

The College of Wooster

Open Works

Senior Independent Study Theses

2020

Talking about EU: The Impact of Leaders' Discourse on Public Support for the European Union

Marco Roccato

The College of Wooster, mroccato20@wooster.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openworks.wooster.edu/independentstudy>



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Roccato, Marco, "Talking about EU: The Impact of Leaders' Discourse on Public Support for the European Union" (2020). *Senior Independent Study Theses*. Paper 9091.

This Senior Independent Study Thesis Exemplar is brought to you by Open Works, a service of The College of Wooster Libraries. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Independent Study Theses by an authorized administrator of Open Works. For more information, please contact openworks@wooster.edu.

© Copyright 2020 Marco Roccato

TALKING ABOUT EU: THE IMPACT OF LEADERS' DISCOURSE ON PUBLIC
SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

by Marco Roccato

An Independent Study Thesis
Submitted to the Global & International Studies Department
At the College of Wooster
March, 2020

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Independent Study Thesis

Adviser: Kent Kille

Second Reader: Jeffrey Lantis

Abstract

This study asks *how do changes in national political leaders' (NPLs) discourse about the European Union affect public support for the EU?* To develop an answer to this question, the research is situated in the tradition of discourse analysis, as it is better suited to understand the nuances in the discourse being presented to the population. In the literature reviewed for this project, EU-related discourse is presented as holding particular power in affecting people's perceptions of European issues due to the historical low engagement and knowledge levels. The lack of a shared European public sphere and international conversations on topics central to the EU leads to centering this project around how national dynamics shape the support for European integration. To analyze the correlation between political discourse and public support, this study adopts a longitudinal single case study on Italy, selecting a variety of time frames and developing an analysis of which messaging both majority and opposition leaders privilege. Public support is measured through a selection of questions from time-sensitive Eurobarometers — the commonly used source for measures of EU public support in much of the literature on EU-related topics. After careful analysis based on the case study of Italy between 1990 and 2019, this project highlights the importance of discursive agreeance amongst NPLs as a leading force in bolstering public support for the EU. In the final overview of discursive trends, this research finds a particular shift in the overall underlying messaging that relates Italy to the EU, with the latter now being presented as an obstacle to national growth rather than an opportunity for greater economic and political integration. The paper ends with an overview of the methodological limitations caused by external constraints, and suggests that future research should apply this model to a cross-country comparative case study to better gauge the actual value of political frames of discourse and their effects on public support for the EU.

Riassunto

Questa tesi pone la questione *in che modo i discorsi sull'Europa di leader politici nazionali influenzano il supporto popolare per l'Unione Europea?* Per formulare una risposta a questa domanda, questo studio si presenta nel contesto della tradizione della *discourse analysis*, un approccio migliore per capire le sottigliezze dei messaggi presentati alla popolazione. Nella letteratura analizzata per questo progetto, i discorsi sul tema dell'UE sono considerati particolarmente significativi per la loro abilità di influenzare le percezioni popolari su temi europei a causa dei bassi livelli storici di conoscenza ed ingaggiamento. La mancanza di una comune sfera pubblica europea e di conversazioni internazionali sui temi centrali all'UE sono la ragione per cui questo progetto preferisce analizzare le dinamiche nazionali che influenzano il supporto per l'integrazione europea. Per analizzare la correlazione tra il discorso politico e il supporto popolare, questo studio utilizza un singolo *case study* longitudinale, con la selezione di certi periodi per capire che tipo di messaggi i leader della maggioranza e dell'opposizione preferiscono. Il supporto pubblico viene misurato tramite domande dell'Eurobarometro — lo strumento comunemente utilizzato per misurare supporto pubblico per l'UE in

molta della letteratura su temi collegati all'UE. Dopo l'analisi basata sul *case study* italiano fra il 1990 and il 2019, questo progetto evidenzia l'importanza dell'accordo discorsivo tra LPN come una forza importante per influenzare il supporto pubblico per l'UE. Nell'analisi finale dei trend, questo studio presenta un particolare cambiamento nel sottotesto dei messaggi che collegano l'Italia e l'UE, con l'Unione ora presentata come un ostacolo per la crescita nazionale invece che un'opportunità per migliore integrazione economica e politica. Questo studio si conclude con una panoramica delle limitazioni metodologiche causate da vincoli esterni, e suggerisce che la ricerca futura dovrebbe applicare questo modello di ricerca ad un *case study* comparativo fra Paesi diversi per meglio capire il valore effettivo delle strutture politiche discorsive e il loro effetto sul supporto pubblico per l'UE.

Resumen

Este estudio plantea la siguiente pregunta: *¿Cómo afectan los cambios producidos en los discursos de líderes políticos (NPL) el apoyo público para la Unión Europea?* Para responder esta pregunta, el estudio busca analizar el discurso presentado para entender los matices ante la población. En la literatura revisada de este proyecto, los discursos relacionados con la UE se presentan con cierto poder afectando la percepción de sus oyentes hacia problemas europeos a través de la historia por falta de compromiso o entendimiento por parte de los oyentes. La falta de estos en el público causa este proyecto a enfocarse en cómo las dinámicas nacionales cambian a favor de la integración europea. Para analizar la relación entre discurso político y apoyo público, este estudio analiza un caso en Italia, seleccionando momentos precisos de discursos de líderes políticos analizando la ventaja de la mayoría y la oposición. El apoyo público es medido mediante preguntas en momentos precisos con Eurobarómetros, la fuente común utilizada por la UE para medir apoyo público en la literatura de temas relacionados con la Unión Europea. Tras el análisis basado en el caso de Italia entre 1990 y 2019, este proyecto destaca la importancia del acuerdo discursivo entre NPL como fuerza que lidera en apoyo público para la UE. En la última visión general de las tendencias discursivas, este estudio encuentra un cambio particular en el mensaje total que relaciona Italia con la UE, siendo el último mensaje el que presenta un obstáculo al crecimiento nacional en vez de una oportunidad para una mejor integración política y económica. El estudio finaliza con la revisión de las limitaciones metodológicas causadas por restricciones externas, sugiriendo un futuro estudio que debe comparar este modelo entre diferentes países para un mejor entendimiento del verdadero valor político que poseen los discursos para causar un efecto en el apoyo público para la Unión Europea.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my mom for making me who I am today.

Thank you to my dad for allowing me to chase my wildest dreams and supporting me at every step of this journey.

Thank you to Jeremy for being the best mentor, friend, and brother that I could have wished for.

Thank you to Tom and Bill from Sandy Spring Friends School for believing in me and what I had to offer.

Thank you to Delta Chi Delta and all of my brothers for being a welcoming, caring, and loving family of incredible men.

Thank you to Nashmia, Q, and Michelle for four years of friendship, and here is to many more.

Thank you to the College of Wooster's Office of Admissions and Residence Life Office for giving me the chance to explore my passion and love for higher education in all of its forms.

Thank you to Dr. Kille for the guidance that pushed me beyond the finish line of this great project.

Thank you to the past, present, and future community of Fighting Scots for everything you did and will do.

Thank you to all those who believed in this Italian kid with a wild dream in his heart.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| CHAPTER II: ANALYZING THE LITERATURE ON EUROPEAN UNION DISCOURSE | 5 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| Talking About It: The Value of Political Elites | 6 |
| Historical Roots and Ideas on European Discourse..... | 9 |
| The Contemporary Changing Landscape: Populist & Eurosceptic Parties | 12 |
| Bridging Elite Messaging and Mass Minds | 14 |
| The European Public Sphere: The Missing Link..... | 15 |
| Changes in Public Support..... | 17 |
| The Electoral Horse Race and Information Exposure | 19 |
| Linking National Political Leaders’ Discourse & Public Support for the EU | 20 |
| CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY | 23 |
| Introduction..... | 23 |
| Methodology | 24 |
| Independent Variable | 24 |
| National Political Leaders | 24 |
| Discourse..... | 26 |
| Measures..... | 28 |
| Dependent Variable | 31 |
| Conceptualize & Operationalize Public Support | 31 |
| Measures..... | 32 |
| Timeline | 34 |
| Across Time Case Study of Italy | 35 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Conclusion | 39 |
| CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE AND POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION..... | 41 |
| 1990-1991 Andreotti VI-VII (July 1989-April 1991, April 1991-June 1992)..... | 41 |
| European Context..... | 41 |
| Italian Context..... | 42 |
| Economic Frames..... | 43 |
| Political Frames..... | 45 |
| Identity-Cultural Frames | 46 |
| Period Analysis | 47 |
| 1996-1997 Prodi I (May 1996-October 1998)..... | 49 |
| European Context..... | 49 |
| Italian Context..... | 49 |
| Economic Frames..... | 50 |
| Political Frames..... | 51 |
| Identity-Cultural Frames | 53 |
| Period Analysis | 55 |
| Berlusconi II 2001-2002 (June 2001-April 2005) | 56 |
| European Context..... | 56 |
| Italian Context..... | 56 |
| Economic Frames..... | 57 |
| Political Frames..... | 58 |
| Identity-Cultural Frames | 60 |
| Period Analysis | 62 |
| 2011-2012 Monti I (November 2011-April 2013)..... | 63 |
| European Context..... | 63 |
| Italian Context..... | 63 |
| Economic Frames..... | 64 |
| Political Frames..... | 66 |
| Identity-Cultural Frames | 69 |
| Period Analysis | 71 |
| 2018-2019 Conte I (June 2018-December 2019)..... | 72 |
| European Context..... | 72 |
| Italian Context..... | 72 |
| Economic Frames..... | 73 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Political Frames..... | 75 |
| Identity-Cultural Frames | 77 |
| Period Analysis | 79 |
| Conclusion | 80 |
| CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS | 81 |
| Introduction..... | 81 |
| Results Overview | 81 |
| Implications of Findings | 87 |
| Methodological Considerations | 88 |
| Future Research | 90 |
| Conclusion | 92 |
| WORKS CITED | 93 |
| ANNEX..... | 97 |

List of Figures and Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure III.1: Arrow Diagram..... | 23 |
| Table III.1:Frames and categorization for the analysis of NPLs’ EU discourse | 30 |
| Table IV.1:Discourse Categories. Andreotti and Occhetto, 1990-1991 | 49 |
| Table IV.2:Discourse Categories. Prodi and Berlusconi, 1996-1997..... | 55 |
| Table IV.3:Discourse Categories. Berlusconi and Fassino, 2001-2002 | 63 |
| Table IV.4:Discourse Categories. Monti and Bossi/Maroni, 2011-2012 | 72 |
| Table IV.5:Discourse Categories. Conte and Salvini, 2018-2019 | 79 |
| Table V.1:Overview of NPLs’ Discourse..... | 82 |
| Figure V.1:Public Support in the Economy Category. 1990-2019. Italy & EU average.. | 84 |
| Figure V.2:Public Support in the Politics Category. 1990-2019. Italy & EU average..... | 84 |
| Figure V.3:Identity of Respondents. Italy..... | 85 |
| Figure V.4:Identity of Respondents. EU average..... | 85 |

Chapter I: Introduction

Political discourse is at the nexus of the study of political science, economics, and history. Politicians and elites have long understood the power that their framing has on influencing and swaying the perceptions of those in the polity - regardless of their status as voters or citizens. In a democracy, any good and bad policy or political decision needs to be accompanied by clear and successful political messaging to get non-elites on board with the decisions being taken. Through political discourse, elites have the ability to frame the past, present, and future, presenting relative histories to the public. While the medium might change as new communication technologies arise, the centrality of political discourse remains of critical importance.

The role of national political leaders (NPLs) in shaping public opinion has long been a topic of research in Political Science. This project's focus on the European Union (EU) and national leaders investigates how political discourse has shaped and influenced public support for the EU project during a period of increasing political, economic, and cultural integration in the continent. The EU has undergone significant changes since its creation in 1992, going from 12 member countries to the current 28, introducing a common currency, surviving through the global financial crisis of 2010, dealing with Brexit and the refugee crisis in the past decade. It is necessary to provide a longitudinal overview of what has changed in how the EU is framed by political leaders and received by the general public. The research question is as follows: *how do changes in national political leaders' discourse about the European Union affect public support for the EU?*

The recent rise of Eurosceptic parties across Europe, paired with the developments of the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, calls for a long-term study of political leaders' discourse to understand how the public has been influenced in their perceptions of the greater project of European integration that started right after World War II. Given the lack of a common European public sphere (as discussed in the following chapter), this research focuses solely on the role that NPLs have in shaping the support of residents and citizens within their country — acknowledging the country-based lens through which most of European politics is still carried out. To research the in-country effects of discourse and framing of the EU, this project's analysis is based on a single case study to allow for an in-depth understanding of the nuances of discourse and the trends of support.

This research selects Italy as the prime case study for this new model of elite cueing about the EU. Italy had been considered for a long time a leading supporter of any form of further European integration, with the Italian public being incredibly supportive of processes of economic, political, and cultural integration throughout the 1990's and early 2000's. Nowadays, however, Italy is presented internationally as a critic of the EU, both through its elected officials and its population. With recent electoral surges from Eurosceptic parties like the Five Stars Movement and the League, and Italians growing increasingly wary of the model of European integration, Italy presents an optimal first case study to understand what might have caused that switch in popular support. The case of Italy provides a particularly engaging research puzzle, as this research tries to explain

what caused the major shift among Italians towards supporting the project of European integration.

This research project develops as follows. In Chapter II, the literature on the topics of both elite cueing and EU public support is analyzed. The chapter covers both historical and contemporary understandings of political discourse in general and in the specific case of the EU, analyzing how a lack of a shared European public sphere has allowed NPLs to be the main influencers of public support within the borders of their own country. The chapter highlights the forms that public support for the EU take on, and how they can be manipulated by political leaders. The chapter builds upon the academic research to affirm that the European masses seek simple understandings for the complicated integrated systems of governance of the EU, and it is NPLs that provide that clear messaging and influence public perceptions directly.

