated that "It has been widely acknowledged that a European public sphere must be a "mass-mediated" public sphere because the media provide for the only inclusive channels of communication between Europe and the public".⁸⁰ However, no proper transnational, pan-European mass media platform which reaches a significant part of European citizens has been developed yet. The platforms that are reaching a transnational audience are mostly focused on the European professional elite. Empirical approaches towards measuring the EPS therefore focus largely on national mass media. Two main approaches can be distinguished: on the one hand, there is the research focused on the salience of words like "Europe", "European affairs" and "European institutions". On the other hand are the cross-national comparative studies which compare the frames

⁷⁸ Christoph Meyer, "Political Legitimacy and the Invisibility of Politics: Exploring the European Union's Communication Deficit," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 37, no. 4 (1999): 617–39.

⁷⁹ See for instance: Lecheler and Vreese, "Framing Serbia"; Barbara Pfetsch, "Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe: The Press in Emerging European Public Sphere," *Javnost - The Public* 15, no. 4 (January 2008): 21–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2008.11008980>.

⁸⁰ Pfetsch, "Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe."

of references when describing European issues used by national mass media.⁸¹ The first strand of research has seen an increase of European issue salience in national mass media, however remaining relatively small compared to national issues; the second strand of research often finds hopeful results in the sense that similar European issues are understood in similar ways by national mass media in different European countries.⁸²

More recent research has suggested that we are seeing developments towards a Europeanization of national public spheres in Europe. Further research on this is important, for example looking at what Risse points out in the introduction to his book on public spheres in Europe:

First, transnational cross-border communication in Europe – at the levels of both the elites and bottom-up social mobilization – is enabled through the gradual Europeanization of national- as well as issue-specific public spheres. We argue that European public spheres do not emerge above and beyond local-, national-, or issue-specific public spheres in some abstract supranational space but rather through the Europeanization of these various public spheres that then allows for cross-border communication in Europe. Second, the politicization of European affairs at both the EU level and in the domestic politics of member states is inevitable and here to stay, whether or not we like it.⁸³

Qualitative analyses of important subjects concerning the European integration process can help towards pinpointing what kind of aspects are still ‘missing’ regarding politicization and the European Public Sphere, from the points of view of advancement of the European integration process and dealing with the EU’s democratic deficit. Politicization of European integration is increasing mainly because of emerging contestation of the EU following the expansion of the authority of EU institutions,⁸⁴ and driven by Eurosceptic, often right-wing nationalist political actors.

It is thus not clear whether it is a good or a bad thing, since it can be argued that the fact that we appear to be increasingly thinking and discussing about Europe, for instance from the point of view of the alleged democratic deficit of the EU, is a good development; on the other hand, seeing that it is Euroscepticism mostly coming from nationalist and anti-EU views that drives this politicization, the implications of more politicization do not point towards the flourishing of European cooperation. This is why Michael Zürn

⁸¹ Risse, “An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators.”

⁸² Risse.

⁸³ Thomas Risse, “Introduction,” in *European Public Spheres*, ed. Thomas Risse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963343.002>.

⁸⁴ Michael Zürn, “Opening up Europe: Next Steps in Politicisation Research,” *West European Politics* 39, no. 1 (2016): 164–82.

calls for more research on the consequences of politicization of European integration.⁸⁵ It is also why the research in this thesis leans more towards questions concerning *why* European citizens take positive or negative stances towards the EU, hereby focusing on the type of source where they ascertain most of their knowledge on European affairs: national mass media.

3.2. The role of national mass-media in Europeanization of national public spheres

Since the EU decision-making process is no longer confined to the European political elite, which could count on the public's 'permissive consensus' when advancing European integration, the attitudes of the public matter.⁸⁶ It is remarkable that rising Euroscepticism among citizens is often attributed to economic and identity-related variables, while ignoring the influence of media information on their opinion, even though this influence is proven to be quite strong.⁸⁷ Furthermore, citizens are largely dependent on national news media for their information about the European integration process.⁸⁸ From a European integration perspective, it is therefore troublesome to see that news about the EU is still largely presented from a national angle on these media platforms.⁸⁹ Since European citizens hold Europe "only at the back of their minds",⁹⁰ media reporting on European issues is something they rely on in order to make it a more prominent subject in these minds.⁹¹

Much research regarding the EPS focuses on the level of Europeanization that is fostered by national mass media. Koopmans and Erbe identified four essential functions of mass media in the European decision-making process. Out of these four, the *accountability* function is what this thesis focuses on: "the public can build its opinion

⁸⁵ Zürn.

⁸⁶ Liesbet Hooghe, "Europe Divided? Elites vs. Public Opinion on European Integration," *European Union Politics* 4, no. 3 (2003): 281–304; Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration?," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 3 (2004): 415–20.

⁸⁷ Claes H. de Vreese and Hajo G. Boomgaarden, "Media Effects on Public Opinion about the Enlargement of the European Union," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44, no. 2 (2006): 419–36.

⁸⁸ Maier J. and Rittberger B., "Shifting Europe's Boundaries: Mass Media, Public Opinion and the Enlargement of the EU," *European Union Politics* 9, no. 2 (2008): 243–67.

⁸⁹ Jochen Peter and Claes de Vreese, "In Search of Europe," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 9, no. 4 (2004): 3–24.

⁹⁰ Lecheler and Vreese, "Framing Serbia."

⁹¹ Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Calculation, Community and Cues Public Opinion on European Integration," *European Union Politics* 6, no. 4 (2005): 419–43.

about the distant European institutions and the complexities of multi-level policies only to a very small extent on direct personal experience and therefore must also rely on how Europe becomes visible in the mass media”.⁹² This is combined with the claim of Pfetsch that media do not only serve as a link between the political sphere and the public, but also function as political actors themselves.⁹³

The relevance of this thesis follows from the line of thinking of Pfetsch about the political role of national mass media in fostering Europeanization of national public spheres. She questions the evidence for the importance of the media coming from the main two strands of research on Europeanisation, looking at “the larger picture of the emergence of a truly European Public Sphere”.⁹⁴ She points to Bruter, who provided evidence that the European identity among citizens is influenced by the way media communicate about Europe; he showed that Europeanization is thus not only about salience of European issues or transnational similarities between media reporting on European issues, but also about whether media engage in positive or negative messaging about Europe.⁹⁵ This argument is taken further in this thesis, agreeing with Pfetsch that “the media’s voice and their performance are critical variables for the emergence of a European public sphere”.⁹⁶ This is why it is important to investigate the positions taken by media about European affairs and European integration. Where Pfetsch conducted a quantitative content analysis, this thesis proposes a qualitative approach in the shape of a rhetorical framing analysis. The reasons for this choice are explained in the following section and in chapter four.

3.3. What qualitative framing research can tell us about Europeanization

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, research on politicization of European integration proves that we are seeing a gradual increase in the politicization of European issues. Research on this topic still finds itself at the early stages, namely at questions like how to define the concept of the politicization of European integration and whether we are witnessing certain developments. Still, the first findings, coming from quite elaborate

⁹² R. Koopmans and J. Erbe, “Towards a European Public Sphere? Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Europeanised Political Communication,” *Innovation* 17 (2004).

⁹³ Pfetsch, “Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe.”

⁹⁴ Pfetsch.

⁹⁵ Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe?: The Emergence of a Mass European Identity*, 1 online resource (xvi, 221 pages) : illustrations vols. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=257343>.

⁹⁶ Pfetsch, “Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe.”

studies,⁹⁷ interestingly contrast with the lack of the development of a EPS. Apparently, the developments surrounding European integration are becoming increasingly contested and reaching the forefront of debate all over Europe, but this does not go combined with a similar shift of the public sphere from a national to a European one. Explained from the viewpoint of a different phenomenon, namely citizen mobilization in European democratic procedures, it has been observed that while on the national political level important events like the Eurozone crisis have indeed increasingly politicized the EU, this citizen mobilization did not increase accordingly.⁹⁸

Among the possible explanations for this phenomenon, there is one that is particularly interesting for this thesis: “a discursive framing that conceptualizes the EU as a consortium of member states rather than a supranational entity”.⁹⁹ In other words: in public discourse, created in the media and by political actors -including EU political actors, the EU remains being portrayed as a sort of international organization where nation states come to mutual agreements, instead of as a common European political body in which all European citizens have a direct say. While there is of course a core truth in this portrayal, it also highlights an important issue which comes to the fore in the scholarly politicization debate: while we might see a trend towards an increasing politicization of European integration, this is still largely confined to “pro- or anti-EU” discussions. This can for instance be attributed to pro-European political elites who have proven to actively depoliticize the European integration process.¹⁰⁰ Thus, increased contestation and politicization of European integration does not necessarily imply increased citizen mobilization in the European decision-making process. To illustrate: national democratic debates surround questions on what kind of laws to adopt, not (or at least: not yet) polarized discussions on whether we should abandon this national democracy or not.

Coming back to the portrayal of the EU as a consortium of member states in public discourse, an important link to the research conducted in this thesis can be made. The European issue of the crisis of EU fundamental values is a good opportunity to provide

⁹⁷ See for instance: Swen Hutter, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi, *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*, 1 online resource (xvii, 340 pages) vols. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁹⁸ Sebastian Baglioni and Achim Hurrelmann, “The Eurozone Crisis and Citizen Engagement in EU Affairs,” *West European Politics* 39, no. 1 (2016): 104–24.

⁹⁹ Baglioni and Hurrelmann.

¹⁰⁰ Kriesi H., “The Politicization of European Integration,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54 (2016): 32–47.

an indication of where we stand on the issue of how the EU is portrayed and whether we can indeed simply speak of increased politicization of European integration, or that it is clearly a differentiated phenomenon.¹⁰¹ In order to provide answers to the question whether politicization is a good development for the European polity or not, this thesis proposes an in-depth analysis of the ways in which a complex topic like the crisis of EU fundamental values is discussed in national media.

Jos de Beus states that we can see significant Europeanization of national public spheres, particularly in “advanced areas of European integration” like monetary policy.¹⁰² While the results in this book are not disputed here, it is possible to dispute the quality of the impact of Europeanization of national public spheres on the European integration process, if this Europeanization concerns exactly those technocratic policy topics that give the public reasons to be skeptical towards the EU. Plus, can we really speak of Europeanization if the European view is still represented as foreign, and these topics are mainly being discussed with national interests in mind? Can we claim that a European identity has been developing among citizens in recent decades if the main difference seems to be that the policies that we used to take for granted (“permissive consensus”) are now being disputed because people have the feeling that national interests are at stake? Of course, many people defend European cooperation and warn for the loss of a project of great importance, but is this not still just an elite group of highly educated people? These are the kind of questions that will be examined in this thesis by looking closely at rhetoric used in Dutch newspapers about the crisis of EU fundamental values; an urgent topic that brings up fundamental questions about the current structure of the EU and the European integration process.

In case of strong Europeanization that goes beyond a national perspective, we would expect to see an inclusive commitment to the issue regarding the fundamental values of the EU and the threats posed by the Polish and Hungarian governments on the national (Dutch, in this case) level. This inclusive commitment would mean that media inform citizens not only from the perspective of national interests, but include the interests of Polish and Hungarian people as well as European-wide interests. Is the issue portrayed as an essential European issue, which therefore connects Dutch citizens to it as European citizens? Or is it portrayed as an issue that mainly concerns the Polish and Hungarian

¹⁰¹ Baglioni and Hurrelmann, “The Eurozone Crisis and Citizen Engagement in EU Affairs.”

¹⁰² de Beus, “The European Union and the Public Sphere.”

national governments, versus the EU of which we, as Dutch citizens, are only linked through our own national government? These types of questions guide the research in this thesis. In order to provide answers to these questions, a qualitative framing analysis is used. The next chapter is dedicated to exploring the concept of framing and arguing in what manner it will be used for the analysis in this thesis.

Chapter 4

Framing European issues in national media

The concept of framing is central to the research conducted in this thesis. Entman defines it as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality to enhance their salience in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation”.¹⁰³ It has often been proven that the way media frame political issues influences people’s perceptions of those issues; this is what Paul D’Angelo described as the cognitive approach.¹⁰⁴ The concept of framing helps in understanding how people make sense of societal issues. Where agenda-setting and priming theory focus mainly on how salience of news topics affects the importance people assign to these topics and therefore what they believe are important political issues, framing theory surrounds the question how people make sense of these issues.¹⁰⁵ The manner in which journalists decide to present a certain topic can affect how people understand and interpret this topic,¹⁰⁶ and also how they evaluate it.¹⁰⁷ Journalists choose a particular mode to present a complex issue, making it more understandable; these modes are called *media frames*.¹⁰⁸ They choose to emphasize certain aspects of an issue while neglecting others. If a mode of presentation fits with the often simpler schemes that individuals use to process information (*audience frames*), it can influence individual understanding of a topic or ‘object’.¹⁰⁹

Although there are many possible ways in which journalists can construct news, scholarly literature has identified typical features that are often used. Thus, among the

¹⁰³ Robert M. Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58; cited in: H. Semetko and P. Valkenburg, “Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News,” *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 2 (2000): 93–109.

