

BRUSSELIAN AS NEWSPEAK. THE EU'S PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON ENLARGEMENT AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL TREATY*

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Abstract:

Problems of European integration and governance are increasingly analysed from a discursive perspective. This article seeks to examine the reasons behind the increasing distance between Europe/European Union and its citizens by taking a discourse and content analysis approach. It argues that the current situation is due to a "communication deficit" as a result of a tendency to rely upon an overly-technical vocabulary. Hence, unlike previous studies, the article does not focus upon the structural difficulties to develop an EU communication strategy but examines the language and the discourse coming from Brussels and used to "communicate" Europe to its citizens. It applies a case study approach by looking at the discourse coming from the European Commission on the Eastern enlargement and the Constitutional Treaty. Seen as one of the main reasons for the current public concern and for the failure of ratifying the Constitutional Treaty, the Eastern enlargement was in fact an event insufficiently explained or justified to the European public. Data collection is archive-based and it relies on primary sources from the European Commission (speeches, press conferences, and press releases).

Keywords: European integration, communication deficit, public discourse, European Commission, enlargement, the Constitutional Treaty

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Throughout Europe, while the elites continue to actively promote a pro-European attitude, the public appears increasingly alienated from the European project. Through referenda, European and national elections, the public changes from a silent and consenting partner to an active and sometimes untamed political partner. Hence, increasingly the positions of the European electorate upset the agenda of political elites, rocking the chairs in chancelleries across Europe and pressing the mass media into announcing global funerals: "Europe in crisis", "Europe divided," "the end of a European era." The ratification process of the EU Constitutional Treaty shows that the general public is becoming increasingly Euro-sceptic and out of tune with European and national political elites. Seen primarily as an elite-led process, European integration has had to come face to face with those whose lives it affects the most, the average citizen.

Problems of European integration are increasingly analysed from a discursive, language focussed perspective (Diez, 1999). This article takes a discourse and content analysis approach to examine the reasons behind the gap between Europe/European Union and the European public. More than any other previous enlargements or policy initiation, the Eastern enlargement seems to have highlighted the need the European Union has to be explained to its citizens. The article uses the argument of an EU "communication deficit" to explain public attitudes. Unlike previous studies (Meyer, 1999) however, the article does not focus upon the structural difficulties to develop an EU communication strategy but examines the language and the discourse used to "communicate" Europe to its citizens. The article applies a case study approach by focussing upon the discursive narrative on Eastern enlargement and the Constitutional Treaty coming from Brussels, in particular the European Commission. The Commission is the institution mostly associated with Brussels' voice since it provides a "European" discourse, relatively free of national bias (Nugent, 2003), and because its officials are seen as belonging to a European culture, relatively independent of national politics (Hooghe, 1999).

Data collection is archive-based and it relies on primary sources of the Commission, (i.e. speeches, press conferences and press releases from Commission's officials: 294 on the Constitutional Treaty and 594 on the Eastern enlargement). The timeframe of this research is January 1, 2004 to June 1, 2006, hence covering the period between the year ten new states joined the EU and the Constitutional Treaty was unveiled to the public, the period immediate after the results of the referendum and until the publication of the Commission's reports on Romania and Bulgaria. Data was collected based on relevance sampling, i.e. selecting all textual

units that contributed to the research. Although this is a non-probability technique, it allows the researcher to interpolate conclusions as general statement, as the texts are the entire population, and all textual units that do not possess the relevant information have been excluded (Krippendorff, 2004). Hence, the confidence interval for the quantitative results is 100% and the margin of error associated with the conclusions is zero. Although an unequal distribution of units per period is possible, this article examines all available relevant documents and articles within the timeframe, and therefore provides a fair representation of data and tendencies. The sampling units have been set as the distinct texts defined by physical distinctions, and the recording/coding units are set to be words as defined by syntactical distinctions, since they are qualified as the most reliable unit for written documents (Krippendorff, 2004). The article applies discourse and content analysis. Thus, the text is processed in two separate layers, one provided by the application of discourse analysis, one by content analysis. Hence, following identification of ideas in their general relation to the Eastern Enlargement and the Constitutional Treaty, I also considered the context in which discourses were produced, noting their evolution in time and identifying the most frequently used words and semantical constructions.

1. Determinants of Support for European Integration. A Case for Public Discourse

In the 1950s, the collective memory of war, destruction and devastation shared by the electorate across Europe and the six founding member states, the European political elites functioned upon the assumption that the public was largely supportive of a project aimed at preventing further conflicts. As a result, little attention was paid to the determinants of support for integration among the average voters. Ratifications of new treaties or introduction of new policies (i.e. euro, enlargement) which, with few exceptions where the national constitutions so require, rarely go directly in front of the electorate but are ratified through national parliaments. European elections have been characterised by absenteeism and lack of knowledge in EU related affairs (see for example Hayward, 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin, 1996; Blondel, Sinnott, Svensson, 1998; Hug, 2002; Steed, 2002; Lodge, 2005). Pro-European campaigns mix promises of better standard of living and calls for a European spirit.