Chapter III sets up the methodological approach for this study. It starts by justifying the methodological choices made for the longitudinal case study, and then conceptualizes and operationalizes both the independent and the dependent variables. The following section introduces the categories of analysis for both the discourse and the public support. Adapting from Pirro and van Kessel (2012), this chapter introduces the breakdown of the political, economic, and identity-cultural categories utilized for the research. The chapter continues with a breakdown of the time frames chosen for the analysis, and concludes with the introduction of Italy as the case study selected for this research project.

Chapter IV develops the analysis of NPLs' discourse and its correlation with public support for the EU in each of the time frames according to the methodology described in Chapter III. Specific sections are dedicated to each time frame, and the discourse analysis for leaders in that period is carried out before utilizing the Eurobarometer data to measure public support. The chapter highlights discursive changes in the last two time frames analyzed, with drastic negative effects for public support for the EU.

The final chapter provides an overview of the results coming out of the analysis of Chapter IV, and provides answers to whether or not the initial hypothesis proved to be true. This overview highlights that while seeking an answer to the original research question, the most significant finding is that public support remains positive and well-above average only when both NPLs in a certain time frame are both using positive messaging in the economic, political, and identity-cultural discourse categories. The chapter also provides a series of considerations over the methodological limitations that might have affected the results of the study. The closing section suggests options and possibilities for future research that could stem from this initial study.

Chapter II: Analyzing the Literature on European Union Discourse

Introduction

While some research in the field of European Union (EU) politics has explored the connections and influences between elites and mass opinions on the EU (Gabel and Scheve 2007; Steenbergen et al. 2007; Vossing 2015), there is a significant lack of research on how the changing dynamics of political leadership in Europe affect public support for European integration. This chapter combines literature on elite political discourse together with EU-specific trends regarding the mediated relationship between masses and elites. There is a need to investigate the role that national political leaders (NPLs) play in commanding the public's feelings about the European experiment in the long run. Understanding public sentiments about the EU requires a political and historical analysis of the importance and the changes in political leaders' discourse throughout the development of European integration. Overall, the chapter analyzes how national political leaders were able to shift the public opinion on the EU by engaging with mostly low-knowledge and disengaged citizen-voters, creating a shared enemy to support populist blame-shifting tactics.

This chapter starts by situating this study's research in the context of political discourse analysis (PDA), to understand the importance of analyzing the language of political leaders. The focus then shifts on political leaders' discourse effects on public perceptions; theoretical understandings of EU-specific discourse are then introduced. The next section provides an overview of the literature on the changes in political leaders' discourse since the 1992 creation of the EU. The chapter continues by deconstructing the

mediated connection between elites and masses, as well as the concept of public sphere in EU discourse. The focus finally lands on public support for European integration and its changes in relation to political leaders' discourse.

Talking About It: The Value of Political Elites

The latter part of the 20th century saw a linguistic turn in the study of political science, which paralleled a similar political turn in the study of linguistics (Dunmire 2012).

Political scientists moved towards the study of language as an inherently political area of expression, one that affects the daily lives and long-term plans of political leaders and citizens alike, rather than simply a tool to get a message across (van Dijk 2004). The role of language in politics is clearly not something that received recognition only in the 20th century, as philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero already understood the importance of political rhetoric in ancient Greece (Dunmire 2012). What shifted in the 20th century was a growing focus on the political content and context of discourse; rather than focusing on the proper ways of political speech like the Greeks, modern political scientists started to explore the power dynamics at play in political discourse, giving value to the causes and effects of certain ways of speech (Wilson 2004).

Modern political science research on speech and discourse has been contextualized within the field of political discourse analysis (PDA), in which language truly came to be understood as a political phenomenon. This new perspective allowed academics to examine the creation of meaning that is fundamental in the political activity of any individual or group: shared understandings of reality and common values are therefore created over a conflict of meaning, one that is a constant at any level of political

activity (Kiratli 2016; Dunmire 2012). PDA is tasked with “critiquing the role discourse plays in producing, maintaining, abusing and resisting power in contemporary society” (Dunmire 2012, 736). While recognizing that the *political* includes a variety of activities and actors in the polity, including professional politicians, political institutions, and active citizens, Teun van Djik advocates for a focus on the “discourse produced by the central players in the polity” (738). Specific forms of discourse are themselves a manifestation of power: political leaders have the ability to access and exert control over public discourse in ways that are not possible for common citizens (van Djik 2004). When this strategy is contextualized within the EU sphere, national political leaders have obtained and maintained the ability to shape the discourse on European integration, and their positions are the ones that are then received by the public.

The literature on the power of political elites offers a variety of models and theories on the relationship between elites and masses. Most models explain the effects of cueing, the linkages in knowledge and behavior that are created between the base and the political leaders. According to the literature, elites more strongly influence perceptions and voting behaviors of the masses than the public can sway the positions of their elected leaders (Gabel and Scheve 2007; Steenberg et al. 2007; Sanders and Toka 2013). While the wider world of political science academia still carries a debate on the directionality of effects between elites and masses, authors on EU issues have made it clear that elite influences on public perceptions are much stronger than public influences on elite discourse or behavior. European political elites generally do not consider the average opinion when determining their positions, but the public often employs cognitive

shortcuts to create their own opinion on relatively unfamiliar topics, and such knowledge paths are presented by trusted sources like party leaders (Sanders and Toka 2013, 23).

Since the EU is perceived as a distant, overly complicated, and somewhat undemocratic political and economic project, the opinions of elites become fundamental in creating public understandings of European integration. Most importantly, as Konstantin Vossing (2015) argues, political elites have the ability to change public opinion at a level beyond that which we would expect from evolving social identities and changing economic factors. In the context of EU discourse, these effects are considered to be particularly prominent. The EU appears as a distant technocratic institution whose inner workings are hard to understand even to informed citizens with high levels of political knowledge. Because of the perception of the lack of impact of EU policies and politics in the everyday lives of European citizens, national political elites cue those within their realm of activity by providing a model to understand and perceive the Union through national lenses. Rather than being a negatively-charged manipulation of public perceptions coming from elites, this top-down understanding of EU support recognizes that citizens expect their political leaders to be the ones providing the necessary information to allow them to form their opinion on technical topics like European integration (Steenbergen et al. 2007). In this model, we recognize the incredible importance of political leaders, especially those at the top of their respective parties: when the short- and long-term party lines are established, those will have a significant effect on public perceptions and support. While the literature covers the importance of political leaders' discourse and it recognizes their ability to sway public perceptions

(Sanders and Toka 2012; Vossing 2015), it lacks an analysis of how the changes in discourse have affected and are affecting citizens in the national political sphere.

Historical Roots and Ideas on European Discourse

The elite discourse on the EU is bound to change continuously as the institution itself changes over time. Political leaders are able to use the changing institutional environment to push their cues forward. To understand how public support for the EU changed, we turn to an analysis of EU national political leaders' discourse, focusing this section on the varying volume of integration discourse. Political leaders in 1992, at the time when the Union only had its 12 original members, presented ideas of Europe that were framed differently than those presented in 2019; for example, as the EU expanded its membership to Eastern European states in the early 2000s, it challenged the boundaries of the perceived "Europe" for the national publics (Herranz-Surralles 2012). Compared to the early years of the European project, when elite discourse on European integration was limited, NPLs have now no choice but to present some form of discourse on the Union due to the increasing involvement of the EU in the economic and political happenings at the country level. The following two sections provide a historical analysis of the changing volumes and focuses of political leaders' discourse before and after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and into the present days.

Discourse on Europe and European unity predates the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that formally established the EU. Ever since the end of World War II, political leaders across the war-torn continent recognized and promoted the need for a united Europe as a foreign policy solution to both dependency from the US and to detachment from the Soviet

Union. The creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 represented an elitist push for integration among European countries, a movement that mostly focused on the economic interests of large national industries and was therefore not of much interest to the average citizen.

The period from the late 1960s to the early 1990s is of crucial interest to the literature on support for European integration as it is commonly highlighted as the era of “permissive consensus.” In this period, elites were forging an ever-increasing European integration while the public was mostly uninterested and not participating in this political process.

The inner workings that established the EU were under an inscrutable technocratic cover that shielded interest from outsiders (Della Porta and Caiani 2006; Sanders and Toka 2013).

The breaking point for the permissive consensus, according to the literature, happened in 1992 with the signing and following ratification of the Maastricht Treaty that established the EU as it is known today. The Treaty moved Europe towards stronger economic integration, but also moved beyond it for the first time, integrating aspects of social, foreign, and security policy (Bickerton et al. 2015). The ratification of the Treaty proved to be tricky in Denmark and France, leading to an increase in the political elite debate on the topic of European integration. The French ratified the Treaty with only 51% of positive votes in the referendum, in what came to be known as the *petite oui*, the “small yes” that pushed the ratification through.

The Maastricht Treaty was pushed by political elites with often strong wording; Andre Szasz, leader of the Dutch central bank at the time, said “If we do not grasp this

opportunity there may not be another one;” German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the statesman who led Germany through the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the unification of Germany, highlighted that a failure to find common ground on this Treaty could mean “the beginning of the collapse of our Community” (Baun 1995, 620). European political elites put their unwavering support behind the creation and ratification of the Treaty, but for the first time the public was able to express themselves on the proceedings of European integration. When the Danish people voted against the ratification in the first round, Danish political elites were in shock: the Parliament had overwhelmingly supported the ratification with 130 members voting for and 25 voting against the bill. The popular referendum, however, opposed the ratification by a narrow margin, with 50.7% voting against it and 49.3% for it (Svenaai 1994). The Danish case was peculiar to Denmark, especially because the ruling government at the time was experiencing high levels of unpopularity and the minor “fringe” party leaders on the left and right managed to push voters with lower political knowledge and engagement to go to the polls and express their dislike for the government by opposing the proposition (Franklin et al. 2007). These leaders were able to frame the Treaty as a dangerous step towards loss of sovereignty and the creation of a relationship with Germany that was still considered impossible by the older generations who had lived through World War II (Marti Font 1992).

The Danish case was one that was particularly influenced by the ability of minority parties to swing those voters that were not being engaged by the mainstream majority sectors: the far left and far right leaders had a fertile ground of action and a

crowd that would listen to them, while the mainstream political leaders expected that their workings and predictions did not require explanations or justification. While the Danish did eventually ratify the Maastricht Treaty (a year later and with opt-out options crafted solely for Denmark), the event sent political ripples across the EU, with new political movements harboring anti-EU sentiments and crafting new strategies to create and engage the population of voters that had long been left out of the elitist conversation on the how and when of European integration. Understanding the political and historical significance of the Maastricht Treaty allows us to pinpoint the early stages of the changing elite discourse on the EU, going from elitist shadows to the public spotlight.

The Contemporary Changing Landscape: Populist & Eurosceptic Parties

In the analysis of the changing landscape of political discourse about the EU, a more recent phenomenon that requires contextualization is how leaders of populist and Eurosceptic parties have changed the discursive paradigms that were previously analyzed (Borriello and Mazzolini 2019). Populist parties have made significant progress in national elections across the Union, and they often provide a strongly Eurosceptic framework for discourse (Pirro and van Kessel 2018). These parties exist across the political spectrum, with leftist parties like Podemos in Spain, right-wingers like Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, and post-ideological movements like the 5 Stars Movement (M5S) in Italy. While the leaders of these movements and parties offer different perspectives, they share a common presentation of the EU as the “ultimate elitist project,” inherently undemocratic and working against the people of Europe (Pirro and van Kessel 2018; Borriello and Mazzolini 2019). Populist discourse is presented as a

counter-hegemonic practice, that seeks to create an antagonist figure to the political and financial elites at the EU level. This antagonization is presented by Borriello and Mazzolini (2019) in their study on the use of metaphors among populist political leaders in Spain and Italy: both Podemos and M5S leaders present the elite/people relation as one of battle and war. The discourse of populist parties is then inherently violent as it aims at amplifying the enemy characterization of the EU in the eyes of their supporters.

Eurosceptic populist discourse represents a breaking point from what mainstream political leaders have been saying in the past 20 years. Eurosceptics' discourse is often targeted at the EU as a whole rather than at specific issues of policy. While mainstream governing parties tend to use their elected members in the European Parliament (EP) to lead the conversation about EU issues, populist parties tend to frame issues on a nationalist level — therefore letting their national leaders control the anti-EU discourse (Seeninger and Wagner 2015). On the topic of framing, the experiences change depending on the ideological background of the party: right-wing eurosceptics prefer to use cultural frames, highlighting issues of integration of migrants, security threats connected to refugees, and ideas like “the Christian roots of Europe”; left-leaning populist parties, on the other hand, tend to prefer the use of socio-economic framing, covering topics regarding economic and financial sovereignty and the dangers of the Eurozone (Pirro and van Kessel 2018, 329-330). With their new approaches to populist discourse, anti-EU political leaders were able to engage with the citizen-voters who felt left out of the conversations on the ever-growing European integration process.

Bridging Elite Messaging and Mass Minds

After considering the historical and recent changes of political discourse about the EU, this paper turns its attention to understanding the ways in which political communication makes its way into the ears and minds of citizens-voters. For masses to be influenced by political elites, it requires efficient and successful communication from the political leaders (Sanders and Toka 2012). While some research has focused on governmental communication (Heinze et al. 2013), there needs to be a focus on political actors outside of the executive cabinet, especially as populist parties work on parliamentary opposition to work towards their own government. Traditionally, political messaging from leaders had to be mediated through news media, either in print, radio, or television. While some experiments have been done in local governance to connect politicians directly with their constituents, allowing for more fluid and direct interactions (Jensen 2003), most political messaging requires the intervention of media. Voters tend to gravitate towards familiar forms of media when seeking information on governmental developments and political updates (Heinze et al. 2013), which expose citizens to a variety of positions on different topics, often setting up conversations as inherently conflictual.

While traditional media is often a target for attacks of anti-EU populist parties, they also get to benefit from the system they are criticizing. TV media's hyper-focus on political skirmishes and its tendency to highlight bold political personalities over modest policy talk has led to an increased presence of populist political leaders on political talk shows, regardless of their polling numbers or seats in parliament (Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018). What these political actors were also able to obtain was a successful

communication strategy through online social networks. The ubiquity and ease of access of social media has fundamentally changed the way in which political leaders talk to their “followers.” Political communication now escapes the filters of traditional media conglomerates and aims at the virality of the messages being shared (Engesser et al. 2017). With social media’s interest in highly engaging content, political leaders have to shift their discourse towards highly emotional, controversial, and sometimes even violent ways that can stimulate responses from their own electorate and those opposite of them (Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018).