¹⁰⁴ Rens Vliegthart, “Framing in Mass Communication Research – An Overview and Assessment,” *Sociology Compass* 6, no. 12 (n.d.): 937–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12003>.

¹⁰⁵ Sophie Lecheler and Claes H. De Vreese, “Framing Serbia: The Effects of News Framing on Public Support for EU Enlargement,” *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (March 2010): 73–93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773909990233>.

¹⁰⁶ Claes H. de Vreese, “The Effects of Frames in Political Television News on Issue Interpretation and Frame Salience,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (March 2004): 36–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100104>.

¹⁰⁷ Claes H. De Vreese and Anna Kandyla, “News Framing and Public Support for a Common Foreign and Security Policy*,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 47, no. 3 (n.d.): 453–81, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2009.01812.x>; Lecheler and Vreese, “Framing Serbia.”

¹⁰⁸ Maier and Rittberger, “Shifting Europe’s Boundaries.”

¹⁰⁹ Maier and Rittberger.

media frames, on which this thesis focuses, there are some important types. They can be divided in issue-specific news frames and generic news frames. Generic news frames can be used to research framing across a range of different topics. The most important types of generic news frames used by journalists are the conflict frame, the human-interest frame, the responsibility frame and the economic consequences frame.¹¹⁰ The issue-specific frames are “intrinsically related to certain topics or news events”.¹¹¹ Though the research in this thesis will focus on issue-specific frames, these frames are often inspired by some of the important generic news frames, like the conflict frame.

4.1. Framing European integration

The shift towards a focus on framing in studies of the European Public Sphere is related to the claim that the presence of similar meaning structures concerning European integration topics across national public spheres is an important feature in defining a Europeanized public sphere.¹¹² “We still know little, however, about prevalent frames about European integration in most of the EU member states”.¹¹³ Statham and Koopmans identified this issue as well and consequently emphasized the importance of moving beyond the standard pro- versus anti-European frames in the introduction to their research on “party contestation over Europe”.¹¹⁴ They analyzed substantive Euro-criticism expressed by political parties in mass media, identifying whether Euro-criticisms “frame a coherent and consistent critique”.¹¹⁵ The research in this thesis takes a similar approach, focusing however on the rhetoric and criticisms put forward by national mass media themselves, as political actors (see the references to the work of Pfetsch in chapter three) and taking the focus on substance one step further.

News commentators have a significant impact on public opinion, and as opposed to political actors they do not need to adhere to the wishes of the media in order to voice their opinions, because “media already have the infrastructure and the resources to

¹¹⁰ Claes H. de Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, and Holli A. Semetko, “(In)Direct Framing Effects: The Effects of News Media Framing on Public Support for Turkish Membership in the European Union,” *Communication Research* 38, no. 2 (April 2011): 179–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210384934>.

¹¹¹ de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko.

¹¹² Juan Díez Medrano and Emily Gray, “Framing the European Union in National Public Spheres,” in *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, ed. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 195–220, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511761010.012>.

¹¹³ Medrano and Gray.

¹¹⁴ Paul Statham and Ruud Koopmans, “Political Party Contestation over Europe in the Mass Media: Who Criticizes Europe, How, and Why?” 1, no. 3 (2009).

¹¹⁵ Statham and Koopmans.

become public themselves”.¹¹⁶ Since it has been argued and demonstrated that citizens’ attitudes towards European affairs are unstable and easily influenced by (new) information,¹¹⁷ analyzing news commentators’ views can provide important insights into the shaping of public opinion on European integration. There are several examples of framing analyses in national media concerning European issues, for instance on the Eurozone crisis,¹¹⁸ the accession of Turkey to the EU,¹¹⁹ the accession of Serbia to the EU,¹²⁰ and the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.¹²¹ These examples do not focus on media as political actors, as opposed to this thesis; this has to do with the complexity of the topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values.

4.2.Framing the crisis of EU fundamental values

Since the topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values cannot aptly be compared to any other European event in terms of framing analysis, the focus lies on issue-specific framing. This means the analysis will consist of analyzing how different types of frames can be identified concerning this topic specifically. Just as, for instance, the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy could broadly speaking be framed by news media and political elites as either a ‘risk’ or an ‘opportunity’,¹²² the crisis of EU fundamental values invites to be framed in particular manners by news media and -commentators. It is, however, a more complex issue because it does not concern a specific policy subject that people can either support or reject. It is thus not possible yet to investigate the influence of framing regarding this topic on people’s perceptions of it and how this consequently relates to people’s perceptions of the EU and countries like Poland and Hungary. Consequently, the topic invites to take a more qualitative approach. The complexity of it makes the question of what media make of it a very interesting one, and also one that cannot be answered without taking an in-depth approach to the texts at hand. The framing analysis in this research will therefore be taking a rhetorical perspective, which is not a

¹¹⁶ Barbara Pfetsch, Silke Adam, and Barbara Berkel, “Agenda Setters, Shapers of Conflicts and Networkers of Cross Border Communication—Comparing the National Press in Emerging European Public Sphere,” 2005.

¹¹⁷ de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko, “(In)Direct Framing Effects.”

¹¹⁸ Johannes Kaiser and Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw, “The Framing of the Euro Crisis in German and Spanish Online News Media between 2010 and 2014: Does a Common European Public Discourse Emerge?,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 4 (n.d.): 798–814, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12515>.

¹¹⁹ de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko, “(In)Direct Framing Effects.”

¹²⁰ Lecheler and Vreese, “Framing Serbia.”

¹²¹ Vreese and Kandyla, “News Framing and Public Support for a Common Foreign and Security Policy*.”

¹²² Vreese and Kandyla.

widely used type in the area of framing research,¹²³ but it fits best here because of the complexity of the topic.

4.2.1. *Rhetorical framing analysis*

“Criticism (one of many humanistic methods of generating knowledge) actively involves the personality of the researcher”.¹²⁴ Therefore the method does not lend itself to be systematized. Rhetorical critics can propose different perspectives when examining a single piece of rhetoric (in the sense that something could mean this, but also that) and even develop their own unique perspective.¹²⁵ “Framing involves how the press organizes the context through which the public will view news. At its heart, this is a rhetorical process ...”.¹²⁶ Rhetorical framing analysis takes a qualitative approach to framing and is subjected more to the researcher’s interpretation than the more often used quantitative approaches to framing analysis. In an example of a rhetorical framing study proposed by Kuypers in 2010, he compared President Bush’s public speeches in the four years after 9/11 with the way news media reported about what Bush said in these speeches.¹²⁷ Thus in this case, Bush’s speeches are the constant variable, and the news media’s reporting is the independent variable. Similarly to the research in this thesis, the crisis of EU fundamental values is the constant variable and the Dutch newspaper’s reporting on the issue is the dependent variable. An important difference with the example is that the crisis of EU fundamental values is much more complex, and thus allows for several interpretations. This is also why it was necessary to elaborately describe in chapter two what the crisis of EU fundamental values entails. In the example, the results concerned the question whether the media followed the frames proposed by President Bush or whether they did not,¹²⁸ which is not as straightforward in this thesis. However, the finding that after a certain amount of time the media appeared to choose to frame Bush as an “enemy of civil liberties”, how this influenced the amount to which they took over Bush’s framing (declining) and especially: how Kuypers states that he did not find a “single, pervasive frame” dominating the news story as found in most framing research,

¹²³ Kuypers, “Framing Analysis from a Rhetorical Perspective.”

¹²⁴ Kuypers.

¹²⁵ Kuypers.

¹²⁶ Jim A. Kuypers, “Framing Analysis from a Rhetorical Perspective,” in *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, by D’Angelo, Paul and Kuypers, Jim A. (Routledge, 2010), 286–311.

¹²⁷ Kuypers.

¹²⁸ Kuypers.

confirms how framing research can indeed be an interesting approach to the topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values.

4.2.2. *Dutch newspapers: NRC Handelsblad and De Volkskrant*

Statham and Koopmans identified four types of Euro-criticism, of which two had a Eurosceptic approach and two a “Europeanist” approach.¹²⁹ Since this thesis analyzes two mainstream, quality newspapers in the Netherlands, the expectation is that from the types of Euro-criticism proposed by Statham and Koopmans, the two Europeanist approaches will be prevalent: the *critical Europeanist* approach, which rejects the values and substances of Europe as it is and commits to a different pro-European belief; and the *constructive Europeanist* approach, which takes the values and substances of Europe as normal and makes criticisms from that starting point, thus “within the existing EU project”.¹³⁰

The reason why the prevalence of these two types can be expected in the two newspapers analyzed for this thesis, is that the political orientation of both *NRC Handelsblad* (center-right) and *De Volkskrant* (center-left) are around the center of the political spectrum. Statham and Koopmans state that “it is well known that criticisms of European integration and the European Union often come from the left and right poles, whereas centre parties suspend normal hostilities advocating a generally pro-European line”.¹³¹ The choice to analyse articles in these two newspapers was made for two main reasons. First, they are both regarded as quality newspapers and therefore more likely to provide elaborate information about European affairs than the more sensational newspapers, which makes them more likely to show signs of Europeanization.¹³² If the Europeanization in these newspapers is weak, then it is likely that Europeanization in the national public sphere in the Netherlands is generally weak. Second, the general differences in political orientation of the two newspapers (centre-left and centre-right) can provide information about the range of views on the topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values within the mainstream political spectrum in the Netherlands.

¹²⁹ Statham and Koopmans, “Political Party Contestation over Europe in the Mass Media.”

¹³⁰ Statham and Koopmans.

¹³¹ Statham and Koopmans.

¹³² Pfetsch, Adam, and Berkel, “Agenda Setters, Shapers of Conflicts and Networkers of Cross Border Communication—Comparing the National Press in Emerging European Public Sphere.”

Analyzing how the crisis of EU fundamental values is framed can provide insights in how the EU, Poland and Hungary are framed in the Netherlands. Using the available literature on framing theory, a range of possible frames that journalists could use when covering this topic can be identified. In this thesis, propositions are made for possible ways in which the crisis of EU fundamental values can be framed and what these different frames imply. Then it will be checked whether these frames can indeed be identified in opinion articles about the topic in two Dutch quality newspapers. Lastly, possible implications of the results will be discussed and the relevance of the identified frames for future research will be assessed. The main goal is to provide a framework of thought for future research about the topics of the crisis of EU fundamental values and its importance for the European integration process, together with media and public opinion.

Chapter 5

Methodology and Analysis: Framing the crisis of EU fundamental values in two Dutch newspapers

The analysis in this thesis aims to identify in what manners the issue of the crisis of EU fundamental values is framed in two Dutch newspapers: *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant*. Thus, by means of interpretation different systematic ways in which these two newspapers report about the issue are identified, after which their implications will be assessed and discussed. The analysis surrounds two general research questions: how are the political issues in Poland and Hungary framed (1), how is the position of the EU with regards to these issues framed (2). The emphasis of the analysis generally lies on whether or not an article takes a more in-depth approach towards the political situations in Poland and Hungary and their governments' struggles with the EU.

This chapter describes and discusses the results of the conducted research. It is divided into three sections. The first section contains the analysis of the articles in *NRC Handelsblad*, the second section focuses on the analysis of the articles in *De Volkskrant* and in the last section the structural differences in framing between the two newspapers are discussed, assessing whether they fit with the hypotheses. As explained in the previous chapter under the subtitle *rhetorical framing analysis*, this is not a systematized study; a rhetorical framing analysis implies that the frames are constructed and identified during the analysis of the used rhetoric in the texts under scrutiny. The names of the different types of frames in this chapter are proposed by the researcher and are used uniquely for this thesis.

The analysis concerns all the opinion pieces and editorials found in *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* that at least referred to the crisis of EU fundamental values (as it is defined in this thesis), in the year 2017. For *NRC Handelsblad*, 27 articles were analyzed; in *De Volkskrant* there were 22. The translation from Dutch to English of all the parts of the texts that concern the crisis of EU fundamental values can be found in the Appendix, which is available upon request. The articles are numbered chronologically, so the first article concerning this topic that was published in 2017 received the number 1, and this is done separately for both newspapers. The articles will

be referred to in this chapter as “Article [number] NRC” or “Article [number] Volkskrant”.