In time, the body of literature dedicated to identifying the determinants for support for European integration has increasingly grown and approaches vary. Those drawing on economic theory and

rational choice sustain that individual support for European integration is determined by expectations of economic costs and benefits. By contrast, other approaches look at cultural influences, individual values and belief systems, domestic politics, party allegiance and incumbent popularity.

Existing literature on costs and benefits of economic integration distinguishes between macro- and micro-level expectations. Although macro-economic studies argue that attitudes towards EU membership change according to economic performance as measured in terms of GDP growth, unemployment and inflation, empirical data do not support such claims (Eichenberg, Dalton 1993; Anderson, Kaltenhaler 1996). The volume of trade among EU members and net national returns from the EU budget have also been found to affect support for integration (Anderson, Reichert 1996; also Eichenberg, Dalton 1993). Micro-economic studies find that EU required reforms are not met with the same level of support across different regions and social strata. Positive attitudes also depend upon an individual's ability to adapt to and benefit from market liberalization (Gabel 1998a,b; Gabel, Palmer 1995; Anderson, Reichert 1996). These models use as proxies income, education, and gender for individual competitiveness. Attitudes towards the euro appeared to be positively influenced by both macro- and micro-economic expectations: on the one hand, the euro was expected to lower unemployment, curb inflation, and boost economic growth; on the other, the euro was seen as beneficial to personal savings, job security, and individual income (Van Everdingen, van Raaij 1998).

Cultural oriented studies link support for European integration to individuals' belief and values systems. Although belief in post-materialist political values has been seen as determining support for international integration (Inglehart 1977), recent studies showed that these variables have no effect on evaluations of membership (Janssen 1991; Anderson, Reichert 1996; Gabel 1998a). While several studies report that opinions toward European integration correlate with partisan allegiance and social class (Shepherd 1975; Inglehart, Rabier, Reif 1991; Gallagher 1996; Hug, Sciarini 2000), others have noted the tendency of many voters to ignore the position of their parties often split over integration issues (Svensson 1984). Recent research has focused on incumbent popularity and voter assessment of government performance as a relevant variable influencing public support for European integration (Franklin, Marsh, McLaren 1994; Franklin, van der Eijk, Marsh 1996). Recently, emphasis was placed upon national identity as a determinant for support. Research in this direction has shown that Euroscepticism is directly proportional with the degree of national identity (McLaren, 2005; Dulphy, Manigand, 2004;

Carey, 2002) and that there are different degrees of identification across EU member states (Medrano, 2003).

While this article does not argue that public discourse is the sole and unique determinant of public opinion views of integration, it does follow the argument that public discourse has its own contribution to shaping the public's attitudes. Schimmerfenning argues that further EU enlargement has benefited and became embedded in the general public discourse due to the mechanism of rhetorical action developed through a concerted narrative (Schimmelfenning, 2001). Arguments based on collective identity, values, norms and practice of the Western community were used to justify the opening of the accession negotiations, overcoming the material bargaining power of the opposing camp (Schimmelfenning, 2001 and 2003). This article operates with an inclusive definition of discourse. As such it combines Foucault's definition of discourse as "a group of statements" providing "a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a historical moment," producing and framing "knowledge through language" (Foucault, 1972) with the definition of discourse as the "site where social forms of organization engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values which make up a culture" (Hodge, Kress, 1988). Ever since the Greek philosophers it has been considered that the rhetorical nature of discourse carries a persuasion component arising from the contest among the diverse discourses of different social groups (for an account of different features of discourse through history Kinneavy, 1969). While political developments can determine changes in public narratives, public discourses carry permanent features over time and can be relatively stable over time unless dramatic changes such as the revolutions of 1989 occur (Dryzek, Holmes, 2002).

2. Brussellian as Newspeak

The EU related discourse is largely owed by experts, academics and EU technocrats. The language coming from Brussels is dry and full of technical references around which a non-initiated finds difficulty its way around. The EU vocabulary resides upon roadmaps, ratifications, recommendations, strengthening commitment, plans/action plans, strategies, enhance visibility, invigorating debate, instruments/techniques, concrete action groups, strategic information, targets, future visions. Differences between types of secondary legislation (directives, regulations, decisions, recommendations, opinions), voting procedures especially the ones in the Council of Ministers (qualified