The European Public Sphere: The Missing Link

A theme that must be addressed to frame popular support for the EU is that of the lack of a European public sphere. The public sphere is to be understood as the “context in which private citizens engage in a public discourse about questions of the common good” (Bee 2008, 258). In the case of the EU, this context is considered to be non-existent because of the lack of cross-border interaction and the nationalization of media coverage of EU affairs. An analysis of the European public sphere is necessary to understand the importance of political leaders in shaping narratives on the EU. Due to the lack of cross-national conversations on topics salient to European integration, citizen-voters can only turn to their own national political actors for engagement in EU politics.

Traditional media is one of the driving forces behind how the public sphere is shaped and what content is even brought into discussion, but national newspapers and TV stations often fail to talk about the EU in a strictly EU context. Media actors tend to frame EU issues from a narrow national perspective, focusing on the positions and

concerns of those within the polity rather than covering a set of cross-border opinions and different political leaders (Dutceac Segesten and Bossetta 2019). In order for a European public sphere to emerge, media discourse must be Europeanized to a certain degree: the scope of public discourse must expand beyond national borders and prominently feature politicians and events from across Europe. Once that process gains traction, European citizens are given the opportunity to discuss and to create cross-national interactions based on that shared knowledge of events and actors at play.

A segmented public discourse about Europe fosters widening gaps between national identities rather than promoting a shared European one. According to Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss (2005), two of the leading researchers on EU discourse analysis, there will never be a uniform and cohesive elite discourse on the EU, which in turn will maintain a variety of local, regional, and national understandings of what a European identity is and could be. The absence of a public discussion about the institutions of the Union is considered to be a leading cause behind the perception of the EU's "democratic deficit." In its current state and for its whole political life, the institutional structure of the EU has never been part of the open arena of public discourse, which is considered to be a strikingly important precondition to legitimization (Della Porta and Caiani 2006). While national actors and institutions are under constant scrutiny from the public and are central parts of media discourse, European institutions are left at the periphery of the public sphere, unable to be scrutinized and legitimized by the European citizens that they are meant to serve. A study by Anamaria Dutceac Segesten and Michael Bossetta (2019) showed that the rise of Eurosceptic parties has facilitated

the Europeanization of media and popular discourse: when covering Eurosceptic parties, traditional media frames them in the context of a broader European discourse, with an increase in mentions of supranational institutions, policies, and processes. The lack of a European public sphere strongly situates NPLs as the central engine of creation for EU discourse, while only being exposed to scrutiny and engagement from their own electorates and citizens.

Changes in Public Support

Public support for the EU and European integration has been a constant subject of research before and after Maastricht (Anderson and Hecht 2018). The variables that can influence an individual's level of support for the EU are almost countless, and they have fostered a variety of approaches to evaluating public support. The average European citizen does not have a particularly articulated vision of the Union, leading to general feelings of support rather than an institution- or policy-specific evaluations. The preference for European integration is based on a few common core items around which the rest of the perceptions are built: as long as the overall perception is that the benefits of membership outweigh the costs, the support will stay significantly positive (Anderson and Hect 2018). Practically speaking, it is unlikely that a citizen that holds a strong belief in favor of the European Parliament will not support European economic policies or the monetary union.

This simplifying tendency in the approach towards EU support was exacerbated during the 2008 financial crisis that reached Europe and the following experience of Greece. The media discourse — especially in Southern Europe — pushed the image of

the *Troika*, the political triumvirate formed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. This set of supranational institutions came to represent everything that the Union did, and it quickly drew the opposition of many citizens across the continent. The Troika provided controversial bailouts to Greece to avoid insolvency on state bonds and external debts, but it did so by imposing incredibly strict economic policies that the national government had no choice but to accept, leading to cost-cutting measures that depleted public health, education, and pensions. The actions of the Troika were portrayed by anti-EU political leaders as the perfect example of the over-imposing powers of the Union, and this simple imagery easily struck a chord with European citizens in countries like Spain, Cyprus, Ireland, and Italy that were all being hit the hardest by the economic crisis. By 2008 for example, only 37% of Italians considered EU membership to be “a good thing,” compared to the 60% and over before 2001, and only 23% said that they trusted European institutions (Lucarelli 2015).

The 2008-2010 crisis had a strong effect on how the public perceived the EU: the crisis itself did not spark populist or Eurosceptic feelings, but those were strongly influenced by how the EU — in the form of the Troika — dealt with the situation. When European citizens were called to the ballots in 2014 for new elections for the European Parliament, they did not treat it as a second-order national contest as EP elections are usually considered, but they cast a vote that was truly aimed at sharing their perspective on pan-Europeanism and the greater European project of integration (Hobolt and de Vries 2016). The next section explores this concept of the political leaders’ preference for

localization of European issues over a genuine EU-level debate on EU-level issues and topics.

The Electoral Horse Race and Information Exposure

The 2014 EP election cycle allows for an interesting case in the analysis of the interplay between political leaders' discourse, media framing, political knowledge, and public reception to EU communication. To increase the democratic participation in EU electoral processes, the EP introduced the *Spritzenkandidaten* concept, which required each of the main EP political groups to bring forward a candidate's name for the position of President of the European Commission — the highest seat of power in the Union.

Research from Katjana Gattermann, Claes De Vreese, and Wouter van der Brug (2016) showcased the lack of European-level political discourse even with the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Coverage of EP elections is one of the very few topics in EU politics that gets addressed by news media, but even then it is dominated by domestic political actors (De Vreese et al. 2006).

One of the core issues is that European citizens at the ballot do not cast their preference for the Europarties themselves, they do so for their national parties they are already connected to. NPLs treat EP elections as second-rate tests of their appeal among the national public, leading them to maintain a low information level for EU issues while focusing on party politics and constructs of Europe that further their national agendas (Clarks and Hellwig 2012). In 2014, according to the data presented by Gatterman et al. (2016), only 16% of their survey respondents were able to make a meaningful assessment of the candidates brought forward by the three major Europarties, which signals a failure

of connection between high-level EU politics and mass perceptions. Low levels of information about the EU have been shown to hold a correlation with distorted popular attitudes that lean negatively towards European integration. Political leaders, especially those who hold anti-EU positions and ideologies, then have a vested interest in maintaining information levels low to improve the strength of their cues, especially because high-knowledge sections of the public are less susceptible to Eurosceptic frames (Clark and Hellwig 2012). Understanding the centrality of political leaders in the context of the national media apparatus carries significance as we consider that the majority of European citizens acquire and seek knowledge on the EU through traditional media like television and the written press, according to data from the Standard Eurobarometer 88.

Linking National Political Leaders' Discourse & Public Support for the EU

This chapter has developed understandings of both the role of political leaders' discourse and public support on the topic of support for European integration. Support for the EU is clearly a complicated and layered issue, whose development is varying based on both cultural and political context. The role of political leadership is then to embrace those different factors at play in the national sphere of politics and to implement and value discourse that is valuable for the people it is aimed at. While the institutions of the EU try to develop a common understanding of European identity and commonalities, the absence of a common European discourse at the European level is a core theme in the literature we presented (Wodak and Weiss 2005; Borriello 2017; Borriello and Mazzolini 2019). National political leaders work strictly in the context of their country: European issues are presented through an Italian, Spanish, French, or German lens rather than through a

supranational one. As long as these leaders benefit from localizing their discourse, their citizens will lack a common understanding of what the European integration project should look like at a Union level. Gaps between public support for the EU are bound to emerge as national political leaders approach EU issues outside of a shared European public sphere (Bee et al. 2008).

The power that national political leaders hold in shaping EU discourse and support is not to be underestimated. While the current research on political cueing still has to come to a common ground on the directionality between elites and masses, the literature reviewed in this chapter strongly highlights the importance of elite effects on masses (Baun 1995; Gabel and Scheve 2007; Steenbergen and Edwards 2007; Vossing 2015). The European public seeks simple understandings of the complex EU system, and those cognitive and political shortcuts are offered by the elites they are represented by. Factoring in the lack of a European public sphere where citizens could interact across borders and develop a common understanding of Europeanness, elite-masses connections come into the foreground for this research (Della Porta and Caiani 2006; Bee et al. 2008). The literature also points us to the value of the mediation of political elites' messages, understanding how Eurosceptic leaders are able to exploit traditional media's interest in heightened conflict as well as social media's algorithms that privilege interactions and virality (Engesser et al. 2017; Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018).

Overall, the literature reviewed for this chapter showcases how low the public's engagement with EU issues has been, and even when those are brought into the public discussion, political leaders do so from national perspectives, which in turn get reflected

in the media coverage of the topic at hand. In the multi-level governance system of the EU, the Union itself has become an easy target for blame-shifting coming from national political leaders — even those holding high offices like that of Prime Minister (Traber et. al 2019). When the EU is brought into the political conversation, it is to present a higher political power that is putting unbearable constraints on the power and autonomy of national governments and their people. As the chapter has covered, the reception of these messages from the perspective of low-knowledge and generally disengaged masses has brewed strong anti-EU sentiments in many European countries across a variety of voting groups.

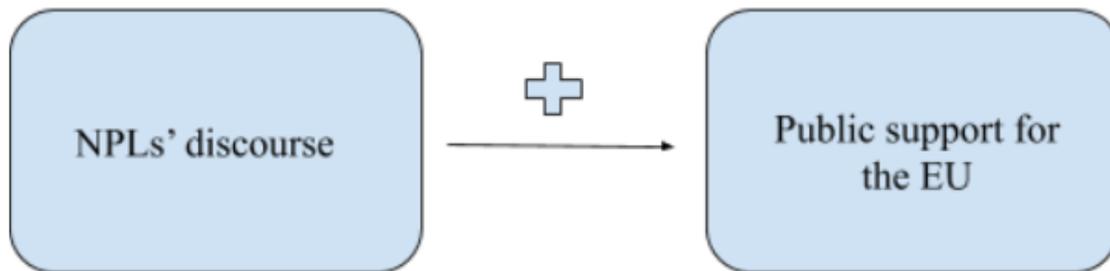
Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter covers the methods of the study for the following research question: *how do changes in national political leaders' (NPLs) discourse about the European Union affect public support for the EU?* Therefore, the hypotheses are as follows:

- **H₁:** if national political leaders' discourse about the EU turns negative **then** public support for the EU will decline in those leaders' country.
- **H₂:** if national political leaders' discourse about the EU turns positive **then** public support for the EU will increase in those leaders' country.

Figure III.1: Arrow Diagram



The chapter starts by understanding the methodology selected for this research. It then moves on to analyzing the background for the selection of National Political Leaders (NPLs) and their discourse as the independent variable of the analysis. Qualitative measurements for NPLs' discourse are then set up. The next section is dedicated to exploring public support for the EU as the dependent variable, followed by its appropriate measurement. The chapter then sets the time frames used for the comparative analysis. The chapter ends with setting up the country of Italy as the case study selected for this specific research.

Methodology

This study is based on a single case study which allows for internal comparisons between time to better analyze the changes in the discourse of NPLs and how those have affected the public support for the EU. This research design based on discourse analysis and survey data allows for an in-depth analysis of the effects of elite-mass cueing in the context of the wider European integration project. A time-based case study allows for comparison between each of the time frames taken into consideration while also bringing significant trends to the forefront of the analysis that would have otherwise been lost through a traditional single case study. While the case study is focused solely on one country in the EU, it provides opportunities for external validity and generalization of the findings to similarly structured countries across the Union, which will be explored in a later section of this chapter.

Independent Variable

National Political Leaders

The unit of analysis for the independent variable is at the individual level. The focus is the discourse produced by national political leaders (NPLs). Due to the recurrent focus on political leaders in discourse analysis (Dunmire 2012; Borriello 2017; Borriello and Mazzolini 2019), this research seeks to analyze individual leaders and their nuanced approaches in common political contexts. Political leaders in the EU represent a variety of party and ideological interests and are considered particularly powerful in setting public understandings on the topic of Europe (Baun 1995). Political leaders are the actors through which elite-mass cueing processes are reified in the political arena (Gabel and

Scheve 2007). For this research, the specific focus is on leaders that are part of the national political system. This specificity is due to the power of NPLs to shape the national discourse to which the public is exposed. Political and media structures in European countries give discursive power to NPLs rather than to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) or political leaders from other countries (van Djik 2004; Steenbergen et al. 2007; Sanders and Toka 2012; Vossing 2015).

Leaders' selection is done by choosing significant time frames in the modern history of the EU and selecting specific NPLs in that interval. The time frame selection is explained in a later section. For this research, NPLs of the country being studied include the Head of Government, as well as one or two opposition leaders. Heads of Government are often the central focus in the national public sphere, and analyzing their discursive changes is significant in understanding the ideas to which large parts of the populations are exposed. Including at least one opposition leader is necessary, and a second one might be added depending on the context of the time frame in question. A second opposition leader should be taken into consideration if their discourse is significantly different from that of the first opposition NPL selected or there was a change in leadership during the time frame in consideration. The value of including the discourse of opposition leaders is tied to the multi-party parliamentary system typical of European countries. The historical variety of ideologies and parties is reflected in a diversity of discursive themes that are allowed to be presented in the political arena. Reflecting on the discursive changes of opposition leaders allows for a better understanding of which type of discourse becomes effective enough to move from the political periphery into the mainstream. While some

ideas of Europe might be constantly relegated to small minority parties that are considered extremist, some previously radical ideas can become normalized and reach mainstream status.

Discourse

For the purpose of this research, discourse is defined as the cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about a certain topic as framed and presented by NPLs. This general definition allows for the recognition of the variety of ways in which discourse is articulated by political leaders. Discourse is the fundamental reifying process of political thought, and a proper analysis requires contextual value. Images of the EU are created and projected through NPLs' discourse and its connection to the frames received by the population at large. Following the canon of discourse analysis employed by scholars such as Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2017) and Borriello (2017), this study utilizes a qualitative analysis of the frames and images used by the political elites under scrutiny, arguing in favor of a more holistic approach to the analysis of discourse.