5.1. The crisis of EU fundamental values in *NRC Handelsblad*

5.1.1. How are the political issues in Poland and Hungary framed?

The first question concerns the articles in *NRC Handelsblad* that focus specifically on the political developments in Poland and Hungary, without paying much attention yet to the position of the EU and the struggles of the Hungarian and Polish governments with the EU. Thus, the question concerns in what manner the articles in the two newspapers comment on the national political developments in these countries. The analysis was aimed at looking whether the texts show that the author is taking an *exclusive* approach or an *inclusive* approach. An exclusive approach is signaled by authors taking the political developments and commenting on them from an ‘outsider’ point of view. They give their opinions on these political developments without paying much attention to questions like why they are happening, what the underlying factors could be or how it is affecting people in the respective countries. A focus on these kinds of questions signify authors taking an inclusive approach.

5.1.1.1. Framing political developments in Poland and Hungary: the inclusive approach

The goal of trying to explain underlying issues that led to- and help maintain the current political situations in Poland and Hungary is a frame that motivates readers to take a more inclusive approach to the issue. It aims to help readers to better understand these situations and sympathize with the Polish and Hungarian people, particularly (but not only) with those who do not agree with those governments. There is a fundamentally important difference between this type of framing and framing the issue as Poland and Hungary being ‘enemies to the West’ or ‘threats to our liberal democratic system’, because the former takes an inclusive approach and the latter an exclusive one. An inclusive approach aims to incorporate the issue into our own knowledge and addresses the importance of solidarity with fellow Europeans.

“But the Poles have manoeuvred themselves towards the far corner of the EU and are looking for engagement again: the Russian growling and the American whimsicality are giving them an unsafe feeling” (Article 2 NRC). This is an example of an inclusive approach. The author points to a possible reason behind political considerations in Poland.

Besides this quote in an article that did not specifically address political developments in Poland and Hungary, only in two other analyzed articles of *NRC Handelsblad* an inclusive approach was identified. First, Article 14 NRC shows a deeper understanding of the political issues in Poland by arguing how the political situation there still relates to the period under the communist regime, which can be seen in the current issues concerning the Polish judiciary. The authors, both scientists in the field of law, explain that it is very likely that the communist legacy, during which times the judiciary obediently followed the line of the government party, still lives on in people like Kaczynski and Orbán (who were, as it happens, both educated as lawyers during the communist regime).

They quote Geert Hofstede, who:

states that in some national cultures, certain frameworks of thought occur relatively more often than in others. These basic ideas, about the organization of state and society, and therefore also about judiciary and judge, are so deeply rooted that they do not disappear in the transition to a different political system, like moving from communism to the ‘western’ constitutional state. (Article 14 NRC)

Interestingly, the authors refrain from consequentially defending the EU’s status quo (the EU is not even mentioned); instead, they simply highlight the importance of this issue and call for action in a way different from an “us or EU versus Poland” manner, in their final sentence: “Politicians, policymakers and commentators will have to recognize/acknowledge where constitutional rhetoric is serving as a camouflage for anti-constitutional power politics [referring to Polish vice-minister of Foreign Affairs Konrad Szymanski who said: “we share the European values, also in the area of the rule of law, but we differ in the interpretation of them”]”.

Article 21 NRC contains an inclusive approach in two ways. First, it portrays anti-elitist sentiments that in Poland and Hungary on which the Polish and Hungarian governments are thriving, saying “they impersonate the broad anti-atmosphere that has advanced in almost all of Europe ...”. The author emphasizes that the problem is not confined to Poland and Hungary, after which he uses the Netherlands as a specific example, citing research that shows that “the support for an authoritarian democracy like in the East is also gaining ground in the Netherlands”. After this, the author proposes a general explanation for these sentiments: the “gradual decay of the lower middle class”. He states that contrary to the upper class, which can take its specialized qualifications across borders, and to the lower class, for which migration is sometimes a necessity, “the

middle class is captive”. “The pluralist model – compromise, live and let live – does not offer the now still working middle class enough comfort. The authoritarian democratic leaders claim to be able to offer this comfort.” Thus, the author of this article shows an inclusive approach in the sense that he clearly brings forward thoughts on what drives motivations of people not only in Poland and Hungary, but also in the Netherlands, in favor of technocrats and authoritarian leadership. An important aspect that could be said to be missing is ideas on how to improve or change this pluralist model.

5.1.1.2. Framing political developments in Poland and Hungary: the exclusive approach (1)

An exclusive approach, consciously or subconsciously, makes the reader understand the issue as if it is not ours as Dutch or European citizens, but that of Poland and Hungary only. The exclusive approach to framing the political developments in Poland and Hungary was found more often in *NRC Handelsblad* than the inclusive approach, namely in 11 different articles. First, in Article 8 NRC, the following is stated: “Europe has some internal differences of opinion. Countries like Poland and Hungary agree more often with Trump than with Germany about many issues”. This quote implies that European countries that are not “like Poland and Hungary” agree more often with Germany than with Trump on many issues. While this might be somewhat true, it ignores the increasing amount of people and politicians in Europe in general that are starting to agree more with Trump than with Germany on many issues, as well as the people in ‘countries like Poland and Hungary’ that do not share this feeling at all”. Article 18 NRC follows the European Court’s verdict that the objections of Poland, Hungary and Slovakia against the EU asylum quota were not legitimate, and that these countries would thus need to comply.

The authors state:

The question could be asked whether we can still speak of a Union, a community with European constitutional values, with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.

This court decision comes from an independent European judicial college with which member states comply. This is after all the core of a constitutional government – it respects the rule of law and thus the court’s verdicts. - Article 18 NRC

The authors (NRC editorial office) take a clear ‘us’ and ‘them’ perspective here.

Article 20 NRC includes the following sentence: “They got all they wanted and still sang the songs of hate even louder. I see a people without excuses.” The comment

marks the end of an article that takes the controversial march in Warsaw in November 2017 (the yearly independence march organized by extreme-right, nationalistic groups) as the cause for bringing up other, worse problems (according to the author) in Poland caused by the government. The author then moves on to show how well Poland is in fact doing (economically). Although the author does show in this article that he did some of his homework on Polish national affairs, claiming to “see a people without excuses” lacks considerable nuance. Article 25 NRC contains a small example of the exclusive approach as a

response to the issues in Poland concerning the judiciary:

I count my blessings ... We [in the Netherlands] can sometimes be unsatisfied by a verdict and sometimes a request for recusal is granted. But about the independence, the impartiality and the authority of the judiciary we luckily do not essentially need to worry. – Article 25 NRC

Where is, though, the essential worrying about these problems among fellow Europeans?

Framing political developments in Poland and Hungary: the exclusive approach (2)

During the analysis a specific frame in which the exclusive approach was identified came forward frequently enough to create a separate category. In four different articles in *NRC Handelsblad* the policies of the Polish and Hungarian government are framed as being a threat to the status quo in (Western) Europe, as an attack on the West in general or on Western values. Article 2 NRC, which will be analyzed more in-depth later in this chapter, carries the title: “Better status quo than chaos and destruction”. Article 5 NRC compares the current right-wing nationalist and anti-liberal developments in Europe with the period of nazi-Germany and even the 19th century, stating how we are witnessing a similar battle against “internationalism, cosmopolitanism, openness to refugees and immigrants and free trade”. “Orbán, just like other elected autocrats in former communist countries, is a proponent of ‘illiberal democracy’”. The author’s approach is not fully exclusive, since he recognizes the problem lies not only with politicians like Orbán and Kaczynski, but also Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders and Donald Trump. However, he speaks of how these politicians pose “an existential threat for the West”, and how “the most dangerous enemies of the West are people who like to portray themselves as the saviors of Western civilization [thus the mentioned politicians]”. A short citation of Article 10 NRC in a subtler way fits into this category too. In this article, that reads as a hymn of praise to French president Emmanuel Macron’s first appearance

at the European Council of EU government leaders, the author writes: “Against Hungary and Poland, who want money from Brussels but are violating democratic values, Macron said: “Europe is not a supermarket, we share a destiny”.” Even though Macron’s quote speaks of sharing a destiny together, the comment also reads as ‘them, the Hungarians and Poles, who are profiting from us but not cooperating with us’. The final example in this category is Article 23 NRC: “In the West the popularity of Kaczynski and Orbán is seen as a step towards Putin- or Erdogan-style authoritarian democracy, or as a choice against Europe.” That is indeed partly true, although probably more people than just the people who vote for extreme-rightwing parties in the Netherlands understand the anti-EU sentiments in Poland and Hungary, for instance for anti-neoliberalist reasons.

Then:

Kaczynski and Orbán are indeed anti-Brussels. But both cannot really be anti-EU. In Hungary 67 percent supports the EU. Before Brexit this was not even 60 percent. In Poland 88 percent is pro, while this was 81 percent in 2015. - Article 23 NRC

The author does follow-up with an explanation for the anti-EU sentiments, which the author claims is often sought in the migration issue. While this is indeed an issue that raises concern with many people in Poland and Hungary, an important explanation of the high support for the EU is not mentioned here. The feeling regarding the EU that the governments of Poland and Hungary voice, is that they are against further ‘meddling’ in their national affairs from outside. Furthermore, they feel they are not treated on an equal basis with older EU countries like Germany. Many Poles and Hungarians support the EU in the sense that they want to be a part of it; this does not mean they agree with the developments that are currently happening there. Now the absence of this can indeed be explained by the fact that this article focuses around the admiration of the Polish and Hungarian current leaders for interbellum leaders in their countries, but still: the concept of framing theory is based on journalists making choices to emphasize certain aspects of a story and leave others out, and the question what kind of consequences this can have. In this case, the choice is on the issue on the national levels of Poland and Hungary, and not on relevant critical remarks of these countries towards the EU for instance.

5.1.1.3. Framing political developments in Poland and Hungary: choice of words

In this section a closer look is taken at the authors’ specific use of words to frame the political developments in Poland and Hungary. The analysis of these specific use of

frames led to different categories, with each having its own implications. These will be explained and discussed in this section. All the examples found in this section can incidentally be related to the exclusive approach to the topic that was described in the previous section.

The first type of framing found in the pieces of the texts concerning the political trends in Poland/Hungary is a *violence frame*. Terms such as “trying to destroy liberal democracy” imply violent motivations of actors (politicians in this case) towards liberal democracy. Words like “destroy”, ‘attack’, ‘threatening (used in an active sense)’ point to this type of framing. The use of these type of words have the effect of adding drama to certain events, adding a heavy-weighting or even sensational tone to them. Examples were found in four different articles of *NRC Handelsblad*. First, in Article 3 NRC, an example that speaks for itself: “(...) now that in countries like Hungary, Turkey, Poland and the US politicians are in power that are consciously and purposefully trying to destroy liberal democracy.” In Article 7 NRC: “How is it possible that a country that fully committed itself to EU-membership has chosen to point its middle finger [Dutch expression for ‘giving the finger’] to EU-values and gets away with it?” The following examples have a slightly lighter tone, but still portray Polish and Hungarian political developments as a type of ‘attack’: “Hungary has changed into an authoritarian state and the government is not making any effort to do even as little as hide its collision course towards ‘Brussels’” (Article 7 NRC).

Another example:

Anti-Putin Putinists? Yes, they exist and are on the rise. Look at Polish leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who hates Russia and wants to stay a member of the EU, but who uses every opportunity he gets to challenge Europe. - Article 17 NRC

In the same article the following was stated: “this works well for Porosjenko. As long as Kaczynski takes up arms against Brussels, he can continue his old way with his new ancien regime” (Article 17 NRC).

The final example:

In a few days time President Putin and Prime-Minister Orbán through this way clarified that they, together with the Polish leader Kaczynski, are the flag-bearers of the authoritarian democratic current that has opened fire against the pluralist democratic establishment. - Article 21 NRC

The following type of frame is called the *ignorance frame*, pointing to the author’s choice to relate Polish/Hungarian government actions to ignorance, appearing he suspects

these actions to come from a lack of understanding of things that the author does understand. The most prominent example was found in Article 4 NRC: “in a weird kind of kamikaze-action, the politicians in power in Poland recently tried everything in their power to prevent their compatriot Donald Tusk, president of the European Council since 2014, from being re-elected”. And, concerning the same topic: “The Polish government let resentful sentiments prevail over preserving an influential post in Brussels.” The Polish government has its own, mainly electoral reasons for not wanting one of its main political opponents (Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council) to be in an important position in the EU. Now of course one can condemn the Polish government for the lack of validity of those reasons; stating however that it was a “weird kind of kamikaze-action” implies that the authors (NRC editorial office) of this article find the Polish government’s actions impossible to understand. Their understanding is that “the Polish government let resentful sentiments prevail over preserving an influential post in Brussels”, implying it was emotion instead of reason that pushed the Polish government towards doing this. Of course, there might very well be emotion involved, yet probably this emotion is largely politically motivated. Other examples were authors using words like “half-heartedness” as being “typical for almost all post-Soviet states” (Article 17 NRC), assigning weakness to Hungary claiming the country “fears pluralist democracy” (Article 21 NRC), and the following sentences found in Article 18

NRC:

This court decision comes from an independent European judicial college with which member states comply. This is after all the core of a constitutional government – it respects the rule of law and thus the court’s verdicts.