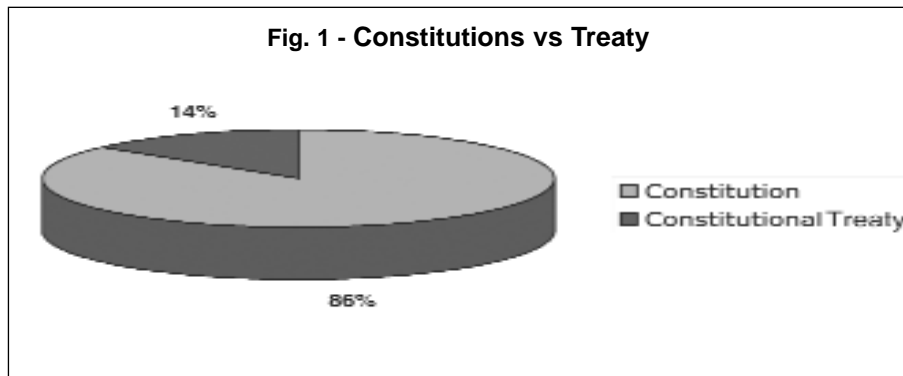
majority voting, simple majority, unanimity), legislative procedures (co-decision, co-operation, assent, consultation) or between the functions and roles of the EU institutions in general are not grasped by the public. According to the Eurobarometer, "the lack of knowledge of the EU institutional system appears great, often very great, sometimes even unfathomable," while "the decision-making process is practically unknown" (Eurobarometer, "The European Citizens and the Future of Europe", May 2006).

Faced with a discourse developed essentially in terms that are alienating and alienated from the general audience's interests and concerns, the public finds little help in guiding itself around the mechanism of EU polity and policy-making. The Constitutional Treaty and the Eastern Enlargement have been subjected to a similar discursive narrative.

2.1 "Communicating" the Constitutional Treaty

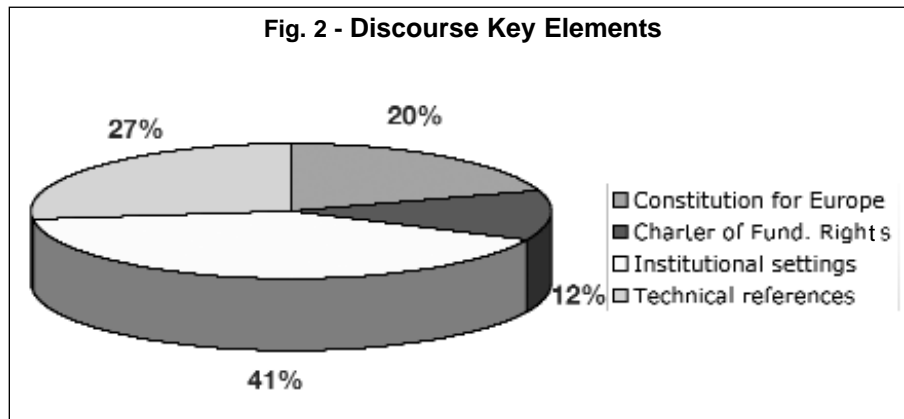
Initiated as part of a policy of bringing Europe closer to its people, subjected to two years of consultation with the European citizens, under the framework of the European Convention, the Constitutional Treaty was finally unveiled to the public in June 2004. Like all European treaties, it was a result of hard fought negotiations and the final text represented in the end a compromise bound to please no-one (see for example Dobson, Follesdal, 2004). Seen as not ambitious enough for the federalists, too adventurous for the intergovernmentalists, too socialist and interventionist for the liberals, too liberal for the socialists, the Treaty was difficult to be marketed through a concerted campaign from the centre. Rather it was left up to the national governments to make use of the Treaty ambiguities and mould it to the expectations of the public each government was facing. The treatment of the mainstream European media reception of the Treaty was rather derogative pointing out the Byzantine language of the Treaty, its over-dimensioned size and its inconsistencies. Although the Constitutional Treaty was initiated with the purpose of making the EU body of law more accessible, the 400 pages of the Treaty hardly provided for friendly reading. Constant references to the Treaty as Constitution rather than Constitutional Treaty created the false impression that the document provided for a far more politically developed organisation than it was actually the case. Constant references to the Treaty as Constitution rather than Constitutional Treaty (see fig. 1) created the impression that the document provided for a far more politically developed organisation than it was actually the case.

In this context, the European Commission discourse on the Constitutional Treaty has carried two dimensions: one championing the Treaty's provisions, and one countering arguments from opponents and aimed at saying what the Treaty is not. The European Commission's disclaimer strategy stressed that the Constitutional Treaty "does not create a centralised 'superstate', lead to a loss of statehood or weaken the social dimension of the Union" (Commissioner Wallstrom, November 2004). In relation to the nature of the document, the European Commission is rather clear: this is "not a treaty like any other. Rather, the Constitution makes the Union an association of States and citizens which is given legitimacy not only by the States and their diplomats, but also by the citizens themselves via their Parliamentarians" (Commissioner Reding, June 2005). However, calling the Constitutional Treaty, Constitution, is both misleading and unfortunate and poses problems with the public. On the one hand, there seems to be disagreement among legal scholar as to the nature of the document and as to whereas or not it is a Constitution legally speaking (see Weiler, 1999), on the other hand it gives ammunition to those domestic political actors looking to pounce at any sign that the EU is about to become a European super-state further limiting national sovereignty and diluting national identity and



national culture. Literature has stressed that the European public is receptive to such discourse and does react negatively to prospects of supranationalism (McLaren, 2002), especially in countries with strong national identities. For the Commission though, the use of the term Constitution seems to be justified as an attempt to link the citizens closer to Europe. This is "our" Constitution, more importantly "a Constitution for Europe," which brings with it "democracy, fundamental rights, transparency and efficiency." These new improved features are achieved by the incorporation in the Treaty of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and by an array of changes in the EU