NPLs' discourse is the cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about the EU as framed and presented by NPLs. Discourse encompasses all verbal and written production by NPLs through media like parliamentary addresses, interviews, political rallies, and social media posts. Discourse analysis then aims at deconstructing and analyzing the messages and frames that are utilized regularly by — in this case — NPLs in order to create a certain set of images of Europe that can be then transmitted to the public. Deploying the discourse analysis framework allows to uncover the beliefs and

values presented by each NPL over the time frames taken into consideration for this comparative case study.

The significant time frame that is considered for this study presents particular methodological challenges. While PMs have a consistent presence in front of the Parliament and in the press, opposition leaders are often working as extra-parliamentary individuals, and even when they sit in parliament, that is often not where they push most of their discursive opposition. Limiting the research to the analysis of parliamentary speeches would not give a full overview of the discourse presented by NPLs, especially those at the opposition who seek extra-parliamentary avenues to let their discourse reach their potential electorate.

Over the years, the ways in which NPLs can reach their electorates have changed dramatically. While the printed press represented the main mode of communication in the early 1990s, current-days' NPLs often employ their social media channels to quickly share influential inputs on many topics, including the EU. In understanding that different ways to share discourse have been employed in the almost 30 years overviewed in this study, as well as assuming that NPLs use a variety of channels depending on whether they are in the governmental majority or at the opposition, the corpus collected for the analysis of discourse requires a combination of parliamentary addresses, newspaper and magazine interviews, as well as social media posts when applicable - similarly to Borriello and Mazzollini (2019). While their analysis focuses on counter-hegemonic discourse across Spain and Italy, their methodology and choice of content still applies to this study. This research strategy, which includes the analysis of content from a wide

variety of sources, allows for a comparative analysis both between leaders in a specific period and across time frames. Reducing the field of content analyzed would not allow for a proper evaluation of recurring frames of discourse for the NPLs.

While the components that make up the corpus analyzed for each NPL might be different, they all contribute to creating the broad discourse whose qualitative analysis will follow in the chapter. For each leader being analyzed, the source material involves parliamentary addresses and newspaper interviews. These are highly public and thought-out avenues for NPLs to construct their discourse, and their analysis can uncover the specific frames that are being discussed. Parliamentary addresses are particularly useful in capturing the programmatic nature of leaders' discourse on Europe, highlighting what the EU should look like and what role should their country play within that context. Parliamentary addresses provide a more formal context to the discourse, providing a strong base for analysis. Parliamentary addresses can be gathered from the country's Parliament website and archives. Newspaper interviews provide a more direct and potentially less structured look into the discourse of NPLs. The mass nature of these interviews provides useful insight into what NPLs want to mostly directly communicate to their electorates. These interviews can be found by researching the leader's name during a certain time frame on the country's mainstream newspapers.

Measures

The discourse analysis is based on a set of recurring frames and positionalities within those frames. The methodology is based on an adaptation of Pirro and Van Kessel (2018). A holistic approach to the analysis of these frames allows for gauging which frames are

consistently used by NPLs and how their discourse plays within those specific frames. The questions that NPLs' discourse on the EU try to provide answers to are many and nuanced: what is the EU right now? What should the EU be? Is there significance to the European project? What is the role of their country in the greater European project? How has the EU wronged/benefited the country's citizens? These sections help in guiding the analysis of the most important messages included in the parliamentary addresses and interviews. The answers to these questions can be categorized into three different sections. Guidelines for recognizing positive and negative discourse are based on the context of three frames, modified and adapted from Pirro and Van Kessel (2018): identity-cultural, economic, and political frames. In this research, the NPLs' discourse is categorized within these three discursive frames to understand how NPLs present images of the EU to their potential electorate.

Table III.1: Frames and categorization for the analysis of NPLs' EU discourse

| | Economic | Identity-Cultural | Political |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| Positive | A common union with the euro as the single currency is the best option for national economic growth and easier trade across borders. | Multiculturalism and diversity of the EU is a strength that should be recognized. Membership in the EU allows member-countries to recognize their shared cultural identities. (Country) belongs in the wider context of European identity. | The EU project has brought peace thanks to its supranational system of democracy, with elected and appointed officials. |
| Negative | A common union with the euro as the single currency hurts national economies and puts unnecessary financial restraints over individual members. | The historical roots of Europe are in Christianity, and that cultural frame has to be preserved at all costs. The EU project erases national identity in favor of a neutral one. | Relinquishing any national decision-making power to the EU is wrong, and the institutional system of the Union is fundamentally undemocratic. |

. Modified from Pirro & Van Kessel (2018).

Firstly, the analysis focuses on how different NPLs utilize each type of frame, in order to understand which discursive strategies are preferred by either government or opposition leaders in each of the time frames being analyzed. Secondly, the analysis turns to how NPLs position themselves and their discourse within those specific frames that are being deployed, in order to understand how extreme or moderate positions arise within each type of frame. A qualitative approach to the analysis of frames and images used by NPLs requires a thorough reading of the source material in the original language, to maintain an understanding of the nuances of the discourse. Once the first collection of all the material is completed, the discourse is categorized, and samples of salient parts of the discourse are selected — translated into English — and analyzed within the context of the

individual NPL and in comparison with the other leader in the same time frame. While ideal long-term research would allow for a set of graders to provide reliability and inter-coder reliability, this project focuses on a single-person analysis of the source material.

Dependent Variable

Conceptualize & Operationalize Public Support

Conceptualization for measures of public support for the EU has not received particular interest in the literature on the topic. An over-reliance on the measurements provided by the Standard Eurobarometers (discussed later in this section) has led to a stalemate in new conceptualizations of public support. For this research, public support for the EU is intended as one single underlying predisposition for or against Europe rather than one that is broken down based on a particular institution or policy. We can accept this monolithic approach because of the low-information positions that many Europeans hold towards the Union, as explored in the previous chapter. The support for the EU is then a general orientation towards the overall project of European integration in the economic, political, and identity-cultural spheres.

These three categories mirror the discursive frames through which NPLs' discourse is analyzed. Analyzing public support based on these three categories leads to uncovering which frames have been more successful in shaping the public perceptions about the Union. The focus is on public support, therefore analyzing the predispositions of those who do not belong to the political elite group of the country being discussed, but rather the "masses." This general level does not discriminate based on nationality or citizenship status, it simply takes into consideration the general public resident in the

country in which the NPL is operating. We expect public support to increase or decrease in positive correlation with the positive or negative changes in the images and frames used by NPLs.

Measures

Public support will be measured through responses to significant questions from appropriate Standard Eurobarometers. The Eurobarometer (EB), started in 1974, is a project of the European Commission (EC). EBs are multi-topic, pan-European surveys carried out by independent public opinion companies that lead 1,000 face-to-face interviews to gather attitudes towards European integration, institutions, policies, culture, health, the economy, security, and a variety of other topics. The target population, before EB 41.1, was the national population of any EU country aged 15 over. Since EB 41.1, the target has been the population of any nationality of an EU member country, aged 15 years and over, resident in any of the Member States. A new Standard EB is released twice a year, one in the fall and one in the spring, providing the chance for a bi-annual analysis of public support for the EU. While the EB is not a perfect system due to its institutional bias and connection to the EC, it has been recognized academically as an appropriate tool to gauge the feelings of Europeans towards the EU and the greater European project of integration (Anderson and Hect 2015).

The EB provides a wealth of information that can be useful to measure public support for the EU. Following a model similar to Anderson and Hect (2015), this research selects a few recurring questions from the EB and analyzes the answers registered at each significant EB in the country being studied. Recognizing that EB questions have changed

over the 19 years that are being analyzed, multiple questions that fit within a certain category are selected. All questions are fielded in Standard EBs. The questions selected are:

Identity & Cultural: questions regarding perceptions of personal identity, nationality, sense of community.

- Do you see yourself as...?(NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), European only

Economic: questions regarding common currency, free trade, financial markets.

- Is the respondent 'for' or 'against' a common European currency (single currency) replacing the national currencies in all EC / EU member states
- What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it: a European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro.

Political: questions regarding democracy, satisfaction with EU political institutions.

- Do you have hope or fear for the EU after 1992?
- Would you consider (your country) membership in the EU a good thing or a bad thing?
- I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. Please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it: the European Union

The recurrence of these questions across multiple EBs is useful in providing a standard by which we can track the relative changes happening at each time frame. The

significance of these questions is also due to their focus on personal perceptions towards Europe, which can help in understanding what images and frames are being assimilated by the public. The answers to these questions are generally categorized as positive, neutral, or negative, with each one being connected to the percentage values of the results. Recognizing that there is a significant lag in the effects of political communication, as argued by Königslöw (2007), the Standard EBs used for the research include the first one recorded at least 6 months after a government's official start and the three EBs following that one. This set-up provides consistency in the measurements across time frames and allows for focus on the effects of each set of NPLs in their own time frame.

Timeline

The selection of time frames is of fundamental importance to acquire significant results. The overall timeline includes the years between 1990 and 2018.

The first time section is 1990-1991. The Maastricht Treaty was signed in early 1992 after a long-term discussion on the future of the European Community. Researching the NPLs' discourse and its effect on public support in the lead up to the passing of the Treaty allows for the analysis of the frames that NPLs deployed to shape the understanding of the future of the overall European project in the eyes of the public.

The second time period is 1996-1997. This period is significant to gather the NPLs' positioning on the long-term plans for the EU. For countries who have been members since the original 1992 group (Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, France,

Netherlands, West Germany, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, and Spain), this time period brought important debates on what Europe should look like.

The third time frame is 2001-2002. This era saw the introduction of the Euro as the common currency in the Union, and represented a time for higher economic and financial integration in the EU. Researching this time section provides insight into the discourse's effects on public support for new forms of integration at the European level.

The fourth time frame for research is 2011-2012. Countries across Europe were implementing some form of austerity measures to tackle the economic and financial issues of the Great Recession, and the Greece-EU relations became of particular interest for NPLs across the Union. Analyzing the discourse for these years leads to an evaluation of EU involvement in national economic affairs, which was made visible to the electorate.

The final and most recent timespan is 2018-2019. At this time, the EU became more commonly used in NPLs' frames as they created images surrounding the refugee and migrant crisis as well as the Brexit proceedings. Analyzing discourse and public support during this time period is particularly interesting as anti-EU parties grew in popularity during national and EP elections.

Across Time Case Study of Italy

This study utilizes the country of Italy as the case study. As one of the early promoting states of European integration, Italy has received a significant amount of research in the field of European studies (Lucarelli 2015; Pirro and Van Kessel 2018; Borriello and Mazzolini 2019). Italy, due to the literature's interest in the country, is a valuable country

to run an initial test of the new research framework presented in this study. As an original member of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the European Economic Community in 1957, and the European Union in 1992, Italy allows for a proper analysis of the long-term changes in NPL discourse and public support for European integration. Studying Italian NPLs' discourse provides a particularly poignant case study because of the formation in 2018 of a staunchly anti-EU and populist government coalition. An in-depth study of Italy helps in making sense of what is happening in Spain with VOX, in Germany with Alternative für Deutschland, in France with the National Rally, in Hungary with Fidesz, and many other Eurosceptic parties and leaders across the Union. The multi-party parliamentary system of Italy is similar to that of the vast majority of EU member states, allowing for similar dynamics to arise in different contexts.

There are other ways in which Italy represents a general case apt for this study. Italy does not have major European institutions on its territory and does not depend upon them: countries like Belgium and Luxembourg are heavily influenced in their support due to their close ties to the main institutions of the Union. As explained in the previous chapter, Italian politics were also affected by the end of the permissive consensus on the elitarian European integration in the lead-up to the Maastricht Treaty, which started a period of more contested ideologies and ideas on the present and the future of Europe. This provides the chance to analyze the full arc of NPLs' frames and public support for the EU project.

Based on the set of standards and guidelines set up in the previous sections of this chapter, the NPLs and EBs being analyzed for Italy are as follow:

1. The Andreotti VI and VII governments between 1990 and 1991. The NPLs are Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti (Christian Democracy), Achille Occhetto (Italian Communist Party/Democratic Party of the Left). This particular time frame requires the analysis of Occhetto during his leadership at the tail-end of the Italian Communist Party and the birth of the new Democratic Party of the Left. The Andreotti government is considered to be a centrist moderate force, and it was during Andreotti's tenure as Prime Minister that Italy officially signed the Maastricht Treaty.

The Standard EBs analyzed are EB 34 Fall 1990, EB 35 Spring 1991, EB 36 Fall 1991, EB 37 Spring 1992.

2. The Prodi I government between 1996 and 1997. The NPLs are PM Romano Prodi (The Olive Tree) and Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia). This was Prodi's first run as PM, at the end of which he would end up being elected as President of the EU Commission, the European organization he led from 1999 to 2004. This time period is of particular value for this analysis, as it is placed between the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and the introduction of the common currency of the European economic union. Struggles among the majority forces, together with Berlusconi's unstable support for the executive while at the opposition, made the discourse particularly engaging to the public.

The Standard EBs analyzed are EB 45 Spring 1996, EB 46 Fall 1996, EB 47 Spring 1997, and EB 48 Fall 1997.

3. The Berlusconi II government between 2001 and 2002. The NPLs are PM Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia), and Piero Fassino (Democrats of the Left). This time frame is of particular interest because it comes during the introduction and widespread implementation of the Euro in Italy as the common currency of Europe, and it is also the longest-lived government in post-World War II Italy. Analyzing Berlusconi's discourse is significant because of his long-term involvement in Italian politics, and this time frame covers the early efforts of his second tenure as PM after the short-lived Berlusconi I government of 1994 and 1995.

The Standard EBs analyzed are EB 55 Fall 2001, EB 56 Spring 2002, EB 57 Fall 2002, EB 58 Spring 2003.