The authors (NRC editorial office) take a rather judgmental tone by using the words “after all”, which seems to imply that this is something that of course, every sane government simply accepts.

The use of *sarcasm* often sounds degrading and can be intentionally demeaning. It can be closely linked to the ignorance frame. The use of sarcasm implies a lack of common sense among the subject to which the sarcasm is directed, so it has been categorized as a subcategory under the ignorance frame. Sometimes, as can be seen in the first two examples below, it concerns subtle sarcasm in addressing factual events.

Both of the following examples come from Article 22 NRC:

Orbán speaks of the “Soros-plan” that is meant to force Hungary to also become an immigrant country. An alliance shaped in Brussels, the “Soros state” would be working on that. This is not on internet forums, but on the website of the Hungarian government.

(...) Orbán will be up for his third consecutive term next year and his colleague’s from the government party PiS in Poland have started following his script quite well.

Two other and clearer examples of the use of sarcasm were found, first in Article 23 NRC: “There is a reason why his nickname is naczelnik: Leader with a capital L.” About Polish PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Lastly, in Article 25 NRC: “So this is what happens when populism is allowed to proliferate: the independence and impartiality of judges becomes drastically reduced and the importance of the role of the judge and his authority is explained away.” The sarcasm lies in the words: “so this is what happens when ...”.

5.1.2. Framing the position of the EU in the EU fundamental value crisis: *NRC Handelsblad*

The second main question concerns the response from the EU towards its member states Poland and Hungary, that are, as described in chapter two, threatening the fundamental values of the EU. As was argued in both chapters two and three, however, the issues are not as straightforward as they sometimes appear to be. It is not simply an ‘EU versus the Polish and Hungarian government’-situation. The issues highlight fundamental problems within the EU, like the democratic deficit, the lack of a European Public Sphere and the fact that consequently, Euroscepticism is rising throughout Europe and not only in Poland and Hungary. What makes these two countries to be distinctive cases at the moment, is that their governments have put the EU in a position in which it urgently needs to respond to these problems.

The same two dimensions will be used in this section as in section 5.1.1, with the first part focusing more on the substance of the articles and the second part on the specific type of rhetoric used to describe the events. In section 5.1.1, the first part of the analysis contained a general distinction between an inclusive and an exclusive approach, and this distinction will be used here too. Here, the inclusive approach is characterized by articles emphasizing broader aspects of the issues surrounding the EU and the European

integration process concerning the crisis of EU fundamental values. These are articles, or passages in articles, that confirm that the issues with the Polish and Hungarian governments in the EU can indeed be called a crisis- because it raises fundamental questions about how the EU is made up and towards what kind of future it is heading. The exclusive approach is characterized by texts that do not raise these questions and stick to an 'EU versus Poland and Hungary' frame, in which the emphasis lies on the importance of defending the status quo against nationalism and populism. Furthermore, advocating a so called 'multi-speed Europe' falls within this exclusive approach since this idea proposes to exclude certain countries in further integration. Finally, an important feature in this section is the question how the articles portray the position of the Netherlands itself. Is it portrayed as being part of the EU, emphasizing that the Dutch readers should feel involved in these issues too? Or is it portrayed as standing largely outside of these issues, describing how this is a problem of the EU and not necessarily of the Netherlands?

5.1.2.1. The position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values: the inclusive approach

A clear inclusive approach did not come forward in the articles of NRC Handelsblad. In some articles, the authors did try to emphasize the crucial importance of the issues concerning the EU's fundamental values and the Polish and Hungarian governments for the future of Europe. However, the implications of the issues discussed by the authors do not go beyond sending out general warnings for the future of the EU or the political future in Poland and Hungary.

To illustrate, Article 7 NRC contains the following passages:

The EU is carrying a heavy responsibility. Now that all internal opposition has vanished or is at least heavily weakened, the EU is one of the few remaining forces that can provide a counterbalance to the Hungarian government. EU-membership as the final safeguard for the Hungarian rule of law.

The instruments are present. Only the political will to use them is still missing. Sticking and plastering does not work. Of course, the fear of inspiring more Eurosceptic forces plays a role. But the real reason for Euroscepticism is an EU that does not defend its own values and does not put up the slightest obstacle to an autocratic regime.

The urgency of the issue is emphasized, here both for Hungary and the EU, but a real inclusive approach cannot be seen here. The author does not dive into deeper fundamental

questions about the issues and furthermore: the EU appears to be portrayed as an outside force instead of emphasizing that ‘we’, as Dutch citizens, are part of it.

Two more articles contain examples of this kind, starting with Article 15 NRC:

The EU is an organization of countries that underwrite the values of the democratic constitutional state. (...) The EU demands respect for these values from countries with whom it engages in trade agreements or for whom it provides emergency aid. This is hard to defend when its own members trample these values.

So again here the urgency of the issue is emphasized, but the author does not go beyond this. In Article 19 NRC, the author starts by explaining that the EU cannot really intervene in national affairs, and when it does (financial crises, or once in the Netherlands about traffic jams obstructing economic growth) “the world immediately is too small”. Meaning it is not accepted. She appears to voice the opinion that the sanctity of national sovereignty in the EU is problematic sometimes. But the two reasons she gives why according to her “the following years the focus on European values will increase”, fit in the category of the exclusive approach.

One more article puts forward some sort of self-criticism regarding the defense of the liberal democratic state, stating: “To win the battle the liberal forces need to acknowledge their own blind spots” (Article 26 NRC). However, the author sees the neglect of the “state order thanks to which they [belief in self-regulating markets and world citizenship] exist” as a blind spot both at the right-liberal and left-liberal side of the political spectrum. The article largely points towards advocating a defense of the status quo and seeing a problem with how this is currently executed.

5.1.2.2. The position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values: the exclusive approach

When it comes to describing and commenting on the position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values, an exclusive approach was far more often identified in NRC Handelsblad than an inclusive one. Questions in light of what this finding means regarding the newspaper’s view on the issue, what this view might imply concerning the way Dutch people think about the EU, Poland and Hungary and whether this can be seen as problematic for the EU’s future or not, will be returned to later in this chapter (section 5.3) and in the Discussion chapter. In this section, examples will be provided that show what the exclusive approach means with regards to the portrayal of the position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values.

Two particular ways of framing an exclusive approach were identified: first, portraying the EU as being in a struggle with the Polish and Hungarian governments who are threatening the status quo, without regards for underlying European-wide issues. Part of this approach is also portraying the Polish and Hungarian political situations as a threat to national interests of the Netherlands, or ‘Western-European’ countries, instead of emphasizing that we should be concerned for fellow Europeans. The first example proposes the idea of rewarding the ‘good’ (member states) and punishing the ‘bad’: “Praise with the good, scold with the bad. What if this was a leading principle in Brussels, would the EU function better?” (Article 11 NRC). Furthermore, in the same article, Commissioner Günther Oettinger’s views come to the fore:

It is known about Oettinger that he likes the idea about ‘conditionality’ in the EU budget. Why should it not be allowed to curtail (Eastern-European) countries that refuse to host refugees? Or what if they are hopelessly behind with necessary structural reforms (France) or disregarding basic principles surrounding the rule of law?

The article is mainly about the question of the budget of the EU. A Dutch left-wing EP (Paul Tang, PvdA [labour party of the Netherlands]) is quoted saying that it is “not justifiable that still two-thirds of the European budget is used for agricultural- and support funds.”

Then:

Tang on Wednesday called it “good news that the Commission dares to advocate ‘quid-pro-quo’ in the EU”. Poland, that is on collision course with the EU about political appointment of judges and about refugees, is the biggest receiver of EU funding. Also Hungary, where Prime-minister Orbán seems to be permanently campaigning against the EU, is abundantly supported.

So what is put forward here is the sense of injustice among countries like the Netherlands that they are funding countries whose governments take negative stances towards the EU, or engage in practices that are contrary to EU values. The frame of ‘country versus country’ is portrayed here. The defense of national interests appears to be seen by the author as more valuable than advancing European integration.

The last paragraph of Article 13 NRC, which concerned the issues with the judiciary in Poland and the EU’s rule of law procedure initiated by the Commission, sounds as follows:

Of course every sovereign state has a lot of room to manoeuvre in organizing its own community and it should not be forgotten that the PiS government was

democratically elected. However, democracy in the European Union means more than going to the ballot box once every four years.

This seems a rather condescending, didactic tone. This way the Netherlands, or more positively interpreted: we, the EU is put forward as knowing perfectly well what democracy in the EU is all about, contrary to countries like Poland. The article does further explain, continuing:

by becoming a member of the EU Poland is not only eligible for European subsidies, but it also committed itself to the values of the EU, including an independent judiciary. The Commission deserves full support in its attempts to make Poland aware of this obligation.

So, *NRC Handelsblad* (this is a commentary piece of the NRC editorial office) openly states that the Commission deserves support here, but it does not move on to suggest how it is possible to engage in this support. The same thing can be seen in Article 15 NRC, in which the author urges Frans Timmermans to follow up his words with deeds, because “the credibility of the Commission is at stake”. Especially after the two previous, basically identical ‘recommendations’ to the one on July 26th (2017) that the Commission did in the past two years, under which Poland did not budge and the Commission left it at that:

The Commission and the member states have stood idly by in the past years while Hungary transformed to an authoritarian, illiberal democracy under Viktor Orbán. Orbán has announced that the potential launching of the second phase of the article 7 procedure will be blocked. More than just a sharp condemnation of Poland through engaging in the first phase will not happen. – Article 15 NRC

The final sentence of Article 15 NRC: “The Polish judiciary and opposition deserve strong support”. What this support should look like remains unclear.

Article 16 NRC contains a small example of the ‘us versus them’ frame:

The Czech Republic together with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia forms the Visegrad group. But the political collision course of Poland and Hungary against Brussels does not please the two little ones. ... Their interests are in Euroland, not with illiberal regimes that will surely be receiving less subsidies from Brussels soon because of their political idleness.

In the last paragraph of Article 19 NRC, along the same lines:

Brexit forces Europeans to close ranks and prevent more watering down and retreat from happening. In the current grim international climate this irrevocably leads to the question: do we each go our separate ways, or do we stand strong together for democracy and the rule of law? The reconfirmation of these kind of basic principles make the EU less flexible when it comes to fundamental cases. For those who only want the cherries of the pie, there is no place in the EU. There is a precedent now, the EU will be quicker to say: until here and no further, use

article 50 if you like. All attention will now go to the democratic rot in Poland and Hungary, which we tolerated all this time. After Brexit we have to do something with it. This will go in stages. And it will provide for new crises, like after Catalonia. But it is unavoidable.

This paragraph is rather vague in its comments. Especially the sentence about the democratic rot in Poland and Hungary that ‘we’ (who?) tolerated all this time, is interesting. Not all Europeans tolerated this, for sure also many Polish and Hungarians did not.

Multi-speed Europe

Article 22 NRC proposes to expand the EU’s mechanisms:

towards less radical, more easily inflicted sanctions. For example, by looking at the EU-subsidies, as was advised recently by the AIV [Dutch Advisory Council for International Issues) to the Dutch government. Hungary is a big net-receiver of EU funding – why would the EU fund the construction of an illiberal state in her midst?”.

These political arguments underlie the idea of a “multi-speed Europe”, in which a core of member states would continue with further integration on some areas where other member states are unwilling to do so. This idea is advocated in some of the articles in NRC Handelsblad as well. In Article 2 NRC, as a solution to prevent “the splintering of Europe”, the author agrees with Merkel that a “core” of Europe should “pull Europe out of the mud”.

Because that’s the only option in times of the G-zero (referring to the absence of a cooperative G20). Because repairing the status quo is a thousand times better than chaos and destruction.

Because, according to the author: “The question is who becomes the boss here: them [foreign powers, referring to Russia and the US], or Europeans themselves?”.

Article 6 NRC advocates the idea that EU countries can work together in smaller groups on certain topics, however emphasizing that it should not be the case “that countries can shop at will in a Grand Warehouse of European Agreements and exchange rules that are less popular at a particular moment”.