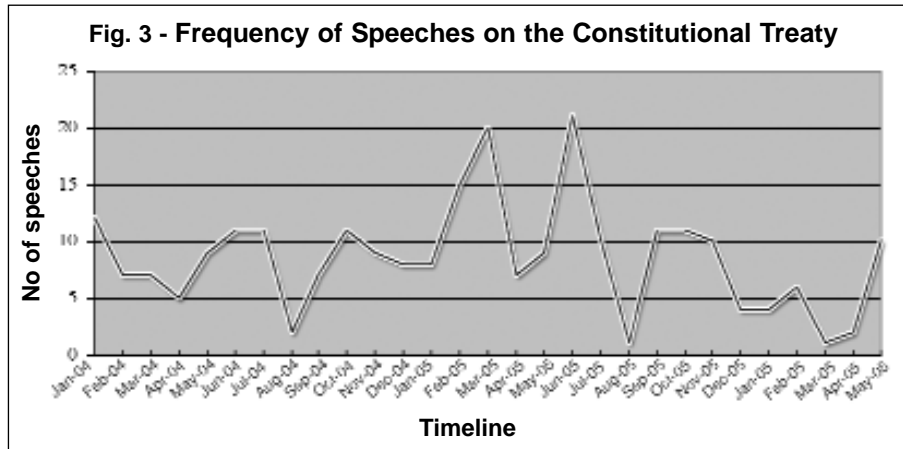
current institutional settings. The narrative is supported by references to principles of EU law, EU legislation, and policy mechanisms (for purposes of quantification called technical references) as well as emphasis upon the changes brought to the EU institutional setting. While they constitute key elements of the discourse in their own right, they rely upon the same type of vocabulary, the one of legal subtleties and inside jargon. Together they represent the backbone of the discourse on the Constitutional Treaty. Almost two thirds of the key discursive elements (see fig. 2).



The Commission's technical vocabulary refers to the Treaty's provisions, amendments, innovations in terms of policy design, policy making and institutional framework. As such, we find references to subsidiarity, the Bolkestein directive (i.e. the services directive), the Lamfalussy process, comitology, the *acquis communautaire*, qualified majority voting, blocking minority, regional and social cohesion, social policy, efficient foreign policy, the Lisbon strategy, primacy of EU law, principle of mutual recognition. References to the new EU institutional design mention especially the position of an EU foreign minister, "the call-back powers of the European Parliament" as a way of "reducing the EU democratic deficit," opening "the doors of the Council to the public," introducing the "right of citizens to invite the Commission to make a proposal," streamlining "the legal instruments from thirty six to only six." As shown by Eurobarometer data, such references ring highly unknown with the public at large.

The discourse coming from the European Commission regarding the Constitutional Treaty varies in time in terms of its emphasis and its frequency (see fig. 3). High frequencies correspond to the periods of high intensity in European affairs (i.e. the publication of the document - June 2004, the ratification period, March - July 2005), while low frequencies

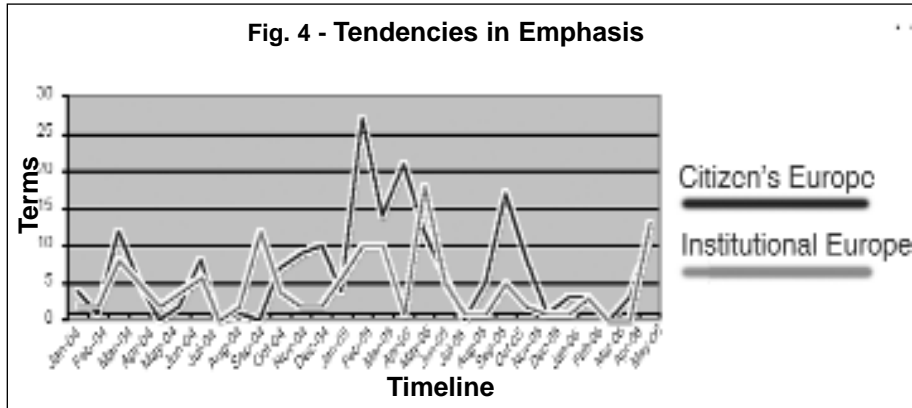
follow calls from national political elites class for "a period of reflection" or periods of parliamentary break (i.e. August).



June 2005 appears to be a turning point both in terms of frequency of speeches per month and in terms of emphasis. Prior to June 2005, the European Commission called on sharing the task of popularising the treaty with national governments, national parliaments, representatives of civil society ("the EU institutions will make their best to popularize it, but they will need all the support from the national parliaments," President Barroso, October 2004; "the representatives of civil society, the trade unions, employers, the chambers of commerce, the churches and all friends of democracy and the rule of law will play their part in ensuring that their members and supporters become familiar with the contents of the Constitutional Treaty," Commissioner Wallstrom, March 2005). Brussels warns national political elite of their responsibility: "We cannot expect that every citizen and voter will read the full text of the Constitution. People therefore turn to the people they trust. They turn to their political leaders for guidance" (Commissioner Wallstrom, April 2005). In this way, the Commission is taking a community approach to its own strategy of communication: the responsibility is shared between Brussels and domestic politics. The Commissioner is not wrong in her analysis of the public knowledge of the Constitutional Treaty: for the past two years Eurobarometer has shown that more than 50% of EU citizens know very little about the document. Without its own views of the document, such a public is sensitive to political campaign and vulnerable to domestic politicians' rhetoric.