4. The Monti I government between 2011 and 2012. The NPLs are PM Mario Monti (Independent), and Umberto Bossi and Roberto Maroni (Northern League). This is a time of particular interest in this case study due to the technical nature of the Monti government. Monti was appointed PM in late 2011 to navigate Italy out of the financial and economic crisis after the failure of previous governments to do so. The technical government was supported by all parties except for two, one of them being the Northern League. Bossi, the founder and long-term leader of the independentist party the Northern League, decided to hand over leadership of the party in early 2012, leading to a tenure for Roberto Maroni as the new face of the party. The Monti government had to deal with heightened discussions surrounding the role of the EU in the economic and political decisions over the

sovereignty of Italy, especially as EU guidelines encouraged stricter austerity measures on suffering countries.

The Standard EBs analyzed are EB 77 Spring 2012, EB 78 Fall 2012, EB 79 Spring 2013, EB 80 Fall 2013.

5. The Conte I government in 2018 and 2019. The NPLs are PM Giuseppe Conte (Independent) and Deputy PM Salvini (Northern League) This case is of particular interest because the 5 Star-Northern League alliance led to the first populist anti-EU government in Italy. While holding different positions on a variety of political and economic issues, the two parties came together and selected Giuseppe Conte — a person with no previous political experience — as their shared representative. This coalition was characterized by continuous in-fighting between the two souls of the government, making Salvini the leader of the opposition while sitting among the executive itself, leaving external parties struggling to be part of the public political arena. The appointment of an independent such as Conte also led to the PM walking a fine political line between the two pillars that maintained the government alive.

The Standard EBs analyzed are EB 90 Fall 2018 and EB 91 Spring 2019.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the guidelines for the methodological approach needed to better understand the correlation between political discourse analysis and public support for the EU. A methodological framework based on qualitative rather than quantitative analysis allows researchers to more deeply understand the dynamics of hegemonic EU discourse

amongst NPLs. The time frame selection is particularly valuable in setting up future studies that could analyze the same relation in other European countries. As previously discussed, the choice of Italy as the first case to test this research framework is particularly valuable, and sets the standards for future case studies. After careful corpus and data collection, this study now turns to the analysis of the NPLs' discourse and the variations in public support for the EU.

Chapter IV: Analysis of the Discourse and Popular Support for the European Union

After analyzing the existing literature on the topic of national political leaders' (NPLs) discourse and setting up a methodology that builds upon existing models of research, this study now turns to the investigation of the correlation between NPLs' changing frames of discourse and their effects on public support for the EU. This chapter will follow the breakdown of time frames that was laid out in Chapter III. For each time period taken into consideration, a brief overview of the European and Italian political contexts will be provided to better understand the discourse being analyzed. After introducing the context, the economic, political, and identity-cultural categories are used to analyze first the discourse within those frames and then its effects on measures of public support. Each section is then completed by an overall analysis of the discourse and public support outcomes for the time frame in question. The overarching analysis of trends will be provided in Chapter V.

1990-1991 Andreotti VI-VII (July 1989-April 1991, April 1991-June 1992)

European Context

The early 1990s were, for Italy and for the rest of the continent, a fundamental turning point in the long history of projects of European integration. The 1987 introduction of the Single European Act (SEA) set in motion the processes that would eventually create the single monetary union and the common political practices that would become the effective pillars of the 1993 foundation of the EU, the political body that replaced the previous European Communities (EC). During the 1990-1991 biennium, NPLs were focused on what the post-1992 Europe should look like, highlighting their plans and

hopes for the next steps of European integration. This type of presentation is, therefore, a perfect example of what Fairclough, Mulderring, and Wodak (2001) call imaginaries, the discursive presentation of how things should be done and how they should be.

Italian Context

Between 1990 and 1991 Giulio Andreotti and the Christian Democracy were leading what ended up being the last government of the so-called First Republic, before the seismic events of Tangentopoli, the bribery scandal that led to the complete reform of the Italian political system in 1992. Italy's executive was comprised of the same Christian, centrist, moderate forces that had maintained power in the country since the birth of the Republic after World War II. As Prime Minister, Andreotti also found himself to be leading the 1990 Italian presidency of the European Council of Ministers, which tasked him with the planning of many of the meetings that led to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

The political situation of the country at this time was particularly tense, as Andreotti actually oversaw two different governments between the beginning of 1990 and the end of 1991. In April 1991, following tensions within the government about the handling of Italy's involvement in the Gulf War and the lack of major institutional reforms, the Socialist Party of Italy (one of the five major parties that made up the government coalition) pulled its support for Andreotti, but rather than going to early elections, then President of the Republic Francesco Cossiga charged Andreotti with forming a new government coalition. This new coalition still included the Socialist Party as a supporting party, keeping their alignment on the same side as the Christian Democracy. In the meantime, opposition leader Achille Occhetto was also enduring

significant political struggle. The Italian Communist Party was a constant opposition to the Christian Democracy governments that Italy had experienced since World War II, and Occhetto led the party at a particular turning point. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Italian Community Party found itself at a cross-road: what was once the biggest and most popular Communist party outside of the Soviet borders, was in 1991 coming to its final chapter, with most of its members taking the road of democratic socialism and founding the Democratic Party of the Left, of which Occhetto would eventually become secretary after internal struggles.

Economic Frames

Discourse

Regardless of the uncertain political circumstances in which they found themselves, both Andreotti and Occhetto engaged with EU discourse in and outside of the parliamentary chambers. Andreotti employs economic frames in his EU discourse to set up the conversation around further integration. In the lead-up to 1992, Andreotti tried to justify stricter monetary and financial policies to the Italian people, measures that were necessary for Italy to align with the criteria of deficit and inflation needed to be ready for the eventual switch to a common European currency — outlined in detail with Maastricht and which would be given the name *euro* in 1995.

For instance, in a parliamentary address on April 17th, 1991, Andreotti highlights the need for “any effort to realize [...] a convergence with the economies of the other European nations”. The call for “politics of sane balances” (12/6/1990) is a key framing of the European integration issue in Andreotti’s discourse. According to the PM, meeting

the new European criteria will not be an easy task, but it is worth “the near perspective rich with many other innovative developments” on the economic front (4/17/1991). This production of meaning of a bountiful Europe that one must fight and struggle for is a constant in Andreotti’s use of economic frames are overall positive, but they do present Italy as needing to do more in order to truly succeed as part of the future EU. The EU is framed as a positive goal to reach and as a chance to increase Italy’s own economic potential.

Achille Occhetto adopts similar discursive strategies in his framing of the economic perspective for Italy in a post-1992 Europe. Occhetto highlights the fight that Italy has to endure at this point in time, referring to the problem of “finding ourselves at the doorstep of Europe carrying the boulder of Italian fragility, an out-of-control public debt” (4/5/1991). Once again, Italy is the one portrayed as being less than appropriate in the economic realm, needing to surpass its burdens before entering the future EU as a valuable and respected member.

Public Support

The use of economic frames proves to be particularly successful among Italians, even with the tougher financial restrictions needed to be granted entry into the common monetary union. To proxy the support for economic integration, this study uses the Eurobarometer questions on the support of “a single common currency replacing the different currencies of the Member States in five or six years’ time.” Between EB 34 (Fall 1990) and EB 37 (Spring 1992), when asked about their support of the introduction of a single European currency, an overwhelming average of 71% of Italians declared

themselves to be in favor of this policy, more than 15 percentage points over the EU12 average of 55% in the same time frame. Italians during this time top many of the EB charts.

Political Frames

Discourse

Having established the importance of economic issues in the discourse, the Italian PM utilizes this area to pivot towards political frames. Andreotti presents the project of an integrated Europe as going “far beyond the model of a free-trade association with the addition of partial political cooperation” (11/20/1990). Andreotti goes even further and challenges Adam Smith’s liberal theory by saying that “the New Europe, not separated by artificial walls, cannot be created by an invisible hand” (12/6/1990), suggesting that the future EU will only succeed with the political will of European governments and conscious efforts to create a unique model of supranational government. On the use of political frames, we start to see a general trend of agreeance between Andreotti and the main leader of the opposition at the time, Achille Occhetto. Occhetto tries to take responsibility for the political focus on this new Union, saying that “today the European Left has in front of itself a historical objective: to combine the values of freedom and equality” (10/11/1990). It is firmly within the European context that Occhetto sees “the explosive, truly revolutionary, force of democracy” (10/11/1990), which is an incredibly positive political framing for the representative of a party that was well known for its dedication to statism. Andreotti and Occhetto’s discourses align on their focus on making the EU a democratic home for Europeans, giving particular focus to the European

Parliament and the unique ability to elect its members through “direct and universal suffrage” (Andreotti 12/6/1990).

Public Support

When asked about whether they hoped or feared 1992 and the evolution of European integration in EB 34 and EB 37, 72% and 67% respectively said that they were hopeful, the highest percentage among the EC12 whose averages were 61% and 55%. Similarly, in EB 35 (Spring 1991) and EB 36 (Fall 1991), when asked about their hopeful perceptions on the single market, 71% and 73% responded positively, in contrast with the EC12 averages of 65% and 60% respectively, once again putting Italians at the top of the positive charts. Italians at this point feel empowered and hopeful that Italy will play a significant role in European politics, and that their voice will be heard thanks to the leadership of their elected leaders of reference.

Identity-Cultural Frames

Discourse

While brief mentions of “a new European nation” (Occhetto, 2/23/1990) and “a notion of European citizenship” (Andreotti, 12/6/1990) are present in the discourse, they are not a recurring framing during this time period. The identity-building process is not particularly present at this point in time. Most of the European identity that is being built during this period is one that sits opposite from the era of conflicts across the continent before and during Nazi-Fascism. Both Occhetto and Andreotti rebuke this type of right-wing opposition to a unified Europe. Andreotti encourages Italians and Europeans to “abandon any autarchic nostalgia” (11/20/1990). Similarly, Occhetto applauds Italians

because “Italians have always understood very clearly the prospective of European supranationality” (2/23/1990). The positive framing from both Occhetto and Andreotti on the topic of identity and culture follows along with the positive frames used in both political and economic themes.

Public Support

While the question was not asked during EB 34, starting from EB 35, Eurobarometer respondents were asked the following question: “do you ever think of yourself as not only (NATIONALITY), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?” With ideas of European citizenship being built into the conversations leading up to Maastricht, the importance of feeling European and belonging to a transnational community became prominent. Even given the shared positive framing of identity provided by Andreotti and Occhetto, Italian responses to the question between EB 35 and EB 37 recorded an 8-point fall (from 28 to 16) for “often,” while “sometimes” grew by 9 points (32 to 41) and “never” by 4 points (from 37 to 41). The results are somewhat similar to the trends across the European Community, “often” lost 7 points (21 to 14), while “sometimes” remained steady at 32%, and “never” increased by 7 percentage points (from 44 to 51).

Period Analysis

The Christian Democracy and the Italian Community Party were at odds on most topics for as long as both parties existed throughout the republican history of Italy. Finding similarities and common frames on the topic of European integration is surprising, but also speaks to a general and overall existing support for a stronger Europe across the

political spectrum of elites in Italian politics at the time. The effectiveness of this type of political framing is rooted in the fresh wounds of Nazi-Fascism, and the tragedy that nationalisms created across the continent. Whether coming from a traditional leftist party or a conservative liberal one, Occhetto and Andreotti present an idea of political Europe incredibly distant from the divided, insecure, and violent one that millions of Europeans had known as early as 45 years before.

Overall, this era of political discourse focuses on presenting the EU as the natural and most appropriate next step in the evolution of European integration. The idea is that the arc of European history is long, but it bends inexorably towards further integration. An integrated Europe must move forward and far beyond economic cooperation and free trade, but it still has to do so with popular support, which both NPLs analyzed in this period consider important. Early in the EU history, these leaders recognize the dangers of separating elite decisions from popular will, fearing the end of the popular consensus which has been previously highlighted in Chapter II. These NPLs are interested in presenting a Europe that is close to its inhabitants, not a distant and complicated system of technocratic bureaucracies.

Most of the focus is on the positive economic frames that promote the work leading up to the EU and the positive political frames that highlight the hopes of a stronger European integration for the future. NPLs in this time frame are working on the emergence and hegemonic rise of ideas of an integrated Europe that reach both other NPLs in interested countries, but most importantly their own national population. In

presenting a people-focused EU as the objective of the project of integration, they are centering and valuing popular support for these processes.

methodologies of our programs” (2/23/1990).

Table IV.1: Discourse Categories. Andreotti and Occhetto, 1990-1991.

| 1990-1991 | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Andreotti | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Occhetto | Positive | Positive | Positive |

1996-1997 Prodi I (May 1996-October 1998)

European Context

During this time period, EU countries were working towards meeting the Maastricht convergence criteria to join the Eurozone. These criteria, such as price stability, sound public finances, exchange-rate stability, and long-term interests, were established in 1991 to determine which countries would be allowed to join the economic union with the common currency known as the euro (Daniels 1993). While convergence measures were adopted across the member states, this time period was also one during which countries like the Czech Republic and Slovenia submitted their formal application to join the EU.

Italian Context

The ups and downs of the first Prodi government were dictated by the complicated relationship within the government coalition, as the center-left forces of Prodi had to balance the minority support of the Reformed Communist Party, while also considering the support of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia whose one condition was to not have to work

with the Communist Party itself (Parker 1997). These internal tensions had to be put aside because Italy was tasked with meeting the economic and financial criteria established at Maastricht — on which the future of the common European currency depended upon. In order for Italy to align with the criteria, Prodi had to establish financial budgets for Italy that could have cut the strong welfare state in order to bring down inflation and please the international markets, but once again had to deal with the internal and external inputs on such tough choices.

Economic Frames

Discourse

As introduced in the Italian context for this section, Italy was once again in a tense situation in its relationship to the European Union. Prodi does not shy away from admitting to the toughness of the situation that Italy finds itself in, admitting that “the price is high, but all Italians want to pay it” (9/22/1996). Prodi presents both his political future and - most importantly - the future of Italy to the ability of the country to fully join the economic and monetary union outlined by the Maastricht Treaty. With the statement “I have bound my destiny to that of the Euro” (11/21/1996), Prodi presents the issue with particular urgency, further suggesting that “remaining out [of the monetary union] would be the economic ruin of Italy” (9/25/1996). Prodi’s positive economic frames paint a picture of a vital and necessary EU with standards that Italy has to live up to make the most out of the opportunities provided by successful European integration.