Liberal democracy versus nationalism

The same frame as the one identified in section 5.1, namely that of defending the liberal democratic “status quo” against dangerous nationalist-populism, is seen in the rhetoric in

the articles of *NRC Handelsblad* concerning EU intervention as well. Article 6 NRC contained

the following passages:

The rise of nationalist-populism is not only a threat for the EU. Brexit and Trump are conjuring up a response. Passionate Europeans have recognized that the EU needs to be actively defended. Small pro-EU demonstrations in Germany and a flock of European flags on the Museumplein in Amsterdam are indications of that. Victories for pro-European politicians in the Netherlands and Austria have shown that a populist victory is far from certain.

Many Syrians are jealous of European peace, half the world is jealous of European prosperity. The rule of law in the EU and the so often denounced EU-regulations provide the citizens with protection and certainty. It is worth the effort to stand up for those achievements. Especially these days.

In Article 7 NRC:

The European Union has transformed from a platform of economic cooperation to a community of values. Explicitly confirming that is even more important in a time where the moral leadership of the ‘free west’ over other economic superpowers is disputed.

Apparently for the authors, not so long ago the moral leadership of the ‘free west’ was undisputed.

Article 26 NRC is a strong and almost regardless defense of the “liberal democratic state”, in the sense that it is portrayed as something that is so valuable that it urgently needs to be defended. Its weaknesses are not spoken of:

Because of the situation in Poland and Hungary we often speak these days of the “crisis of the liberal democracy”. We can be more precise. It is a crisis of the liberal, democratic state. ... The state brought its subjects security: a primary need after chaos and civil war.

(...) In the eighteenth century those states became more liberal, with judicial equality, separation of powers and legal certainty. In the nineteenth and twentieth century they became, moreover, more democratic: the people obtained suffrage, consultation and citizenship – and they could demand redistribution of wealth and public services.

This introduction to the value of the liberal democratic state then culminates in the following paragraph:

We are heading towards new collisions in 2018 between ‘liberal’ legal state and ‘democratic’ will of the people. European commissioner Frans Timmermans this week signed the launch of a battle between a ‘Western-European block’ that upholds the rule of law and separation of powers, and the Polish government that believes it can dismantle those with support of its voters. In Hungary Viktor Orbán

without shame pledges for the “illiberal democracy”, read: the freedom to violate human rights.

So again, this shows an ‘us’ (the Western-European block) versus ‘them’ (Poland, in this case) frame. The final example for this section, Article 27 NRC, focuses around and comments on the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs’ remarks on the issue and the “fully justified” intention of the European Commission to use Article 7 against Poland.

If it will get this far is doubtful. The Hungarian Prime-Minister Orbán, who defies fundamental rules of the constitutional state in his country too, has already threatened to veto possible measures against Poland. ... It is leading to increased tension between the ‘old’ EU and a few Eastern-European countries that joined from 2004 onwards ... And now there is Zijlstra with his fear for the end of the current European Union. It is good that the new minister of Foreign Affairs has mentioned the problem and at the same time drawn lines. It has to be clear that the European Union’s fundamental values cannot be haggled with. It is a community of values for a reason.

In these sentences a slightly condescending tone can be identified, with the authors (NRC editorial office) speaking of ‘a few Eastern-European countries’ and stating “it is a community of values for a reason”.

5.2. The Crisis of EU fundamental values in *De Volkskrant*

For *De Volkskrant* the same approach is taken as for *NRC Handelsblad*. The same initial questions were used as the ones asked in section 5.1. However, the significant differences that were found in the way the analyzed articles of *De Volkskrant* reported on the crisis of EU fundamental values have lead to some additional types of framing that were identified, while some types of framing that were identified in *NRC Handelsblad* were not found in *De Volkskrant*. Section 5.3 will come back to the question what the most important differences are in the way the two newspapers framed the crisis of EU fundamental values.

The translated articles of *De Volkskrant* can also be found in the Appendix in chronological order throughout 2017. The articles will be referred to as: “Article [number] VK”. A total of 22 opinion pieces or editorials concerning- or at least addressing the topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values were found in the archives for 2017.

5.2.1. How are the political issues in Poland and Hungary framed?

5.2.1.1. Framing of the political issues in Poland and Hungary: the inclusive approach

In *De Volkskrant* a wide array of examples falling under the inclusive approach were identified. Arguably as a consequence of that, many of the analyzed articles include the perspective of the EU and therefore many of them will be discussed in the section on the question how the position of the EU is framed with regards to the crisis of EU fundamental values.

The first example in this section is found in Article 7 VK. This article, that uses thoughts of French political philosopher Claude Lefort to interpret the 2nd round presidential election candidates in France, clearly includes the rise of populist forces in all of Europe:

In a systematic and fundamental way they [Poland, Hungary, Putin and Erdogan] reject the pluralistic nature of the political community. For Marine Le Pen- who recently took a coffee in Russia with Putin- essentially goes the same, just like for the populist parties and movements in Western-Europe and the US.

In Article 8 VK, even though it does not dive very deeply into the issue, a European perspective is taken:

This is what is most painful about the Polish approach: their ‘reforms’ play exactly into the hands of their archenemy, Vladimir Putin. Who has always claimed that Europe is measuring with two different yardsticks. The Polish developments will, just like the lack of European solidarity in some new member states regarding refugees, further motivate other EU member states to continue cooperation in smaller core groups- exactly what proud countries like Poland do not want. In short, the Polish government shoots itself in the foot- and the EU.

More clear examples follow in other articles of *De Volkskrant*. Article 11 VK notes how it was the then ruling Polish political party Civic Platform that began with creating issues concerning the Constitutional Tribunal in 2015. There is one paragraph in this article that fits well in this section and shows a clear inclusive approach:

Timmermans is bringing out the strongest quality in the Poles: offering resistance. My first visit to Poland was in the summer of 1982, during the martial law. It struck me that the Poles were openly revolting more than the DDR-citizens without martial law. In 1990 I lived in Warsaw as a correspondent and saw how the Polish Pope, in the Netherlands mockingly called ‘Popie Jopie’, had a powerful division: 35 million Poles. Poland demolished the Soviet-Union. In the European Parliament I was in the group with PiS-members. Their delegation splintered into groups, with fights everywhere. A Polish Diet. But as soon as the Polish interests, often monetary, were on the agenda, they formed a solid block. – Article 11 VK

In Article 12 VK:

There is not by any means unanimous support for the policy of Kaczynski's PiS. The opposition is manifesting itself clearly by using a Polish flag with the EU-logo over it. In the west of the country and in big cities, the resistance is most clearly present. ... Our conversations with people here are dominated by outrage about the way in which the clique of the conservative government and the catholic church are bringing back 'old times'".

This was in a reader's letter that was published by *De Volkskrant* as "letter of the day", in which an insider's view connected to Polish sentiments is shown.

Framing of the political issues in Poland and Hungary: the inclusive approach (2)

The two articles containing the best examples of the inclusive view were Article 13 VK and Article 14 VK. They are put in a separate section because they interestingly and clearly contrast with the "Polish and Hungarian political situations as attack on the West" (described in section 5.1.1.2: the exclusive approach (2)) frame identified in *NRC Handelsblad*. This distinction will be elaborated on in section 5.3.

The first of the two articles fits well into this section of the inclusive approach, and the second takes a fully inclusive approach as well, though part of it concerns the topic of EU intervention. The author of Article 13 VK condemns how the media often treat all Poles and Hungarians as being the same, as if they are all somehow responsible for and connected to the practices of their governments. "In Western-European media, on Twitter and on Facebook there is often talk again of conservative Poles and reactionary Hungarians".

Furthermore:

Earlier this summer we could read that 'the Poles' have to realize that what they are doing within the EU is really not accepted. Dirk Jan Eppink instead shouted that 'the Poles' are completely in their right. But what Poles exactly? In September 2015 37,6 percent of the Poles that casted their votes (50,9 percent) voted for the current government party, which is trying to take down the judiciary. Are we dealing with the Polish national character here or with 'less decent' politics? – Article 13 VK

The author continues with arguing how this stubborn focus on the idea of a "national character", which he equates with how people can believe in astrology, aids towards portraying an exaggerated emphasis on a perceived East-West divide:

Who laughs about horoscopes, should try paying attention to the similarities with recent views about the divide between Western- and Eastern-Europe. The Christian, conservative, nationalist, coal-burning East cannot get along with the West, where they love clean energy, multiculturalism, same-sex marriages and gay-parades. Now let the disappearing of the taboo on homosexuality precisely be

a development that I witnessed in Eastern-Europe. A quarter-century ago there were almost no Eastern-Europeans that were publicly gay – nowadays, in the big cities there are quite a lot.

In the following paragraph the author argues that this excessive focus on national identity and character leads to views that are missing the real point:

There are cultural differences between Western- and Eastern Europe, between Northern- and Southern-Europe, between Northeast and Southeast-Europe, however: who raises those to be explanatory models, is quickly taking a run with the facts. Views in which Eastern-Europeans are simply reactionary people embezzle what is really worrisome, namely the persistent heritage of a system in which the judiciary was an extension of the political rulers (the managers of the Soviet-Union) for almost half a century (from the late forties to 1989). The Slovakian ex-dissident Zuzana Szatmáry said in 1997: ‘unfortunately it is still far too important who wins the elections here’. Twenty years later judicial systems are still being ‘cleaned’ by political parties. In 2017 it can appear as if ‘the Hungarian people’ have connected their fate with that of Victor Orbán. In reality, we have set through seven years of unscrupulous political games. – Article 13 VK

The author of Article 14 VK problematizes that “different from what many media suggest, Poland and Hungary are not representative for Eastern-Europe”. He emphasizes for instance how “the non-religious Czech Republic does not have much affinity with the ultra-Catholicism of the PiS”, that “The roads of Poland and Hungary sometimes diverge as well” (providing an example), that “Above Poland there are three small republics that are even more difficult to interpret from an ‘East and West’ perspective, namely Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” (a statement that he then explains), and that “It speaks for itself that Romania and Slovenia have again different political characteristics and suffer from different issues” (with one example each).

He then describes a fundamental underlying issue in Europe:

Nevertheless, it will remain tempting to throw everything east of Germany, Austria and Italy onto one incorrigible reactionary pile. The Estonian sociologist Marju Lauristin argued in 2007 already that such a lack of nuance is rooted in the age-old images of the barbarian backyard of Europe: ‘The entire post-communist transition process for EU-accession has been a constant memory of the one-sided, vertical relationship between mentors and students. The new member states were regarded with suspicion, their values, way of life and interests seen as odd and non-European’. Apparently this is still the case. – Article 14 VK

Ending with:

Other countries in the region would be quite right to account Kaczynski and Orbán for threatening to saddle the entire ‘Wild East’ with an image problem with their provoking behavior. The best they can do is move to the opposite, liberal-

democratic side. If only to prevent all the exaggerated rhetoric on an ‘Ost-West-Streit’ from becoming an *isetaätuv ennustus* (Estonian for ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’).

5.2.1.2. *Framing of the political issues in Poland and Hungary: the exclusive approach*

There are less examples of the use of the exclusive approach concerning this topic in the articles of *De Volkskrant* than there were in *NRC Handelsblad*, and the examples found for this section are less clearly and strongly exclusive than those in *NRC Handelsblad*.

The first example concerns Article 2 VK:

In Hungary and Poland we can see where a populist way of governing leads to, in which the ‘will of the people’, in the shape of majority support, is more important than democratic institutions themselves.

This sentence hints towards an exclusive approach in the sense that it condemns populism and arguably defends the status quo of the democratic institutions. However, it also appears that in mentioning the “populist way of governing” the author refers to the increase of populist ways of governing in general, not only by parties identified as populist parties and thus not only concerning Poland and Hungary. This is reflected in the final sentence of the article: “Populism matters. But how mainstream-parties in Europe react, is way more important.”

Another example can be found in Article 6 VK, in two passages of the article.

First:

Hungary, Europe’s own Turkey. A nation where the freedom of the press is suffering, where authorities play games with basic rights of refugees, where Roma-hate and antisemitism flourish, where the state of the rule of law often leads to worrisome speculation among the opposition and on the international stage, where critics of the regime use the words ‘backsliding’ and ‘autocracy’ and where on the other hand European values of which they are so proud in Brussels do not always come to expression.

Referring to Hungary as if these issues relate to the entire country and everyone in it, shows the exclusive approach.

The same can be seen in another passage in this article:

Elshout speaks of a culture war. A struggle between world images. A struggle that was brought into the European Union when the former communist brethren after the fall of the wall were emotionally taken into the arms [of the EU]. Because the

Polish are no fans of the Europe of cosmopolitanism and universal human rights either.