Between January 2004 and early 2005, the speeches from the European Commission are therefore limited in number, balanced in between references to institutional setting, new provisions and citizens' rights. Moreover, the Commission view is that the Constitutional Treaty is already a result of consultation with EU citizens following the two

years work of the European Convention ("it is the culmination of a long process involving Parliament, the Member States, the Commission, national parliaments and civil society," President Barroso, October 2004; "[the] new Treaty was negotiated, not by diplomats and technocrats behind closed doors, but by a Convention," Commissioner Reding, June 2005). Therefore, being already an expression of consultations with the electorate, its ratification was nothing to be worried about. After the "double whammy of the ratification" (Commissioner Michel, October 2005), the Commission combines plan C (consolidation, conditionality, communication) with plan D (democracy, dialogue, debate). It is also interesting to note the high visibility and public speeches given following June 2005 by the Commissioner of communication, Margaret Wallstrom. We notice the increased frequency of references to citizens' Europe. Words such as "citizens," "people," "rights," "dialogue," "debate," "communication" and phrases such as "reconnect Europe with its citizens," "social rights," "freedom of expression," "listen to the public" increasingly abound. Hence, the emphasis on institutional changes through the Constitutional Treaty (institutional Europe) is balanced and occasionally outweighed by emphasis on citizens' Europe (see fig. 4). Unsurprisingly, the emphasis on the citizens and Europe's interest in them peaks during the months of the referenda on the treaty.



The failure of the ratification brings along a change in the importance of the Constitution for the Union and the integration as a whole. Prior to June 2005, the Constitutional Treaty was "a major step forward along the road to European integration" (Prodi, July 2004 and Barroso, April 2005) and "essential for the progress of Europe" (Commissioner Frattini, March 2005). Since it brought about "democracy, transparency, efficiency and fundamental rights" and voting for it was a citizens' feeling for the Union, not ratifying it implied stagnation,

difficulties and rejection. However, the new communication strategy put in place after the ratification fiasco span the analysis on its head and stressed upon the Union's ability to move forward "with or without it" (President Barroso, May 2006). The Commission's post-ratification assessment revolves around topics such as the average citizen's fear of globalization and of what the future may bring, electorate's discontent with their own governments, economic context (e.g. foreign takeovers, floods of cheap imports, migrant workers), fear of Europe ("too big", "non-transparent", "too market oriented", "liberal tendencies", "the service directive", "loss of national identity and national sovereignty"), being uninformed over this Europe it was called upon to vote for. The answers offered were "inadequate," disconnected from reality and elitist. The plans for the future diverge from plan D ("democracy, dialogue, debate"), avoiding playing the blame game, and focussing upon "reconnecting with the citizens." The Commission aims to popularise "Europe" through written and audio information, sponsor seminars and workshops, overall engaging the public in a meaningful way so that "to find the right argument."

However, despite the current emphasis on the need to "listen to the public," initiate "dialogue" and "communicate," the data shows that Brussels continues to rely on the terminology it knows best. It has in time evolved into a language of its own, and this Europe's language is difficult to follow without a dictionary. For a novice in the vocabulary of European integration, the Commission public discourse continues to be difficult to stir imagination, develop emotional attachment and secure the public's support. It relies on one hand upon high specialised terminology (i.e. subsidiarity, *acquis communautaire*, comitology) or the other hand upon the newly discovered buzz words of spin politics (i.e. "transparency," "efficiency," "democracy," "communication").

2.2 Communicating Enlargement

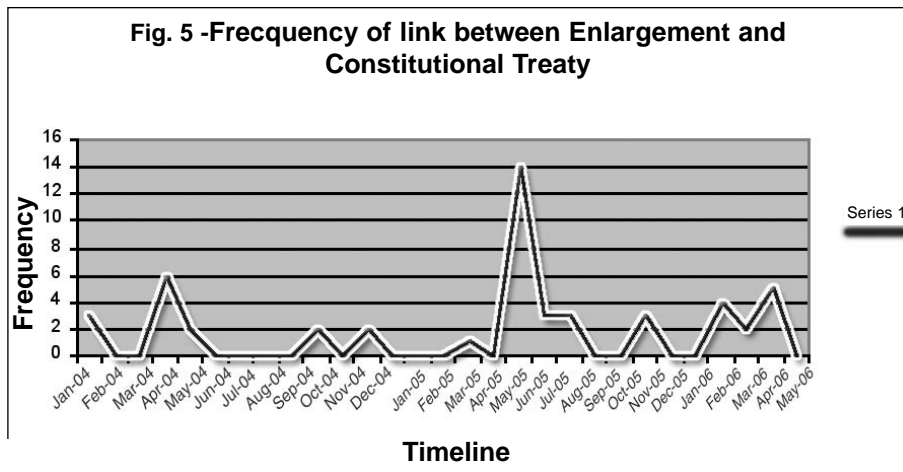
The difficulty to sell the Eastern enlargement to the average EU electorate comes from the fact that more than any other EU policy, enlargement is not an initiative but a reaction. An initiative is the New Neighbourhood Policy seen largely as a way to stop further enlargement. By contrast, enlargement is a reaction to a knock at the door. Any communication strategy is caught in between deciding what "Europe" wants and hopes to do and what "Europe" can or think it can defend in front of its electorate. While it may be easier to explain why one has guests for dinner, it is far more difficult to explain why they have to stay the night. In other words, it is hard to be at the same time Santa and Santa's guard.