Very similarly, Berlusconi’s positive framing of the EU are also paired with a critique of the Italian situation. According to the leader of Forza Italia, “we must solve a

problem that is of the whole country: aligning with the Maastricht parameters through a financial budget that will guarantee us the entrance and permanence in Europe” (3/2/1997). The financial distress for Italy is then worth not only the entrance but also the permanence of Italy in the wider European project of economic integration. Aligning with PM Prodi, Berlusconi’s frames the urgency of the financial alignment process and its consequences on both the economic and the political level. “We have to make any type of effort to enter [Europe] among the first ones, otherwise we will have negative consequences on the union-based politics of Europe itself” (2/6/1997).

Popular Support

During this time period, support for European economic policies and for the introduction of the common currency known as the euro was at historically high levels among Italian respondents. When asked whether they supported the introduction of a single European common currency, an average of 76% of the Italians sampled answered positively, with Italians being at the top of the lists for positive answers in EB 45 (Fall 1996), EB 46 (Spring 1997), EB 47 (Fall 1997), and EB 48 (Spring 1998). The overwhelming positivity of Italian answers goes well below the EU average, which in the same time frame barely reaches 50%.

Political Frames

Discourse

Building off the positive economic framing analyzed in the previous section, Prodi pursues positive frames in his political discourse. In his programmatic speech at the beginning of his executive, the new PM assures that “we will be committed to the

formation of an overall political project, starting from the economic and monetary union” (5/22/1996). As a convinced supporter of an integrated Europe, Prodi does praise the economic connection achieved in the Union and sees the potential for success at the political level as well. With a recently fallen Soviet Union that had destabilized many of the structures of the international arena that had dictated 50 years of foreign policy, Prodi also recognizes that “a political Europe will contribute to a more efficient relationship with the United States” (5/22/1996). Prodi’s vision for a politically integrated Union “is about giving the EU its own foreign and security policy and stronger integration in the sectors of justice and internal affairs” (5/22/2006). This analysis shows clear, constant, and positive framing from PM Prodi - a NPL with a vision for the future integration and expansion of Europe.

During this time period, Berlusconi’s opposition from the liberal right follows a pattern of support and tension based on the problem at hand. While Berlusconi is firmly placed as a leader of the opposition, he recognizes that the goal of joining the upcoming monetary union in good standing is fundamental for the political future of Italy, not just economically. This higher political calling and mission is enforced by Berlusconi as he says that “in order for Italy to be in Europe, we will get over anything, even a governmental majority that we do not like” (3/7/1997). This call for internal political unity to reach for Italy’s European goals is repeated again by Berlusconi, as he clearly sends the message that “there is an opposition that willing to be with the majority government for the higher interest of the country” (3/7/1997). Berlusconi’s political

framing is then positive, as he understands and shares with the public the need for common political action for Italy to be successful in Europe.

Public Support

When asked whether they thought that membership in the EU was a “good thing” or a “bad thing,” the responses of Italians were once again particularly positive when compared to the EU average. Despite a drop between EB 45, when 75% of Italian respondents responded positively, and EB 46, when 68% had positive answers, the number remains high through EB 47 (62%) and EB 48 (back up to 69%). During the same time period, the EU average remains constant around 47%. So while Italian respondents seem to grow somewhat weary of EU membership, they are still overwhelmingly positive when compared to the responses of their fellow Europeans across the Union.

Identity-Cultural Frames

Discourse

PM Prodi’s identity-cultural frames situate Italy as a fundamentally European country, connected to its network of values and identity and inseparable from the larger community. Similarly to Andreotti in the previous time period, Prodi establishes a symbiotic relationship in which “not only Italy needs Europe but Europe needs Italy” (9/25/1996). This kind of relationship is one that elevates Italy to a central position in the European world and that of Western democracies. Prodi’s national pride in his framing is one aimed at uniting rather than dividing, as he says that Italy is “a great nation that Europe and the West cannot do without” (5/22/1996). In his vision for the future of his

governmental action, laid out in May 1996, Prodi's closing statements are on the identity of Italy in the context of Europe and the role that the EU must have in the international arena: "the Italy we want to bring beyond the year 2000 is fully European, integrated in a Union that we want to be bigger and more united, and it will be able to fulfill with authority its missions of human rights promotion and peace in the world" (5/22/1996). In highlighting the values that a united Europe could be the global leader of, Prodi maintains his positive framings and once again reinforces the role that Italy will play in that new world order.

Berlusconi's use of identity-cultural frames is limited during this time period. In Berlusconi's vision, "remaining outside of Europe would be a tragedy because it would be just us, with devastating effects for our country" (3/7/1997). This kind of phrasing suggest that consequences for Italy's absence from an integrated Europe would go well beyond political and economic hardship, but would directly affect the structural identity of the country. Without being inside of the EU, Italy loses part of its meaning as a nation.

Public Support

When asked questions about identity and belonging in the EU context, the answers of Italian respondents are once again among the highest positive percentages across member states. In EB 45, when asked whether they felt citizens of the EU, citizens of their own country, or citizens of their own region, the answers of Italians recorded a particularly high 30% in the first category, 53% in the second, and 16% in the last option. Comparing that to the respective EU averages of 16%, 61%, and 22% show a much stronger feeling of European citizenry among Italian respondents. For EB 46 and EB 47, the question was

slightly changed to be phrased as the following: “in the near future do you see yourself as: (nationality) only, (nationality) and European, European and (nationality), or European only.” The answers of Italian were still particularly positive in comparison with EU averages. Averaging the results of EB 46 and EB 47, 34% said that they only felt Italian, 52% Italian and European, 6% European and Italian, and 5% European only. The results remain high in comparison to the EU averages for the same answers, which were respectively 46%, 40%, 6%, and 5%.

Period Analysis

The calls for political unity during this time period are clearly reflected in the shared messaging that Prodi and Berlusconi promote. The internal differences between parties are temporarily put on the sidelines to guarantee the continuation and promotion of processes of European integration that favor Italy and the Italian people. The PM and the opposition leader both frame the EU as a sort of higher call of politics, that goes well beyond the electoral contest. The sense of urgency in preparation for the introduction of the common currency is also clear in the discursive framing of both leaders, as they share the messaging of an absolute need to not be left behind while the processes of further economic integration keep moving forward across the continent.

Table IV.2: Discourse Categories. Prodi and Berlusconi, 1996-1997.

| 1996-1997 | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Prodi | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Berlusconi | Positive | Positive | Positive |

Berlusconi II 2001-2002 (June 2001-April 2005)

European Context

During this period, the EU was working on the implementation of the euro as the common currency across the monetary union, while also looking towards the future Eastern enlargement of 2004 and early talks of a shared EU Constitution to consolidate many of the European treaties into one single document adopted by the whole community. The euro was still in its early phases and it was too early to judge whether or not it was a success, and talks of financial convergence were left to the past.

Italian Context

The 2001-2002 biennium represents the start of the second Berlusconi government. After a brief 8-month executive between 1994 and 1995, this second governmental experience would eventually be the longest-tenured government of Italian history after the wars. Berlusconi's alliance with the National Alliance and the Northern League allowed for a strong majority government that lasted for almost four years (Blondel et al. 2002). The leader of the opposition during this time was Piero Fassino, who was recently elected as secretary of the Democrats of the Left, the party that followed the short-lived experience of the Democratic Party of the Left. The Democrats of the Left would ally themselves with other parties of the center-left, forming the electoral alliance of the Olive Tree until 2005. Fassino was particularly critical of Berlusconi, as he often called out the PM for presenting positive frames of Europe but not following up with clear actions.

Economic Frames

Discourse

In his outlining of his executive's foreign and European policy, Berlusconi presents the common currency as an incredible success for all of Europe. In this instance, the PM says that "the euro works - this is a beautiful and uncontested truth - and the currency is already a popular symbol for the citizens of the continent" (1/14/2002). From Berlusconi, the use of the Italian term "popolare" does not directly translate to the English word "popular" as something with popularity, but more aptly translates to "a symbol of and for the people." Berlusconi's economic frame is then positive, and he does set the euro as not an imposition from higher European powers, but rather as a currency and a decision belonging to the people of Europe, including Italians.

Fassino's economic frames are focused on claiming many of the victories of European economic integration under the banner of the center-left: "The years in which the center-left coalition governed were those in which we set and realized the policy of convergence that brought the lira into the euro" (1/14/2002). The success of the financial convergence of the Italian economy to enter the euro was not a given for Italy, as it was discussed in earlier sections of the chapter, and Fassino's positive economic frames help in sharing the value of this political effort from the parties of the center-left coalition. Fassino continues using positive economic frames to center the value of Italy in the European project by saying that "having brought the lira into the euro did not simply mean rightfully respecting an essential interest of the Italian economy, but it also

represented the occasion to show that Italy could be a credible and trustworthy country, capable of respecting the European criteria like other countries” (1/14/2002).

Public Support

When asked whether they were for or against the euro as the single currency of the EU, Italians respondents had overwhelmingly positive answers. In EB 55 (Fall 2001), 83% of Italians said that they were for the euro, the highest positive answers in the Union and incredibly higher than the EU average of 59%. Between responses in EB 56 (Spring 2002), EB 57 (Fall 2002), and EB 58 (Spring 2003), the Eurobarometer answers do show signs of fluctuation, as positive answers go from 79% to 87%, and back down to 76%. The inability to highlight a specific downward or upward trend does not allow to establish a specific effect of the economic discourse on public support in terms of economic frames.

Political Frames

Discourse

PM Berlusconi’s political discourse over this time period spans a variety of topics, in line with positive political frames but also imagining future developments of the EU that not many other contemporary leaders particularly agreed with. In his confirmation speech in front of Parliament, Berlusconi confirms right away that “the government has highlighted the continuity of the foreign policy line that it intends to strengthen with a more incisive effort for the construction of Europe and its future” (6/18/2001). Six years removed from his first executive between 1994 and 1995, Berlusconi reassures the Italian public that the work that had been done since by the center-left governments would not be erased, but

his task would be to embrace those political frames and strengthen them. Berlusconi's pro-EU efforts are, according to the PM, "certain to guarantee the national interests" (6/18/2001) of Italy, and he positions himself as a strong leader in Europe when he says that "I am protagonist of all European meetings; there is a sense of great consideration, cordiality, and friendship" (10/26/2001).

Following the September 11th, 2001, attacks on the New York City's World Trade Center and the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., the rampant talks of war in the US and in Europe seep into the political discourse of PM Berlusconi. In recognizing the potential escalation towards war, Berlusconi reminds the Italian public and his political peers across Europe that "only the union of our various countries and answering questions as one Europe can give us a political role and importance in the international arena" (10/26/2001). In valuing multilateral diplomacy and decision-making processes, while at the same time recognizing the particular importance of the US in the international arena, the Italian PM suggests that a strong and united EU has the ability to say to the Americans "here we are, this is Europe" (1/20/2002). The increased unity in external policy for EU, according to Berlusconi, should also lead to "the creation of a single army that integrates the various national components [if] Europe wants to be incisive" (10/1/2002).

Rather than focusing on the potential for political change of the Union, Fassino's positive political frames highlight the contemporary successes and political prowess of the EU. In reminding the Italian public of the efforts of the European Parliament, the Commission, and many of the other EU bodies, Fassino says that "Europe is already a

political subject! Europe already has sovereignty and its own structures” (1/14/2002). Furthermore, similarly to his framing of economics, Fassino claims the political integration successes of the past few years for the center-left governments that preceded when he says that “the years of the center-left were those in which we brought Italy in the system of free movement of Schengen, from which we were initially sidelined” (1/14/2002). The positive framing in this case works both ways, towards the EU and towards the work of the center-left government coalition.

Public Support

The trend of support for EU membership during this time period is a generally upward trend. Between EB 55, EB 56, and 57, the “good thing” answers are set at 57%, 64%, and 69% respectively, compared to the average answer of 51% across the EU. These answers are in line with what the latter data from the previous time frame indicated in terms of political support, where the last data point from EB 48 was a positive answer at 69%.

Identity-Cultural Frames

Discourse

The identity-cultural frames used by Berlusconi focus mostly on what future Europe could look like. While talks about the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the EU were still ongoing with countries like Estonia and the Czech Republic, Berlusconi foresees “a strong and big Europe, not just reaching 25 or 27 member states, but incorporating, when it will be possible, even Russia” (1/20/2002). The annexation of Russia into the Union is a recurring topic in Berlusconi’s discourse as he suggests again that bringing in the Eurasian giant is necessary “to make the EU not only an economic power, but a political

and military one, that could share with the US the goal of guaranteeing peace, security, and wellbeing to the whole world” (4/14/2002). The focus on the values of peace, security, and wellbeing enumerated by Berlusconi suggests that Russia shares those same ideals and that the identity of Russia is inherently European and Western. This peculiar discourse from Berlusconi might have been influenced by Berlusconi’s strong friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and no other political leader in this time period (or since) has pursued this goal.

Berlusconi argues that “the last obstacles to the EU enlargement have fallen” and therefore sees “in front of us the historical responsibility to unify the continent under democracy and liberty, after the two totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism and after the division of the post-war period” (6/18/2001). The values of democracy and liberty, according to Berlusconi, are the foundation of European identity - which he contrasts with the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.

Fassino highlights the tension between the talking points and the actions of previous Italian governments and how that has contributed to building a particular image of Italy over time in the European arena. Fassino does agree that “Italy has always been a country seen in Europe as a country that is Europeanist and European” (1/14/2002), but he does admit that “the contradiction between what we said we wanted to be and what we were was often brought up” (1/14/2002). Fassino’s framing of Europe is positive, but clearly suggests the need for Italian politicians to be doing better on keeping up with its promises. The Democrats of the Left’s leader encourages his political peers to do better because “many parts of Italian society, now more than ever, live, in their daily lives, the

European dimension as an economic, social, and cultural dimension in which they make, on a daily basis, their own choices” (1/14/2002). The identity of Italians as fundamentally European, for Fassino, has evolved in such a way that the experience of Europe is a tangible part of the daily livelihoods of Italians.