5.2.2. Framing the position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values: *De Volkskrant*

A similar approach to the topic that was described in section 5.2.1 for *NRC Handelsblad* is also taken here regarding the analyzed articles of *De Volkskrant*. What is different in this section is that for the inclusive approach taken by the authors of the articles concerning this topic, a distinction is made between different main categories, while for the exclusive approach this is not the case. For the analyzed articles in *NRC Handelsblad*, this was the other way around.

5.2.2.1. The position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values: the inclusive approach

The first article that offers an inclusive approach to this topic is Article 2 VK, which evolves around one main argument; after addressing shortly the issues with the governments of Poland and Hungary, he states: “Populism matters. But how mainstream-parties in Europe react, is way more important”. The author of this article claims that “(...) the mainstream parties have taken over the themes of populists, out of fear to lose votes”. He uses examples from different European countries to illustrate this. Article 3 VK contains a small example arguing that it is “irresponsible” that “(...) a fundamental discussion about the EU did not get off the ground” in the Dutch national parliamentary elections, mentioning the political situations in Poland and Hungary among the main reasons why he deems this irresponsible.

Article 4 VK takes a general approach to the EU, describing that according to the author:

Long the illusion was that Brussels’ drawing boards would deliver more and more European unity. We now know that the EU is a union of states driven together by the Cold War. Juncker celebrates the unique European diversity of culture, ideas and traditions in his scenario’s. That sounds better than divisiveness. But imposing rules from Brussels is barely possible. Commissioner Timmermans has meanwhile experienced that with grinding teeth {knarsetandend}, through conflicts with Poland and Hungary. (...) My European future-scenario is thus modest.

Article 6 VK starts by mentioning that the European Commission launched a legal procedure against Hungary (“again – towards Hungary there has already so often been

groaned, complained and waded with legal procedures from Brussels that a person tends to lose count”), but then shifts the view to the Netherlands. She argues that “elsewhere in Europe, [Orbán] can count on support and sympathy” for instance from the largest Dutch government party (VVD, mainstream-rightwing), of which “Parliament member Anne Mulder, Europe-spokesman of the VVD, advocated on Monday on NPO Radio 1 [Dutch radio station] that the Netherlands should form partnerships with countries like Sweden, the Baltic states and Hungary and Poland”. The point the author wants to address is that the Dutch government carries responsibility in the matter, for instance by looking for Eurosceptic allies in Europe

and clearly preferring them over Emmanuel Macron:

a proponent of a European minister for the euro and a European army – cases Mulder addressed as if they were dirty words which you could not decently express on the morning radio. Then rather the Hungary of Orbán, he explained to the surprised presenter, because ‘of course it is not perfect there, but at least they are very careful concerning European integration’. – Article 6 VK

In a piece that mainly concerns national politics, the author of Article 9 VK also frequently touches upon fundamental questions around politics in general, making a negative

example out of the EU:

Look to Europe to learn how not to do it. Twenty-seven countries with as much traditions and histories, in the east the memory of the Soviet-Union, in the west the colonial background. Deep divisiveness about migration and asylum was masked with high ideals and European values, which were beautiful as long as there was no asylum seeker at the gate. When that did happen, the enthusiasm about the shared values was soon over. The apotheosis came this week with the European Commission launching sanctions against Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, who do not want to accept their asylum quota.”

The author argues that the flaw in the development of EU policymaking concerning fundamental values lies in a lack of debate preceding it. “That crucial process is missing when politics is silenced through values, fundamental principles and rights”.

Article 16 VK concerns a diplomatic issue created by the Dutch ambassador in Hungary who had openly voiced his criticism on the Hungarian government in an interview.

It mentions the issues concerning EU fundamental values in the following passage:

And so it happened. We are stuck with an unpleasant and completely unnecessary friction between two member states. As if there is not already enough dissent in

the Union. The Hungarian government, that already has little regard for rules and agreements of the Union and uses quite lewd language itself, suddenly got the perfect opportunity to defend itself in strong tones against inappropriate meddling in her sovereign, domestic affairs.

Article 17 VK also shortly mentions Poland and Hungary. It does not clearly show an inclusive approach, however the author emphasizes how Austria and Italy are having similar issues with rightwing-populism:

After all, the counterproductive consequences of the German image-politics in 2015 are clear. ... Because Merkel did not confer with the neighbor countries, the entire Central- and Eastern-European block (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) has become one large rightwing-populist block. To which also Austria can be counted, where an extreme-right coalition is in the making. And in Italy Berlusconi is already crowing around again for the next elections.

A similar concern is expressed by the author of Article 18 VK:

Instead of that [following up on the FPÖ's original wish to leave the EU] Austria, which will have the EU presidency in the second half of 2018, aspires for a strong adjustment of the European agenda. The first point of which will be setting up control on the outside borders of Europe, the second point combatting terrorism. Since Austria will be joining forces with the Visegrad-group of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, such an adjustment of European priorities is not at all prospectless.- Thus the right-wing populism of Central-Europe challenges the hegemony of Germany and France in the European Union. This can lead to a lot of unrest. But political struggle within the Union is preferable over the breaking up of the Union.

A different view on EU sanctioning

The articles of *De Volkskrant* in which EU sanctions concerning Poland and Hungary are discussed, often approach this topic from views that diverge at least in some sense from the framework of defending the status quo, which often came forward in *NRC Handelsblad*. The first example of this is found in Article 10 VK, which is a response to a new law in

Poland giving the government a grip on appointing new judges:

This law marks the end, according to the European Commission, of the independence of the judiciary in Poland. Brussels now threatens to take this to the European Court of Justice or to launch a procedure that can even lead to Poland losing its voting rights in the EU.- Hopefully it will not get this far, because Poland is part of the European family, despite all the cultural differences. Brussels would thus be wise to show understanding for the hypersensitivity of the Poles for anything that looks like a dictate from Brussels, given their experience with Moscow.- But it is also in the interest of the Poles themselves that the EU keeps the PiS-government from repeating the mistakes of the communist system.

Nobody longs back to the ‘telephone-jurisdiction’ from the old system, in which a call of the party to the judge was enough.” Thus, the inclusive approach in this passage lies in the nuance that is added to the issue, and clearly stating that “Poland is part of the European family”.

Article 15 VK is a response to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker’s state of the Union speech. At the end of the article EU intervention in member states’ affairs is problematized:

Also under the chapter Judiciary Juncker cannot resist the temptation to combine practical proposals for combatting terrorism with interference in the internal affairs of Poland and Hungary. Commissioner Timmermans needs to ‘ensure stricter adherence to the democratic principles’ in those countries. - That is a noble goal, but Juncker and Timmermans should leave that to the government leaders of the member states. They determine the course and the European Commission executes. This is hard to accept for ego’s like Juncker and Timmermans, but it is the right division of tasks to get something done in this fragmented Europe.

In Article 19 VK, the author includes a Polish view concerning EU intervention, emphasizing that the EU is not entrenched in a struggle with the full country of Poland, but that there are many Polish people concerned with their own national government as well:

In Warsaw Timmermans is put away as an imperialist from Brussels, who would be searching to punish Poland for not taking up Muslim refugees. But the Poles that protested en masse this year against the seizure of the PiS against the judges and the critical media, see the European Union as their ally in their battle to strengthen the Polish democracy.

The author furthermore does state that the European Union “cannot accept” what “populists in power” are doing in mainly Poland and Hungary, but does express a need for caution with sanctions, clearly expressed in the following sentence: “Both for the Poles as for the other member states a compromise without humiliating and divisive sanctions is by far the best solution.” A Polish perspective is mentioned in Article 12 VK as well: “European sanctions will be experienced as opposition by the people here, the Polish people could more than ever use our European support”

Article 21 VK starts by urging people or politicians to more actively defend the EU’s fundamental values, for instance by “defending the rule of law against populist threats”, because “the rule of law is the most valuable possession of the EU and a

fundamental part of her DNA”. However the author adds a considerable nuance to this thought, viewed from a European integration perspective and emphasizing the importance of acknowledging Polish and Hungarian citizens as being fellow European citizens:

But we have to acknowledge that not all illiberal developments are equal. It is not smart to put Poland and Hungary in the same basket and thereby stimulate an ‘alliance of the despised’. The European project is about integration, not isolation. We need to be careful not to punish countries just because they are led by irresponsible politicians at a certain moment.

European integration needs to be about people, not about political elites. Irrespective of the standpoint of their governments a majority of the population of Poland and Hungary wants to stay in the EU and actively participate. The EU is an expression of their values and a mechanism with which they can realize their dreams. This gives EU-leaders, except responsibility also a chance to turn around the illiberal development. – Article 21 VK

A way to influence the Polish and Hungarian political situations that would not punish these entire countries is proposed:

If we want to pull illiberal regimes closer to us, we need to actively support the societal midfield with means that pressure these governments. Coarse instruments will be counter-effective. If the EU for instance shortens the structural funding for regional development and other aid, that would be a punishment for Polish and Hungarian citizens, not for their leaders. It would push those citizens away from the EU and in the arms of their illiberal regimes.

The challenge for the EU is how to engage in dialogue again with the regressive member states without punishing their voters for the misdemeanors of their leaders. It will not be easy. But if the EU wants to reform itself, it needs to look for mutual solutions. Because for those who believe in Europe, a dialogue based on good faith is the only option. – Article 21 VK

Finally in this subcategory, Article 22 VK starts by explaining how the EU’s mechanisms to counter threats to its fundamental values have significant shortcomings and questioning whether it is wise for the EU to take action at all, since “the recent escalation plays right into the hands of the Polish government”. The author then puts forward a more fundamental thought on what the rule of law in the EU entails, before he moves on to propose how he thinks the EU should deal with the issues in Poland:

The rule of law is more than just a collection of rules and institutions: eventually it is about a judicial and political culture, that needs to be carried by the people themselves, ‘from the bottom-up’.

The changes that have been made in Poland after the collapse of communism were fairly superficial in that regard. Behind a façade of liberal spirit still hides a deep nationalist-conservative belief, with sometimes even a slight preference for authoritarian leadership. If the EU wants to change that, it would make more sense

to invest in Erasmus-exchanges for students in the long-term for example, than in a quick ‘round of punishment’. Building a constitutional state requires patience, however frustrating we in Western-Europe that may find. - For now Poland is still a democratic country, where the people decide who forms the government. As long as the government has not boarded up the door to power, for example by changing the electoral laws in its own favor (although they are working on it), we will have to put our faith in the Polish people themselves. Even though a little pressure from the EU cannot hurt, eventually the fate of Poland is in the hands of the Poles. – Article 22 VK

Denying an East-West divide (see also: section 5.2.1)

A similar approach as the one identified in section 5.2.1.1 (the inclusive approach (2)) on the framing of the Polish and Hungarian political situations - referring to the condemnation of media throwing all Polish, Hungarian or Eastern-European people on one pile - can also be seen in the way the following article of *De Volkskrant* address the position of the EU in the matter.

Article 14 VK opens with the following two paragraphs:

A true clash of titans is developing between the government of Poland and the European Union. The political-judicial, but above all the ideological vendetta about the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of the press in Poland is reaching a climax after a year and a half – Jaroslaw Kaczynski and his arch-conservative PiS versus Frans Timmermans and the European Commission.

Sometimes however, it seems as if journalists and political commentators in Western-Europe cannot resist the temptation to extend the titan-battle between the Kaczynski-clique and Brussels towards a broader discussion and see it as a confirmation: a confirmation of the existence of a deep mental gap between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Europe.

5.2.2.2. The position of the EU in the crisis of EU fundamental values: the exclusive approach

Article 4 VK includes one paragraph on EU sanctioning tends towards an exclusive approach, since the author’s sarcasm in addressing the way the EU is trying to handle the issues it has with the Polish and Hungarian governments seems to be used to argue that the EU should act more strongly:

The aversion among EU-colleagues towards doing more than addressing Hungary in a quasi-punishing manner is almost tangible. Every now and then someone from a Western EU-country calls for blackmail: no more European money from the development fund for Hungary, as long as it refuses to cooperate with European

agreements for distributing refugees. It stops at that. And if the European Commission undertakes a trip to Budapest to point out the obligations that follow from European treaties, from humanitarian agreements, from international minimum standards to the Hungarians, then this happens by a deputy of the European Commission with silk gloves.