The public discourse surrounding the Eastern enlargement started to develop in the early 1990s. It was constructed around three main reference

points: political benefits, economic advantages and the idea of re-unification between East and West. Entrusted with the monitoring of the progress made by candidate countries towards fulfilling the membership criteria and with negotiating the chapters, the European Commission was placed at the forefront of the enlargement process. As such, its officials had to address the issue on a regular basis. This article looks at 594 public speeches, press conferences and press releases for the period 2004 to 2006. Data was fragmented into variables set as more general semantical characterisations such as "justifications" (further divided into political/cultural and economic justifications), "technicalities" (technical EU vocabulary), "post-2004 assessment" and "plans for the future."

Enlargement was one of the reasons used to justify the need for the Constitutional Treaty: "an enlarged European Union requires an adaptation of its governance mechanisms. This is where the Constitution comes in" (President Barosso, April 2005). The Constitutional Treaty was therefore a need created by enlargement. In the summer of 2005 during the campaigns for ratification, the connection reaches its peak since the Constitutional Treaty was explained as imperative for the efficient functioning of a Union with 25 members (fig. 5). Hence, there was an implicit connection between the two narratives which transferred into the public space. In fact, following opinion polls, some political analysts have seen the referenda on the Constitutional Treaty, a vote on enlargement on which the average citizen did not get a chance to directly express its view.

However, unlike the Constitutional Treaty which was a document in

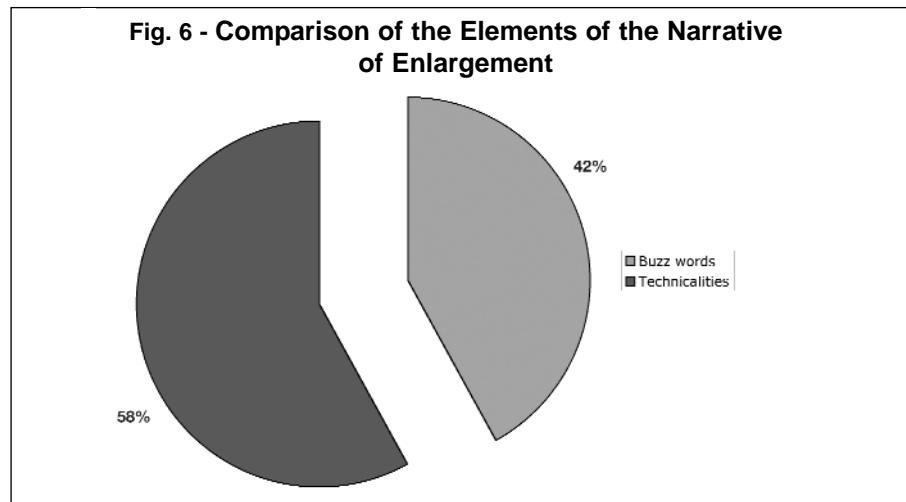


need of being marketed and sold to a reluctant public, enlargement was a policy in need of justification having not put directly to the citizens' approval. Hence, the tone (optimistic in the first case, realistic in the

second), as well as the vocabulary (tentative as opposed to decisive) were different. By comparison with the discourse on the Constitutional Treaty, the one on enlargement relies on buzzwords (i.e. democracy, prosperity, stability) as much as on technical terms (i.e. *acquis*, conditionality). Split in between catchy but vague words and technical terms the discourse on enlargement does little to alleviate fears or prepare the EU average citizens for enlargement. The 2006 Eurobarometer shows that only 37% of the EU citizens felt well informed about enlargement.

Technical terms relate in particular to conditionality, the *acquis communautaire*, the Lisbon agenda, the Union's absorption capacity and the EU's decision making process for enlargement (the Council's unanimity and the European Parliament's assent). References to conditionality and the *acquis* carry the promise that the new member states have to meet certain criteria before joining as well as incorporating the EU legal framework. As such, the intention is to convey a message to the public, namely that the newcomers would not be as different, as far apart as it may seem. While the terminology of enlargement is less technically heavy than the one of the Constitutional Treaty, reliance upon technical terms remains significant (see fig. 6). Moreover, its terminology is not part of the every day vocabulary of the average European citizens and therefore this part of the narrative is rather lost for the public at large.