Public Support

Considering the recurring Eurobarometer question on European and national identity, Italian respondents are still prominently at the top of the positive charts during this time period. Those responding that they felt “Italian only” had a significant drop from 31% during EB 56 to 20% and 22% in EB 57 and EB 58 respectively. The “Italian and European” response gained 20 percentage points in the same time period, from 45% (EB 56) of answers to 65% for both EB 57 and 58. This gain in dual feeling of identity, with the nationality still taking the higher value, did also decrease the total of the “European and Italian” and “European only” responses, which went from a total share of 30% in EB 56 to a total of 13% in EB 57 and 11% in EB 58.

Period Analysis

The tensions between Berlusconi and Fassino during this time period are mostly focused on internal politics and claiming ownership over some of the successes of Italy in the European realm, but the discursive frames of both NPLs remain positive — even if they do cover different topics between each other. Fassino does attack Berlusconi’s pro-EU claims, arguing that the PM does not actually believe and will not act upon those ideas he is sharing with the public, but the focus of this research is on the analysis of the discourse presented by the NPLs, not the implementation of said ideals, values, and projects.

Table IV.3: Discourse Categories. Berlusconi and Fassino, 2001-2002.

| 2001 - 2002 | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Berlusconi | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Fassino | Positive | Positive | Positive |

2011-2012 Monti I (November 2011-April 2013)

European Context

The 2011-2012 biennium was a particularly tough one at the European level. European governance, including the European Central Bank and the European Commission, was forced to deal with the dire economic and political situation of Greece and other struggling EU countries such as Spain, Ireland, and Italy itself. The Greek debt crisis represented a danger to the entire eurozone and the functioning of the whole EU as an institution (Zahariadis 2012). Pressures from European institutions led to widespread austerity policies across the struggling member states, suggesting policies that would help ameliorate the deficit while also protecting the interest of banks and financial institutions.

Italian Context

The Italian political situation during this time period was a direct reflection of the European context that was just analyzed. Between 2011 and 2012, the Italian executive was led by Mario Monti — economist, former European Commissioner, and Bocconi University’s former professor and president. While the case of Monti is not unique in

Italian political history, the selection of a non-elected leader for the role of Prime Minister was a particularly touchy subject in the political arena and amongst the public: at a time when trust towards politicians and institutions was struggling across the country, President Napolitano's choice to assign the government's formation to Monti was a signal to higher European powers that Italy would fall in line with the policies that were necessary to stay afloat in that time of crisis (Giannetti 2012).

Particularly difficult for this period is the analysis of opposition discourse. Given the urgency felt among political elites for the success of the Monti-led technical executive, every single parliamentary group except the Northern League was supporting the government. At this time, the League did not hold many seats in the Parliament and was going through a significant change of leadership that made them less active in the political arena (Del Palacio Martin 2015). While minor interventions from leaders like Berlusconi were present, they tended to align with the discourse framed by Monti. To properly cover this time frame, both Umberto Bossi and Roberto Maroni are taken into consideration. Bossi led the Northern League from its inception in 1991 to 2012, when he resigned from the party's leadership following a corruption scandal, which prompted the rise to leadership of former Interior Minister Maroni.

Economic Frames

Discourse

The dire economic conditions of Italy were the reason behind the existence of the Monti government. Monti, as a non-elected leader, found himself between the economic requests of the EU and the fears of Italians dealing with a struggling economy. Monti

does not hide the inevitability of the “sacrifices needed to reduce the debt and restart economic growth” but also promises that “they will have to be equitable” (11/17/2011). Monti’s messaging and framing remain consistent throughout his tenure as PM, and he encourages other countries to abide by the same economic and financial rules that Italy is living by. Monti has a strong condemnation for those European leaders who do not follow the plans set in place by the EU: “in violating the promises of balance strictness or by pushing the needed reforms, national leaders not only have fooled their partners but also their own peoples” (2/15/2012). The euro as a common currency remains central to Monti’s vision of a shared Europe, and he goes as far as saying that “if we were to compare Europe to a cathedral, then the euro would be its most perfect spire to date” (8/6/2012). Monti also recognizes the importance of working for the unity of the eurozone saying that preventing the break up of the common currency “is still possible, but it isn’t just going to fall out of the sky” (8/6/2012). Monti’s economic framing is overall positive: while he understands the toughness of the situation and does not hide it from the Italian public, Monti still highlights the value and potential for economic development that come from respecting and honoring the EU guidelines on debt in order to remain outstanding members of the European monetary and economic community.

The use of economic frames from the leaders of the Northern League follows the independentist and regionalistic framework that the party still followed during this time period. In creating a North-South separation among the regions and areas of Italy, Roberto Maroni suggests that “the South is like Greece and needs another currency. They can not afford the euro” (10/2/2012). On the other hand, he frames the North as a

fundamentally European region, in saying that “Lombardy and the North can afford the euro. I want it in Milan, because here we are in Europe” (10/2/2012). In this case, Maroni is constructing a case for regional Europe that will be analyzed in the following section, but with regards to the economic frames connected to the use of the euro, his framing must be considered negative, because it provides a vision of a Europe that is vastly different (and in direct opposition to) the current state of the EU at this time.

Public Support

Even through this period of economic hardships, Italians remained faithfully connected to the euro. When asked whether they were for or against “a European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro” in EBs 77 (Spring 2012), 78 (Fall 2012), 79 (Spring 2013), and 80 (Fall 2013), an average of 55% of Italian respondents provided positive answers, a slight downward inflection from the average favorable answer at 63% recorded between EBs 66 (Fall 2006) and 69 (Spring 2008). This data puts Italy a few percentage points above the positive averages among all European respondents of 52% and 61% in the respective sets of EBs. The receptiveness towards the high value of the common currency is clear in this case, as Italians align with Premier Monti’s vision of the euro as the center-piece of the economic union

Political Frames

Discourse

Monti builds upon the economic frames to solidify his political role and seek recognition from the Italian people, to whom he was a “political stranger.” While remaining supportive of the project of European integration, Monti still expresses critique towards

some of the decision-making processes of the EU, while also claiming the spoils of victory for the multilateral work that Italy leads in this biennium. The PM highlights that “it is important to invest more political constructive energy towards economic growth” (1/12/2012). Monti’s political frames fully play a defensive role for the EU; in a February 2012 article, Monti suggests that “no one can believe that national democracies are doing well and that instead ‘Europe’ does not work” (2/15/2012). In Monti’s framing, the shortcomings of national governments and the “tyranny of short-term decisions” to appease the electorate can only be solved through EU-level decisions. In talking about the European debt crisis, Monti strongly affirms that “the only venue in which this mission can be guaranteed is the European Parliament” (2/15/2012), reaffirming the centrality of the most democratic body of the Union.

Similarly to what has been presented in the discourse analysis of Andreotti during the 1990-1991 biennium, Monti assures the electorate that Italy will have and does have the chance to be a significant player in the European chessboard, but that can only be achieved “if we will be able to avoid anyone considering [Italy] ‘the weakest link of Europe’” (11/17/2011). While in tune with the European directives on financial and economic plans, he does play into the popular feeling of an overly bureaucratic Union by suggesting that the EU “should allow a bit more leeway to those states in the eurozone that follow European guidelines the most closely” (8/6/2012).

Monti also provides reassurance to the Italian people by trying to reclaim a more central role for Italy in the EU. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the leading German newspaper, Monti suggests that “it is completely normal that the third-largest economy in

the eurozone has now become more active when it comes to reaching consensus on decisions facing the Union” (8/6/2012). The reciprocal need between Europe and Italy is clear in Monti’s discourse, as he signals that “Italy must play an active role in leading Europe back on a path of stability and growth” (12/1/2012). This self-assigned task, presented with a sense of urgency, aims at reigniting interest in the European project among Italians, suggesting once again hope for a better future with Italy as a leader of further European integration.

Political frames are particularly where the challenge from the Northern League comes into play. Umberto Bossi and Roberto Maroni, the former the founder of the League and the latter the new leader selected in late 2011, both have strong words and visions for what Europe should be, and they frame those very directly. Bossi presents a fully re-imagined EU: as an independentist for Northern Italy, the League leader invites for the creation of “a Europe of the peoples” (12/4/2011). In the original Italian speech, the use of the word *popoli* clearly signals an overcoming of the current statehood of European countries, moving towards a federation of cultural groups bound together by history and belonging. This idea clearly remains in the political periphery, but it is a guiding principle for the League during this time. Maroni himself maintains strong words for the future of the EU, saying that “today Europe is in front of a crossroad: it can either go down the road of absolutism and of an authoritarian State or it can choose the road indicated by Bossi, of a Europe of peoples” (12/4/2011).

Public Support

While the Italian people at this point do not fully embrace the more extreme ideas presented by the leaders of the League, their sense of trust towards the Union hoped by Monti, is also not fully realized. Between EB 77 and EB 80, only an average of 25% of Italian respondents shared that they tend to trust the EU, against a staggering 59% replying that they tended not to trust the institution as a whole. This represents a significant drop from the average pre-crisis levels of trust in Italy which sat at 47%, with only 33% not trust the EU. While a similar drop can be recorded in the average EU responses between the EB 66-69 average and the EB 77-80 average, the 22 point-average drop in Italian trust is still wider than the EU average drop of 18% (from 50% to 32%). The assurance provided by Monti, at least during this time period, proves to be ineffective in reaching the Italian population. Similarly, when asked about their satisfaction with the way democracy works in the EU, an average of 55% of Italians replied that they were not satisfied, 10 points above the average European dissatisfaction level of 45% during the same time period that includes EB 77, 78, 79, and 80.

Identity-Cultural Frames

Discourse

As a non-elected leader coming mostly from the economic world, Monti's use of identity-cultural frames is scarce and generally built around political values and struggles of identity among the member states of the EU. Monti recognizes that economic and political hardships have led to tensions "showing signs of a psychological dissolution of Europe" (8/6/2012). A failure of the European project would not simply be a political

disaster but the international political arena “would lose the perspective of a more balanced world, in which Europe can better transmit its values” (11/17/2011). Monti is also not blind to the tensions between different regions in the EU, saying that “there is a front line between North and South [where] there are mutual prejudices” (8/6/2012). Monti believes in the identity-building process of a united European community, but also recognizes the economic and political obstacles that take priority during the biennium of his executive.

Maroni’s use of identity-cultural frames falls within a separation of Italy from the wider European context. Talking about Italy’s relationship with Europe, Maroni uses a traditional Italian idiom, saying that it is “meglio soli che mal accompagnati” (4/11/2011), which translates to “it is better alone than in bad company.” This framing clearly clashes with the values of multilateralism and shared community that are central to the experience of European integration in building a stronger EU. In the same comment from April 2011, Maroni also insists that “the message is that Italy has to move forward by itself. I wonder if it makes sense to remain in the EU.” This strong separatist narrative pushed by Maroni, together with the mentions of breaking up Europe from its current model that were analyzed in the political frames, puts Maroni’s identity-cultural frames in a negative camp.

Public Support

Data from the EB analyzed for this period confirm the lack of strength of any identity-based attacks towards the common Union. When asked what they mostly associate with

the EU, only 10% of responses highlight a potential loss of cultural and national identity for Italy, data in line with the EU average of 11% during the same period.

Period Analysis

The Monti leadership represents a peculiar case in this analysis of NPLs' discourse and the effects on public support for the EU. As PM he qualifies for the role of NPL, and he had some political experience at the EU level as Commissioner, but he comes from a mostly apolitical background, not belonging to any party and not having any kind of experience as an elected official in any capacity at the Italian national level. His government was supported by all the major parties at the time as they were called to build a government of national unity and pragmatism, but his discourse is simply not effective in countering perceptions of economic and political despair, especially as Italian media closely followed the situation of neighboring Greece. An overreliance on higher-level politics, which Monti uses in talking about the diplomatic and multilateral accomplishments of Italy, does not bode well with the Italian people, who seem to prefer more tangible promises such as ones for economic prosperity in the shorter term.

The continuity of discourse between Bossi and Maroni is to be recognized. While the leadership did change in early 2012, the engrained policies and framework that originate from the long leadership of Bossi since the early 90s persist into the Maroni leadership, with the two leaders presenting many of the same discursive trends as they deploy their economic, political, and identity-cultural images of Europe and the EU. The clear opposition to Monti's discourse is declined in each of the frames analyzed, but the data shows the opposition discourse to be particularly efficient in the political context:

presenting a distant EU, not connected to the issues of Italians, and fundamentally structured in a way that challenges the democratic representation of the Italian people gains early signs of approval among the inhabitants of the peninsula.

Table IV.4: Discourse Categories. Monti and Bossi/Maroni, 2011-2012.

| 2011-2012 | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Monti | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Bossi/Maroni | Negative | Negative | Negative |

2018-2019 Conte I (June 2018-December 2019)

European Context

The last biennium under analysis follows the 2017 Leave vote on the Brexit referendum that would eventually lead to the United Kingdom officially withdrawing from the EU. Together with the rhetoric of the Leave campaign, Europe also struggled with the migrant and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and the rise of right-wing nationalist parties. An overall rise of nationalist parties in Austria, Spain, Germany, France, and Italy led to strong Eurosceptic sentiments across the continent, igniting many conversations on the future of a united and stable Europe - especially on the eve of the UK's withdrawal from the Union.

Italian Context

The Conte I government presented a unique case in Italian and European politics, as it was hailed as the first populist government of its kind in the European context. Giuseppe Conte was picked as Prime Minister to lead the alliance between the 5 Star Movement, a

populist movement that presented himself as beyond the right-left spectrum, and the League (formerly known as Northern League), which was at this point pushing a right-wing nationalist agenda rather than the separatist ideals of its early days under the Bossi leadership. Similarly to Mario Monti, Conte did not have previous political experience, with the main difference that Monti led a technical government while Conte was the leader of an explicitly political executive.

The peculiar dynamic within the government, with 5 Star and League creating a unique populist alliance across the political spectrum, led Salvini in particular to represent a force of opposition while still being part of the government. With the March 2018 elections that set in motion the birth of the Conte government, the 5 Stars Movement received the highest number of votes while the League got third place nationally. Salvini's tactic to push against the discourse of Conte has been considered by many commentators as a way to gather electoral support before a new round of elections that could have followed the fall of the first Conte government.