5.3. Main differences in framing the crisis of EU fundamental values

Important differences between the way the crisis of EU fundamental values is framed in articles in *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* stand out in the analysis. They can be grouped together in three main categories. These categories are more specific expressions of the general difference between authors taking an inclusive or an exclusive approach to the issues, as described at the beginning of this chapter. This section will hereby provide a more specific explanation of what the main differences between the exclusive and inclusive approach concerning the framing of the crisis of EU fundamental values entail. The analysis showed how authors took inclusive or exclusive approaches in framing the political situations in Poland and Hungary (1), the position of Poland and Hungary in Europe (2) and the position of the EU vis-à-vis Poland and Hungary (3). The results show that the articles in *NRC Handelsblad* largely take the exclusive approach, while the articles in *De Volkskrant* more often take the inclusive approach. The frames that were identified concerning specific “use of words” in *NRC Handelsblad* do not return in this section, since there was not enough similar type of framing found in *De Volkskrant*.

5.3.1. Differences in framing the political situations in Poland and Hungary

The analysis shows a general distinction in framing the political situations in Poland and Hungary. On the one hand, there is the tendency of authors to refer to Poland and Hungary as a whole when speaking of the political issues in these countries, while not providing more in-depth explanations of how these political issues came to being. As a consequence, it appears as if these countries and all their citizens can and perhaps should be held responsible for these political issues. This falls under the exclusive approach. On the other hand, some authors choose to provide more in-depth explanations of the political developments in Poland and Hungary that have led to the current issues and they clearly hold the specific current governments of these countries responsible. This falls under the inclusive approach.

For the analyzed articles of *NRC Handelsblad*, the three examples presented for the inclusive approach (section 5.1.1.1) are not very convincing ones, especially compared to the clear exclusive approach that was identified in many more articles (section 5.1.1.2). Poland and Hungary were often portrayed as if they, as countries as a whole, have certain issues. Authors saw “a people without excuses” (Article 20 NRC), noted that “countries like Poland and Hungary agree more often with Trump than with Germany” (Article 8 NRC), were astonished “that a country that fully committed itself to EU-membership has chosen to point its middle finger to EU-values” (Article 7 NRC) and claimed “half-heartedness” is “typical for almost all post-Soviet states” (Article 17 NRC).

In *De Volkskrant*, the examples for the inclusive approach (section 5.2.1.1) were clearer than the examples for the exclusive approach (section 5.2.1.2). Although the focus of the articles in *De Volkskrant* was more often on a European-wide scale, the analysis found comments fitting in the category of framing the political situations in Poland and Hungary like: “Views in which Eastern-Europeans are simply reactionary people embezzle what is really worrisome” (Article 13 VK), “Earlier this summer we could read that ‘the Poles’ have to realize that what they are doing within the EU is really not accepted. Dirk Jan Eppink instead shouted that ‘the Poles’ are completely in their right. But what Poles exactly?” (Article 13 VK) and “There is not by any means unanimous support for the policy of Kaczynski’s PiS” (Article 12 VK).

5.3.2. Differences in framing the position of Poland and Hungary in Europe

The second category in which the differences in framing can be brought under is ‘the positions of Poland and Hungary in a European perspective’. The most important observed difference here concerned the amount to which the authors assigned importance to the “status quo” of the broad political situation in Europe. Articles in which authors emphasized the need for Europe to defend the so-called status quo often also included the frame of portraying the political situations in Poland and Hungary as a threat for or attack on this status quo, or on “the West” and “Western values”. This of course falls under the exclusive approach. The inclusive approach in this category was identified by authors expressing doubt concerning this status quo-approach, arguing this could even be harmful because it reinforces and exaggerates the existence of an East-West divide in Europe.

Again, the articles in *NRC Handelsblad* mostly took the exclusive approach. This is shown by quotes such as “... now that in countries like Hungary, Turkey, Poland and the

US politicians are in power that are consciously and purposefully trying to destroy liberal democracy” (Article 3 NRC), “The question could be asked whether we can still speak of a Union, a community with European constitutional values, with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia” (Article 18 NRC), “... Hungary and Poland, who want money from Brussels but are violating democratic values” (Article 10 NRC), and by describing the political situations in Poland and Hungary as “an existential threat for the West” (Article 5 NRC).

The authors of the articles in *De Volkskrant* expressed the inclusive approach more often, which can especially be seen in quotes like “There are cultural differences between Western- and Eastern Europe, between Northern- and Southern-Europe, between Northeast and Southeast-Europe, however: who raises those to be explanatory models, is quickly taking a run with the facts” (Article 13 NRC) and:

Nevertheless, it will remain tempting to throw everything east of Germany, Austria and Italy onto one incorrigible reactionary pile. The Estonian sociologist Marju Lauristin argued in 2007 already that such a lack of nuance is rooted in the age-old images of the barbarian backyard of Europe: ‘The entire post-communist transition process for EU-accession has been a constant memory of the one-sided, vertical relationship between mentors and students. – Article 14 VK

5.3.3. Framing of the position of the EU vis-à-vis Poland and Hungary

The third and last category analyzes the differences in the way authors framed the position of the EU vis-à-vis the political developments in Poland and Hungary. In this category fit discussions on how the EU can sanction the governments of these countries, and why it should or should not do so. Some authors also related the topic to broader questions concerning the European integration process. Like in the previous two categories, there were structural differences found between the exclusive approach that was most often used in articles in *NRC Handelsblad*, and the inclusive approach that was most often used in *De Volkskrant*. The exclusive approach is characterized here by authors urging the EU and European leaders to sanction Poland and Hungary, often accompanied by an emphasis on the importance of defending the status quo and proposing the idea of conditionality. Furthermore, some authors advocated the idea of a multi-speed Europe for the future. Authors writing with an inclusive approach on the other hand expressed doubts concerning EU-sanctioning, did not like the idea of conditionality and emphasized the importance of not pushing Polish and Hungarian citizens away from the EU. They advocated a need to find common solutions.

In the analyzed articles of *NRC Handelsblad* again the exclusive approach was most commonly used. For instance by urging the EU to follow through on sanctioning in light of defending the status quo: “Many Syrians are jealous of European peace, half the world is jealous of European prosperity. The rule of law in the EU and the so often denounced EU-regulations provide the citizens with protection and certainty. It is worth the effort to stand up for those achievements” (Article 6 NRC), and “All attention will now go to the democratic rot in Poland and Hungary, which we tolerated all this time” (Article 19 NRC). Or by arguing that a “core” of Europe should “pull Europe out of the mud. ... Because repairing the status quo is a thousand times better than chaos and destruction” (Article 2 NRC). Or by showing interest in the idea of conditionality in the EU: “Praise with the good, scold with the bad. What if this was a leading principle in Brussels, would the EU function better?” (Article 11 NRC), “For those who only want the cherries of the pie, there is no place in the EU” (Article 19 NRC) and:

Poland, that is on collision course with the EU about political appointment of judges and about refugees, is the biggest receiver of EU funding. Also Hungary, where Prime-minister Orbán seems to be permanently campaigning against the EU, is abundantly supported. – Article 11 NRC

In *De Volkskrant* the inclusive approach came forward the most, as shown by examples in which authors argue that there are more responsible parties than just the Polish and Hungarian governments in the issue: “Populism matters. But how mainstream-parties in Europe react, is way more important” (Article 2 VK), or “irresponsible [that] a fundamental discussion about the EU did not get off the ground [in the Netherlands]” (Article 3 VK), or seeing a general political problem in the silencing of politics in the EU “through values, fundamental principles and rights” (Article 9 VK). One author problematized the tendency of journalists in Western-Europe to see the political struggle between the EU and Poland as “a confirmation of the existence of a deep mental gap between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Europe” (Article 14 NRC).

About EU sanctions against Poland and Hungary, the thoughts and ideas proposed in *De Volkskrant* were structurally different from those in *NRC Handelsblad* as well. About the consequences of Article 7: “Hopefully it will not get this far, because Poland is part of the European family, despite all the cultural differences” (Article 10 VK). Including a Polish view in the matter: “Both for the Poles as for the other member states a compromise without humiliating and divisive sanctions is by far the best solution” (Article 19 VK) and: “European sanctions will be experienced as opposition by the people here, the Polish

people could more than ever use our European support” (Article 12 VK). Alternative options are proposed: “If we want to pull illiberal regimes closer to us, we need to actively support the societal midfield with means that pressure these governments” (Article 21 VK) and: “If the EU wants to change that, it would make more sense to invest in Erasmus-exchanges for students in the long-term for example, than in a quick ‘round of punishment’” (Article 22 VK).

Chapter 6

Discussion

The results of the framing analysis showed structural differences in the views of *NRC Handelsblad*, a Dutch newspaper with a center-right political orientation, and *De Volkskrant*, a Dutch newspaper with a center-left political orientation, towards the crisis of EU fundamental values (as described in Chapter 2). If the analysis would have focused on the question whether the newspapers report positively or negatively about the EU, as done for instance by Bruter,¹³³ then *NRC Handelsblad* would probably have been identified as a newspaper with a much more positive view than *De Volkskrant*. The research by Bruter was conducted in 2005 however, and contestation or politicization of European integration has significantly increased in the meantime. The topic of the crisis of EU fundamental values is a broad, complex European issue that poses fundamental questions about the structure of the European Union and the European integration process. The qualitative nature of the research in this thesis offered the opportunity to take an in-depth approach and give answers to the question how two Dutch national newspapers deal with these fundamental questions that the crisis of EU fundamental values bring up.

Seen through the concepts of politicization and Europeanization, it can be argued that Europe is significantly more politicized- and that a stronger Europeanized view can be seen in *De Volkskrant* than in *NRC Handelsblad*. Seen from the more common definitions of politicization and Europeanization, that mostly focus on visibility and salience of European affairs, this is not the case. The research conducted in this thesis shows how a qualitative analysis can provide interesting insights into how the EU and the European integration process are approached in national mass media, and it is argued here that this type of analysis can aid towards a better understanding of the concepts of politicization and Europeanization, and the important role of national mass media in fostering these. An expansion of the scientific literature towards more qualitative research concerning these topics is therefore needed in order to increase our understanding of how they relate to broader questions about the EU and the future of the European integration process.

¹³³ Bruter, *Citizens of Europe?*

There are several reasons why the views portrayed in *De Volkskrant* signal a stronger Europeanized view towards the crisis of EU fundamental values than those in *NRC Handelsblad*. The most important reason is that the authors in *De Volkskrant* often used a perspective in which the involvement- or request for involvement of Dutch readers was emphasized. They were addressed as European citizens, not only as Dutch citizens. Consequently this could push readers towards stronger feelings of solidarity with other European citizens, like Poles and Hungarians, and to regard issues on an EU-level from the perspective of European-wide interests. The authors in *NRC Handelsblad* did emphasize the importance of European cooperation, but they often clearly used the scope of national interests when doing so. The call for more qualitative analyses in the field of Europeanization research therefore includes an emphasis on the importance of assessing to what extent mass media portray European affairs from the perspectives of European citizens and European-wide interests. This could aid towards establishing differentiating levels of Europeanization.

The second main reason is more open to interpretation. It is proposed here that the views on European sanctioning of the governments of Poland and Hungary in the articles in *De Volkskrant* signaled a stronger Europeanized view, because they argued against European sanctioning of the Polish and Hungarian governments and instead proposed alternatives. These alternatives were proposed in light of arguing for the importance of further European integration. This is why these views showed more signs of Europeanization; the strong advocacy of European sanctioning in *NRC Handelsblad* can be argued to come from skeptical attitudes towards further European integration. Thus the types of views concerning European integration should be further differentiated in future framing research as well, in order to gain more information on the different attitudes towards Europe in European countries.

As can be seen in this chapter, the results of the research in this thesis do not reach beyond analyzing the political positioning of two Dutch newspapers in the crisis of EU fundamental values. The implications can therefore not be generalized, nor was the effect on people's attitudes measured. The weakness of the nature of this research, which is the relatively large influence of the researcher on the outcomes, however shapes its strength at the same time. The in-depth approach provides new information and possible new insights that can be tested and could prove useful for researchers in the fields of Europeanization and the European Public Sphere.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis argued and explained how through the claims made by Amichai Magen and Dimitry Kochenov,¹³⁴ the scholarly debate that is often referred to as the “great rule of law debate” or the “rule of law crisis” can also be described as a “crisis of EU fundamental values”. This crisis in the EU, that has reached the forefront of European-wide debate in recent years mainly through internal struggles with the governments of member states Poland and Hungary, raises fundamental questions about the structure of European institutions and the future of European integration. Shortly summarized, because the governments of Poland and Hungary are threatening the status quo in- and the legitimacy of the European Union, but conversely the EU’s response that we have seen in recent years suggests that further European integration might be needed to battle the weaknesses in the current structure of the EU - both things that do not please many member state governments, including that of the Netherlands.