Politically, the narrative of enlargement carries promises of democracy, stability, peace, rule of law, and human rights both inside and outside the new

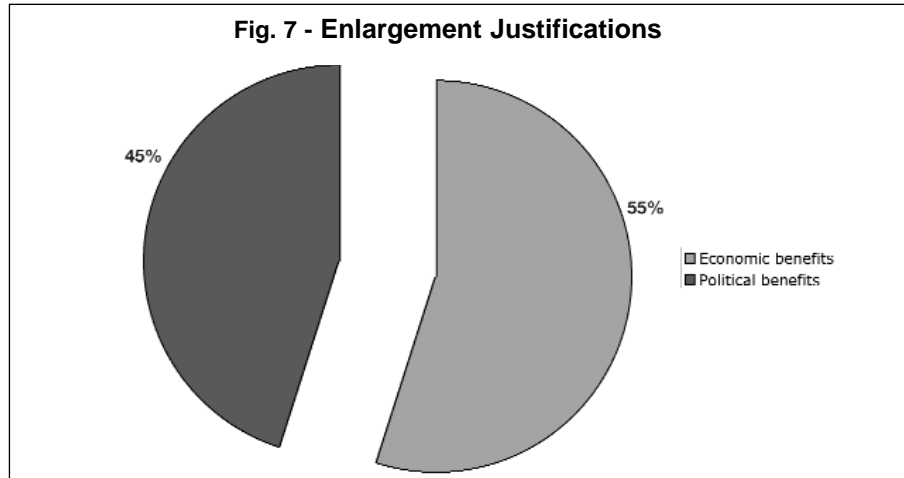


borders. It is also claimed that enlargement has given Europe "extraordinary security advantages," being "the most powerful policy tool to pursue peace and prosperity, liberty and democracy." Emphasis is placed upon the EU's

role as a "civilian," "soft" power, "extending the zone of peace and stability, liberty and democracy, across the continent." The perspective of EU accession shaped democratic political developments in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, pacifies the Western Balkans and remains "the foundation that holds the region on a peaceful and reformist track." Enlargement is therefore also about the EU position in the world, a message the EU citizens appear to have appropriated. The 2006 Eurobarometer showed that 61% of the EU citizens believed that enlargement was about "improving the EU influence in the world."

Enlargement is also about fulfilling "a destiny," "the peaceful unification of Europe" on the basis of shared common values (i.e. "democracy, freedom, the market economy;" "liberty and solidarity, tolerance and human rights, democracy and the rule of law") and creating "our common European home." The EU officials however are careful to balance the references to those common values and to this common project with references to Europe's diversity. Enlargement will enrich rather than level Europe's cultural diversity. Hence, "the EU pursues a concept of unity in diversity" rather than "creating a European national identity." While giving "the EU the capacity for effective action in pursuit of its goals by sharing sovereignty," but also looking "to preserve those elements of national, regional, or ethnic identity which our citizens hold dear" and "develop positive policies designed to maintain and even promote national and regional identities and cultures. Thus, the discourse coming from Brussels attempts to marry an idea of a collective united by common values and of individuals with their own languages, cultures and customs so that to alleviate fears of a centred regulated, uniform Europeaness. It is a sign that the affective connection between Europe and its citizens is too thin to be used as a backbone for argumentation.

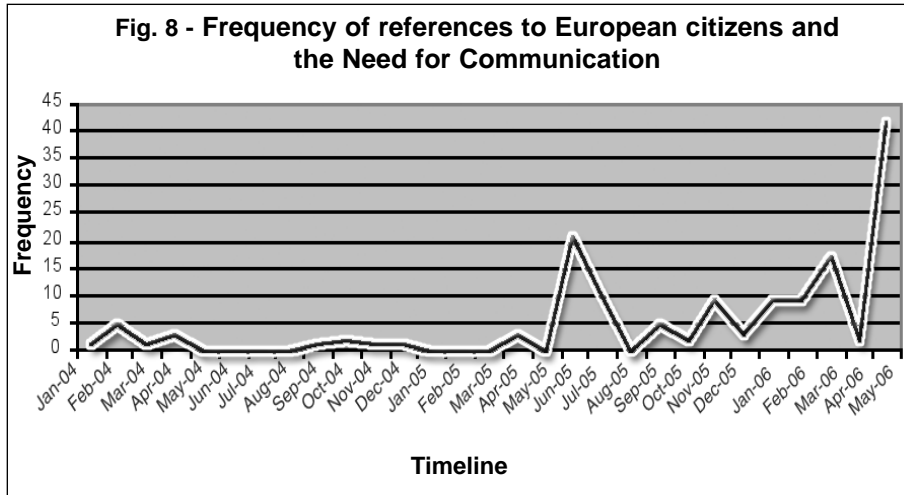
References to the enlargement's economic benefits outweigh the political arguments (see fig. 7), which though well packaged remain vague in purpose. It is repeatedly pointed out that enlargement will bring about greater prosperity, increase Europe's competitiveness and most importantly create new jobs. The prospect of new jobs is particularly important so that to balance the spectrum of Eastern economic migration (personified by the figure of the Polish plumber in French politics) and resounding well in an economic environment characterised by high unemployment. The predominance of the economic references shows that the EU public discourse relies essentially upon utilitarian connections to connect with the average citizen. There are specific messages towards those constituencies identified as perceiving themselves as losers following enlargement. Hence, the references to those EU policies that are redistributive and



placed under pressure by the accession of additional poor member states unable to significantly contribute to the EU budget but eligible to receive EU funds. There are specific references to the EU agricultural policy (and implicitly to the French farmers), the social policy (and implicitly the unemployed and those at risk of losing employment) and regional policy (and implicitly those currently receiving EU subsidies). Hence, the EU official discourse is aimed both towards asserting EU's commitment towards enlargement and placing it beyond doubt as well as calming the anxieties of the internal constituencies.

However, economic determinants of support are vulnerable to economic performance. Since the late 1990s, the EU member states are going through a period of economic recession with high unemployment and low rates of growth. In this context, enlargement carried even more threatening overtones. Hence, enlargement came to be personified, especially in France, by the figure of the "Polish plumber", the low paid migrant worker arriving from the East and taking the jobs. The EU is also going through a generation change. The current 30s, 40s old generations have no memory of the war (the essential catalyst of the 1950s integration process), take Europe for granted and take the rights that comes with it (freedom of movement, single market, and harmonisation of several policies) as given. Europe's achievements are therefore not sufficient to create emotional attachments and rely solely on utilitarian support. Since utilitarian connection dilutes easily when unable to be delivered, Europe has little additional substance to maintain itself in the hearts of its electorate.

Unsurprisingly, references to European citizens and calls for a strategy of communication grow in frequency following the failures of the Constitutional Treaty (Fig. 8).



Just as for the Constitutional Treaty, the future agenda for enlargement is based upon plan C: consolidate, conditionality, communication. Increasingly after the summer of 2005, the EU officials grant space in their speeches to the European citizens when talking about enlargement, but the substance of the discourse continues to miss clear information. The public should be told "both its successes and its challenges," enlargement should be "communicated" and a new consensus should be built around EU enlargement by stressing its "concrete added value" although precise clarifications as to what this is are lacking. Attempts are made to make enlargement an inclusive process: the call is for "all" to be involved and make it a success although what such involvement means is unclear. It is stressed that the policy's democratic legitimacy is achieved due to the European Parliament power of assent on enlargement, thus the institution directly elected is granted significant say in the matter. The speakers appear to conveniently forget the low turnout in European elections rising doubts as to the legitimacy and representativity of this EU institution.

Overall, enlargement is talked about in history-making terms (i.e. described as "historic," "momentous"), but also in more realistic terms. Hence, it is referred too as an "achievement," a "success" but also as a "burden" and a "challenge." As such, the narrative of enlargement carries two dimensions. On the one hand, the message from Brussels is militant, decisive and self-congratulatory constructed upon a vocabulary that allows no doubt, rallies the troops and shows commitment towards the policy. On the other hand, the EU officials acknowledge problems and admit difficulties. The first argument however outweighs the second in an attempt to appease anxieties. A mixture of spin politics and EU technical

terms, the narrative of enlargement carries promises for better standards of living for the average citizen and a more competitive position in the world for Europe. While its message is upbeat, its vocabulary is no less alienating for the public at large.

Conclusion

Following the results of the Constitutional Treaty, obituaries were written concerning the Treaty but also the European Union itself. Blame was placed randomly so that to cover all corners: Brussels blamed national governments; national governments blamed Brussels; elites were blamed for being unable to convey the message; the people were blamed for being uninformed, uneducated, and immature. And finally, as a general final verdict, everybody blamed Europe, enlargement and the "Polish plumber." While the media talks about "crisis," public officials (both European and national) talk about "a period of reflection." The president of the European Commission is worried as to its duration and in the context of the 2006 World Cup called it "extra time" and recently "the longest extra time in history." The "period of reflection" is dedicated to figuring out what the European citizen actually wants, and how to regain its trust so that to secure its support for the project. It also aimed at instilling into this citizen a degree of Europeaness.

However, debates and discussions about European identity, European culture are subject of workshops, summer schools, roundtables, conferences. Any attempt to find Europe exhausts the participants, the audience and the speakers. Europe becomes a neurosis, a frustration, unwilling to be encapsulated in articles and treaties and nowhere in be found on the streets of its cities. In the end, too much time seems to be spent on something so elusive that the search process itself further alienates the audience rather than finding a way to explain the need to take the trip in the first place. Despite the new battle cry of "communication, communication, communication," data shows that the EU public discourse continues to remain dependent upon either a legal, technical terminology or a glorifying but vague vocabulary both of which are not audience friendly. It seems that while Brussels has understood that Europe needs a language to make it known and approachable to its citizens, it is yet to find its words.

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