The complexity of this crisis has created an urgency for scholars to research to what extent this issue reaches the attention of European citizens and through what channels and in what manners it does so. Because it is not an issue that affects all member states as clearly as, for instance, the Eurozone crisis, studying it in connection with concepts like politicization and Europeanization is difficult. This is why the research in this thesis is of a qualitative nature. Using an in-depth rhetorical framing analysis, the aim was to aid towards defining the crisis of EU fundamental values in light of important strands of research concerning the European integration process, most notably the European Public Sphere and Europeanization of national public spheres.

The analysis focused on opinion pieces and editorials in the year 2017 of two Dutch quality newspapers with political orientations around the center of the traditional political left-right spectrum. The results of the analysis highlighted structural differences between the views of *De Volkskrant*, a center-left oriented newspaper, and *NRC*

¹³⁴ Amichai Magen, “Cracks in the Foundations: Understanding the Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1050–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12400>; Dimitry Kochenov, Amichai Magen, and Laurent Pech, “Introduction: The Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1045–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12399>.

Handelsblad, a center-right oriented newspaper, on the crisis of EU fundamental values; differences that provide important insights into understanding the crisis of EU fundamental values in relation with broader questions concerning the European integration process.

In the articles published in *NRC Handelsblad*, the exclusive approach to framing the crisis of EU fundamental values was much more prevalent than the inclusive approach, while for the articles in *De Volkskrant* this was the other way around. What this meant more specifically, is that *NRC Handelsblad* presented the political issues created by the governments in Poland and Hungary as issues for which these countries (as a whole) should be held responsible, framing them as politically and culturally inferior. In *De Volkskrant*, more attention was paid to broader explanations leading to the current political situations and the articles showed more elaborate accounts of how different groups of Polish and Hungarian people related to these situations.

Regarding the position of the EU, the articles in *NRC Handelsblad* frequently advocated the defense of the status quo in Europe or the West against threats coming from countries like Poland and Hungary. The views of the authors in *De Volkskrant* more often questioned the current structure of the EU, as well as negative consequences that the proposed sanctions against Poland and Hungary can have for these countries. These differences are of a similar nature as the difference between the critical Europeanist view and the constructive Europeanist view proposed by Statham and Koopmans.¹³⁵ The word “constructive”, however, could arguably be replaced here by “defensive”.

The analysis shows that there is an ongoing debate about the crisis of EU fundamental values in a not very closely (to Poland and Hungary) related European member state, namely the Netherlands, at least in the quality press. The results show the importance of further research concerning the crisis of EU fundamental values and how this crisis is portrayed in national public spheres. Since there were fundamental differences identified between the way two newspapers portrayed the issue, research focusing on how these different portrayals can influence people’s perceptions of- and attitudes towards other European member states and European integration in general is needed. This type of research could prove helpful in gaining information about the state of Europeanization in national public spheres and about the development of a European

¹³⁵ Statham and Koopmans, “Political Party Contestation over Europe in the Mass Media.”

Public Sphere. It can provide important insights for the future of the European integration process.

Bibliography

- Baglioni, Sebastian, and Achim Hurrelmann. "The Eurozone Crisis and Citizen Engagement in EU Affairs." *West European Politics* 39, no. 1 (2016): 104–24.
- Batory, Agnes. "Populists in Government? Hungary's 'System of National Cooperation.'" *Democratization* 23, no. 2 (February 23, 2016): 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1076214>.
- Beus, Jos de. "The European Union and the Public Sphere." In *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, edited by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, 13–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511761010.003>.
- Blauberger, Michael, and R. Daniel Kelemen. "Can Courts Rescue National Democracy? Judicial Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU." *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 321–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229357>.
- Bruter, Michael. *Citizens of Europe?: The Emergence of a Mass European Identity*. 1 online resource (xvi, 221 pages) : illustrations vols. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=257343>.
- Conant, Lisa. *Justice Contained: Law and Politics in the European Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Cuddy, Alice. "What Is 'Article 7' and Why Was It Triggered against Poland?" euronews, December 20, 2017. <http://www.euronews.com/2017/12/20/what-is-article-7-and-why-was-it-triggered-against-poland->
- Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.
- EUObserver. "Orban: Hungary Would Veto Sanctions on Poland." Accessed July 29, 2018. <https://euobserver.com/tickers/131755>.
- "European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press Release - Rule of Law: European Commission Acts to Defend Judicial Independence in Poland." Accessed July 20, 2018. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5367_en.htm.
- "EU's Big Four Back 'multi-Speed' Europe." Accessed July 21, 2018. <https://euobserver.com/news/137134>.
- Habermas, Jürgen, Thomas Burger, and Frederick G. Lawrence. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989.
- Hennen, Leonhard. "The European Public Sphere and the Internet." In *Electronic Democracy in Europe*, 21–51. Springer, Cham, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27419_5_2.

- Hooghe, Liesbet. "Europe Divided? Elites vs. Public Opinion on European Integration." *European Union Politics* 4, no. 3 (2003): 281–304.
- Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. "Calculation, Community and Cues Public Opinion on European Integration." *European Union Politics* 6, no. 4 (2005): 419–43.
- . "Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 3 (2004): 415–20.
- Hutter, Swen, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi. *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. 1 online resource (xvii, 340 pages) vols. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Jankovic, Sava. "Polish Democracy Under Threat? An Issue of Mere Politics or a Real Danger?" *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 9, no. 1 (June 1, 2016): 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bjlp-2016-0003>.
- Kaiser, Johannes, and Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw. "The Framing of the Euro Crisis in German and Spanish Online News Media between 2010 and 2014: Does a Common European Public Discourse Emerge?" *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 4 (n.d.): 798–814. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12515>.
- Kelemen, R. Daniel. "Poland's Constitutional Crisis." *Foreign Affairs*, August 25, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/2016-08-25/polands-constitutional-crisis>.
- Kochenov, Dimitry, Amichai Magen, and Laurent Pech. "Introduction: The Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1045–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12399>.
- Koopmans, R., and J. Erbe. "Towards a European Public Sphere? Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Europeanised Political Communication." *Innovation* 17 (2004).
- Koopmans, Ruud. "How Advanced Is the Europeanization of Public Spheres? Comparing German and European Structures of Political Communication." In *European Public Spheres*, edited by Thomas Risse, 53–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963343.005>.
- Kriesi H. "The Politicization of European Integration." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54 (2016): 32–47.
- Kuypers, Jim A. "Framing Analysis from a Rhetorical Perspective." In *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, by D'Angelo, Paul and Kuypers, Jim A., 286–311. Routledge, 2010.
- Lecheler, Sophie, and Claes H. De Vreese. "Framing Serbia: The Effects of News Framing on Public Support for EU Enlargement." *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (March 2010): 73–93. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773909990233>.
- Leconte, Cécile. "The EU Fundamental Rights Policy as a Source of Euroscepticism." *Human Rights Review* 15, no. 1 (March 2014): 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142013-0299-6>.

- Magen, Amichai. “Cracks in the Foundations: Understanding the Great Rule of Law Debate in the EU.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1050–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12400>.
- Maier J., and Rittberger B. “Shifting Europe’s Boundaries: Mass Media, Public Opinion and the Enlargement of the EU.” *European Union Politics* 9, no. 2 (2008): 243–67.
- Maier, Jürgen, and Berthold Rittberger. “Shifting Europe’s Boundaries: Mass Media, Public Opinion and the Enlargement of the EU.” *European Union Politics* 9, no. 2 (June 2008): 243–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116508089087>.
- Medrano, Juan Díez, and Emily Gray. “Framing the European Union in National Public Spheres.” In *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, edited by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, 195–220. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511761010.012>.
- Meyer, Christoph. “Political Legitimacy and the Invisibility of Politics: Exploring the European Union’s Communication Deficit.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 37, no. 4 (1999): 617–39.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. “Defending Democracy within the EU.” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 138–49.
- . “Should the EU Protect Democracy and the Rule of Law inside Member States?” *European Law Journal* 21, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 141–60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12124>.
- . “The Hungarian Tragedy.” *Dissent* 58, no. 2 (March 27, 2011): 5–10. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2011.0048>.
- Niklewicz, Konrad. “Safeguarding the Rule of Law within the EU: Lessons from the Polish Experience.” *European View* 16, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 281–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-017-0452-8>.
- Oliver, Peter, and Justine Stefanelli. “Strengthening the Rule of Law in the EU: The Council’s Inaction.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (September 1, 2016): 1075–84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12402>.
- Palombella, Gianluigi. “Illiberal, Democratic and Non-Arbitrary?: Epicentre and Circumstances of a Rule of Law Crisis.” *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 10, no. 1 (April 2018): 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-017-0059-9>.
- Peter, Jochen, and Claes de Vreese. “In Search of Europe.” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 9, no. 4 (2004): 3–24.
- Pfetsch, Barbara. “Agents of Transnational Debate Across Europe: The Press in Emerging European Public Sphere.” *Javnost - The Public* 15, no. 4 (January 2008): 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2008.11008980>.
- Pfetsch, Barbara, Silke Adam, and Barbara Berkel. “Agenda Setters, Shapers of Conflicts and Networkers of Cross Border Communication—Comparing the National Press in Emerging European Public Sphere,” 2005.

- Pfetsch, Barbara, Silke Adam, and Barbara Eschner. "The Contribution of the Press to Europeanization of Public Debates." *Journalism* 9, no. 4 (2008): 465–92.
- Porta, Donatella della, and Manuela Caiani. "The Europeanization of Public Discourse in Italy." *European Union Politics* 7, no. 1 (2006): 77–112.
- Priebus, Sonja. "Hungary." In *Constitutional Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, 101–43. Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft. Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13762-5_5.
- "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp." Government. Accessed July 13, 2018. <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/primeminister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp>.
- Risse, Thomas. "An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators," n.d., 11.
- . "Introduction." In *European Public Spheres*, edited by Thomas Risse, 1–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963343.002>.
- . "No Demos? Identities and Public Spheres in the Euro Crisis." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52, no. 6 (2014): 1207–15.
- Sargentini, Judith, and Aleksejs Dimitrovs. "The European Parliament's Role: Towards New Copenhagen Criteria for Existing Member States?" *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 5 (n.d.): 1085–92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12403>.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. "Political Legitimacy in a Non-Optimal Currency Area." Working Paper. MPIfG Discussion Paper, 2013. <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/87733>.
- Schlipphak, Bernd, and Oliver Treib. "Playing the Blame Game on Brussels: The Domestic Political Effects of EU Interventions against Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 352–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229359>.
- Sedelmeier, Ulrich. "Political Safeguards against Democratic Backsliding in the EU: The Limits of Material Sanctions and the Scope of Social Pressure." *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no. 3 (March 9, 2017): 337–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1229358>.
- Semetko, H., and P. Valkenburg. "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News." *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 2 (2000): 93–109.
- "Statement on the Constitutionality of the Provisions in the New Law of the Supreme Court News - Stefan Batory Foundation." Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego. Accessed May 29,

2018.http://www.batory.org.pl/news/statement_on_the_constitutionality_of_the_provisions_in_the_new_law_of_the_supreme_court.

Statham, Paul, and Ruud Koopmans. "Political Party Contestation over Europe in the Mass Media: Who Criticizes Europe, How, and Why?" 1, no. 3 (2009).

Vliegthart, Rens. "Framing in Mass Communication Research – An Overview and Assessment." *Sociology Compass* 6, no. 12 (n.d.): 937–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12003>.

Vreese, Claes H. de. "The Effects of Frames in Political Television News on Issue Interpretation and Frame Salience." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (March 2004): 36–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100104>.

Vreese, Claes H. de, and Hajo G. Boomgaarden. "Media Effects on Public Opinion about the Enlargement of the European Union." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44, no. 2 (2006): 419–36.

Vreese, Claes H. de, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, and Holli A. Semetko. "(In)Direct Framing Effects: The Effects of News Media Framing on Public Support for Turkish Membership in the European Union." *Communication Research* 38, no. 2 (April 2011): 179–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210384934>.

Vreese, Claes H. De, and Anna Kandyła. "News Framing and Public Support for a Common Foreign and Security Policy*." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 47, no. 3 (n.d.): 453–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14685965.2009.01812.x>.

Welle (www.dw.com), Deutsche. "What Does a Multi-Speed EU Mean for Central and Eastern Europe? | DW | 24.03.2017." DW.COM. Accessed July 21, 2018. <https://www.dw.com/en/what-does-a-multi-speed-eu-mean-for-central-and-eastern-europe/a-38016484>.

Zürn, Michael. "Opening up Europe: Next Steps in Politicisation Research." *West European Politics* 39, no. 1 (2016): 164–82.