Economic Frames

Discourse

In a time frame during which the economic crisis of the early 2010s was mostly considered surpassed in Italy and across the continent, the use of economic frames remains central in the EU discourse of Italian NPLs. PM Conte's frames are quite critical of the EU-led economic policies that member states have to respect. In his discourse, Conte does highlight the need for a common and community-based change in the way that Europe approaches financial policy. The recurring use of "we" suggests that Italy is

not and should be alone in this effort. For instance, in a December 11th, 2018, speech in front of the Italian Parliament before heading off to the December EU Summit, Conte says that “we must move past a short-sighted economic strictness that pretends to fight instability with measures that end up favoring it.” The PM’s refusal to accept the policies of European austerity follows a general trend among European politicians in this time frame. Conte’s anti-austerity framing continues throughout his premiership, as at the end of his first term he repeats that “we can’t simply aim at financial rigor; we must reconsider the models of development and growth that the last few have shown to be disastrous” (8/20/2019). It is worth noticing that while the economic frames are overall negative, the PM never contests the nature of the common economic union, and the euro as the common currency is never challenged.

In this case, Salvini threads along the Conte’s discursive line, but double downs on the severity of the claims against the EU, directly naming the institution rather than maintaining a more general approach that criticizes the policy over the policy-makers. In discussing the role of the financial and economic guidelines set by Europe, Salvini talks about the need to “put away forever the blackmailing behavior that [Italy] had to endure from the EU” (5/25/2019). The vision that Salvini pushes towards the Italian population is one of a Europe that is not based on “the demented constraints on finances that have massacred our economy” (5/25/2019). Salvini does not pull back in directly blaming the EU for the economic difficulties of Italy, creating a clear “us vs. them” discourse in line with the nationalistic framework adopted by the League under his leadership.

Public Support

When asked whether they were for or against “a European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro,” an average of 64% of Italian responded positively between EB 90 (Fall 2018) and 91 (Spring 2019), slightly above the EU average of 62%. While this question clearly does not cover fully how respondents might feel about the economic policies that the NPLs tend to focus on, the overall support for the common economic and monetary union engulfs personal preferences towards specific policies. The support for this common economic scenario registered a significant increase for the average positive answer of 55% registered across the EBs related to the Monti government.

Political Frames

Discourse

In terms of political framing of EU processes, both Conte and Salvini follow a pattern of suggesting the importance of remaining within the boundaries of the Union, though with a critical eye. According to Conte, “to change Europe and give value to Italy’s action, we must sit at the European tables and study the reports” (10/17/2019). Conte’s political framing of the role of Italy in the EU is one that values Italy’s critical role in the politics of the Union. Conte presents Italy as a thorn in the side of a perceived majority within the EU pushing forward certain agendas, saying that “Italy has not given up on expressing its opinion even when what it had to say was uncomfortable” (2/11/2019). As the PM of a so-called populist and anti-establishment executive, Conte clarifies that “being anti-establishment and pursuing change doesn’t mean being anti-EU. We want it to become a

Europe of the people, closer to the needs of the people” (2/11/2019). While Conte clarifies that he is not inherently anti-EU, his political framing remains negative, coming from a place of critique towards the EU while still believing in the overall project of European integration.

Similarly, Salvini sees value in using European multilateralism to change the institution of the EU itself. On September 13th, 2018, the leader of the League says that “we are allying with other European countries to change the EU from within; if we leave, it would be the end of hope.” In this phase, Salvini follows in the steps of former League leader Umberto Bossi, suggesting a strong need to fundamentally change the EU experience while still remaining part of it.

Public Support

The Italian public reacts in interesting ways to the political frames used by Conte and Salvini during this time period. According to answers from EB 90 and EB 91, when asked if they thought that Italy could better face the future outside of the EU, 43% and 44% of respondents agreed with the statement, against 48 and 46% of the surveyed being in disagreement with the statement. This is particularly interesting as the data is particularly skewed from the EU average results. In the same EBs, only an average of 30% of EU respondents agreed and 60% disagreed with the notion that their country could better face the future outside of the Union. To sign-post just how grave the Italian response was, the only country with a higher percentage of respondents believing in a better future outside of the EU is the United Kingdom, with an average of 43% of positive answers. While the NPLs do hope to work within the EU, their critical political

framing seem to suggest to Italians that their country could be better off away from the political pressures of the EU.

Identity-Cultural Frames

Discourse

2018-2019 is a clear turning point in the use of identity-cultural frames in the discourse of Italian NPLs. Matteo Salvini, from his role as opposition within the government majority, often deviates from the tracks laid out by PM Conte. Using particularly strong and direct religious language, Salvini sets the guidelines for Italy's action in the EU by saying that "in Europe, we will act based on the Scriptures' passage, the one that reminds us that the laws are made for men and men are not made for the laws" (5/25/2018).

Salvini roots his and the government's actions in a profoundly religious background, blessing his own positioning towards the EU in the words of the Bible.

Salvini frames his own actions in a crusade-like fashion, putting history and Christianity firmly on his side. In an interview leading up to the May 2019 EP elections, the League's leader says that "history will entrust us with the role of saving European values - from its Judeo-christian roots to the right to work, the right to security, the right to life" (5/25/2018). This higher call to upholding European roots is justified in the failures of the overall project of European integration. According to Salvini, "this Union has grown too much, and too quickly, without common roots, only with a common currency [and] so we are working to re-establish the European spirit" (5/25/2018).

Salvini's framing is clearly set in a negative field towards the EU, portraying it as a force for evil that must be dealt with.

PM Conte, on the other hand, lets his comments and framing of identity-cultural themes fall into a critical yet supportive area with regards to the greater project of European integration, similar to what has been analyzed in the economic and political contexts. Conte's main goal in this context is to frame Italy as fundamentally European and inseparable from the EU project. In his very first speech in front of the Senate on June 5th, 2018, Conte leads by saying that "Europe is our home, our shared home." The role of Italy "as a founding country" is to build "a stronger and more equitable Europe, in which the economic and monetary union is aimed at safekeeping the needs of citizens to balance the principles of responsibility and solidarity" (6/5/2018). Italy's role, according to Conte, is to work within the confines of the EU, "believing and remaining to be an integral part of the European Union" (12/11/2018). Confirming the positive role of Italy in the EU, Conte sets in stone that "Italy has been a protagonist in the decisive turning points of the history of European integration" (12/11/2018). While Conte tends to be critical in the field of economic and political frames, his positioning on the identity-cultural frames remains mostly positive.

Public Support

Regardless of Salvini's focus on the importance of Judeo-Christian roots and presenting himself and Italy as saviors of European values and identity, only an average of 12.5% of Italians responded to the question "What does the EU mean to you personally?" by identifying loss of cultural identity, a number that remained in line with both the EU average of 13% and the previous Italian average of 10.5% between EB 77 (Spring 2012) and EB 80 (Fall 2013).

Period Analysis

The analysis of the discourse for the Conte government, together with the international discursive tensions provided by the Salvini opposition, provides an interesting outlook over the dynamics of populist Eurosceptic discourse among Italian NPLs. While during other time frames some NPLs have been directly critical of the EU in some capacity under economic, political, and identity-cultural frames, it is important to parse out the difference between the discursive frames of Conte as Prime Minister and lead negotiation in the European context and Salvini, who as Ministry of the Interior holds an important national regional but does participate as prominently as Conte in the conversations with other leaders in the EU context. The relationship between Conte and Salvini and their framing of the EU and European integration also help in differentiating between critical yet constructive discourse and one that seeks to simply destroy pre-existing frames of support.

Table IV.5: Discourse Categories. Conte and Salvini, 2018-2019.

| 2018-2019 | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Conte | Negative | Positive | Positive |
| Salvini | Negative | Positive | Negative |

Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth analysis of discourse and public support throughout the selected time frames outlined in Chapter III. As each section focused on majority and opposition leaders alike, what emerge are similar and contrasting discourses among said NPLs. Using a critical discourse analysis approach, this chapter uncovered many of the nuances of the processes of meaning construction that Italian NPLs employed between 1990 and 2019. While the EU did change over time, much of the focus of the political elites remained on what role Italy should play in relation to the greater project of European integration, and whether the challenges presented with that were worth fighting. Having analyzed each of the individual time periods, the following concluding chapter provides an overview of the results from Chapter IV, analyzing the over-arching trends in both discourse and public support, while also suggesting avenues and areas for future research.

Chapter V: Conclusions

Introduction

After having carried out an in-depth analysis of national political leaders (NPLs) within and across time frames, this chapter provides a conclusion to the research project. The chapter begins with an overview of the results from the previous analysis, providing the valuable long-term analysis of trends for both NPLs' discourse and public support for the EU. The next section consists of methodological considerations about the analytical approaches chosen for this research, and what its limitations in practice and results were. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Results Overview

The original hypothesis for this research project was that positive or negative changes in discourse were going to positively or negatively affect public support for the EU. After careful and in-depth analysis, the major trend that is highlighted is the centrality of discursive agreeance among NPLs in a certain time frame. Rather than the individual NPLs' framing of the European integration, changes in public support appear to be deeply correlated to whether majority and opposition leaders within a time frame shared common messaging in the categories of discourse taken into consideration. It is the changing dynamics between NPLs' discourse that affect public support. When positive framing appeared across economic, political, and identity-cultural categories for both majority and opposition leaders, public support in Italy was at particularly high levels. On the other hand, Italian public support for the EU dropped to well-below average levels in

the cases where a NPL's messaging was inconsistent and/or there were discrepancies between majority and opposition leaders in any of the categories of discourse.

Table V.1: Overview of NPLs' Discourse

| | Economic | Political | Identity-Cultural |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Andreotti 1990-1 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Occhetto 1990-1 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Prodi 1996-7 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Berlusconi 1996-7 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Berlusconi 2001-2 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Fassino 2001-2 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Monti 2011-2 | Positive | Positive | Positive |
| Bossi/Maroni 2011-2 | Negative | Negative | Negative |
| Conte 2018-9 | Negative | Positive | Positive |
| Salvini 2018-9 | Negative | Positive | Negative |

A particular trend that generates out of the analysis has to do with the positioning of Italy relative to the project of European integration. In the earlier time frames, there is an underlying message constant across categories and leaders: the EU is great and must be a goal to work towards, and Italy has to better itself to match the standards of membership for its economic, political, and cultural sake. This overall message recognizes the shortcomings and fallacies of the Italian national system and sees in European integration the chance to improve and get a greater economic and political return on investment. The drastic change, which can be seen particularly in the post-crisis

discourse, is that recent leaders have flipped this original script. In recent times, Italian NPLs appear to be more critical of the EU, aiming at changing it from within or drastically moving past the current project of European integration. Rather than a higher goal to achieve, the EU comes is framed as a force dampening the potential of Italy — and Italian NPLs are the ones with the knowledge and know-how to fix the problems they see in the European context.

To proxy for the level of public support in the economic category, this research used four similar questions, which all asked about support for the introduction and then the maintaining of a single economic and monetary union with the euro as its common currency, replacing national currencies. Whether on the terms of hope or support for the single currency, it is clear that Italian levels of support remain significantly higher than the EU levels until the Monti-related Eurobarometers of 2012 and 2013 (see *Figure 5.1*).

To proxy for the level of public support in the political category, questions of hope, membership benefit and trust show once again a much steeper decline in Italy than the EU average. The general level of support remains higher in Italy throughout the pre-Monti period, and then drops to levels that are actually lower than the EU average (see *Figure 5.2*).

Figure V.1: Public Support in the Economy Category. 1990-2019. Italy & EU average.

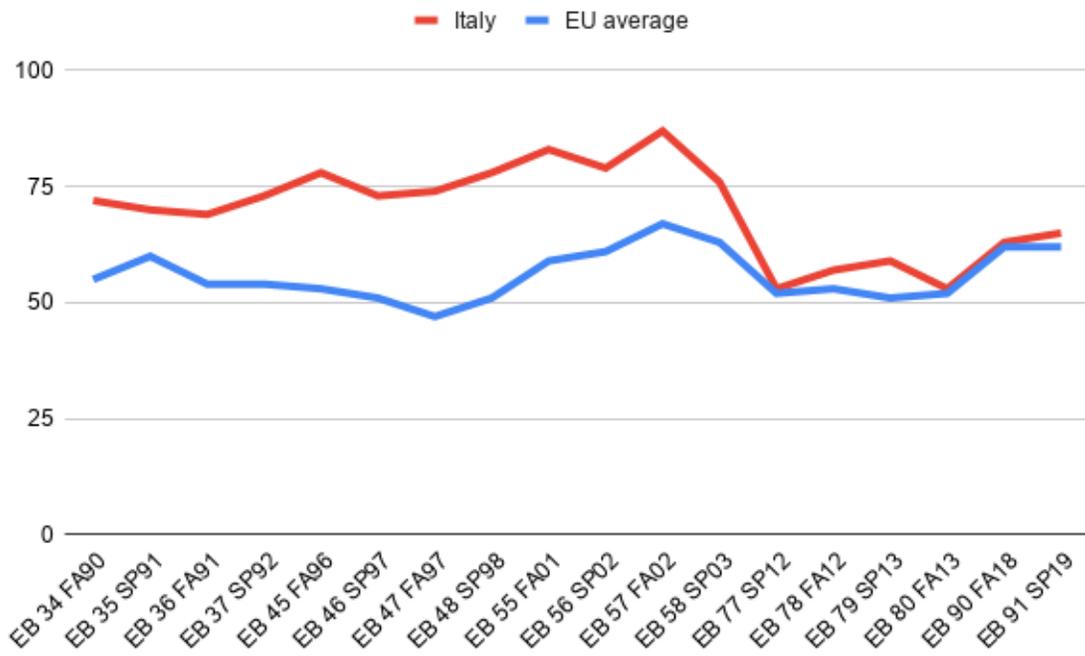


Figure V.2: Public Support in the Politics Category. 1990-2019. Italy & EU average.

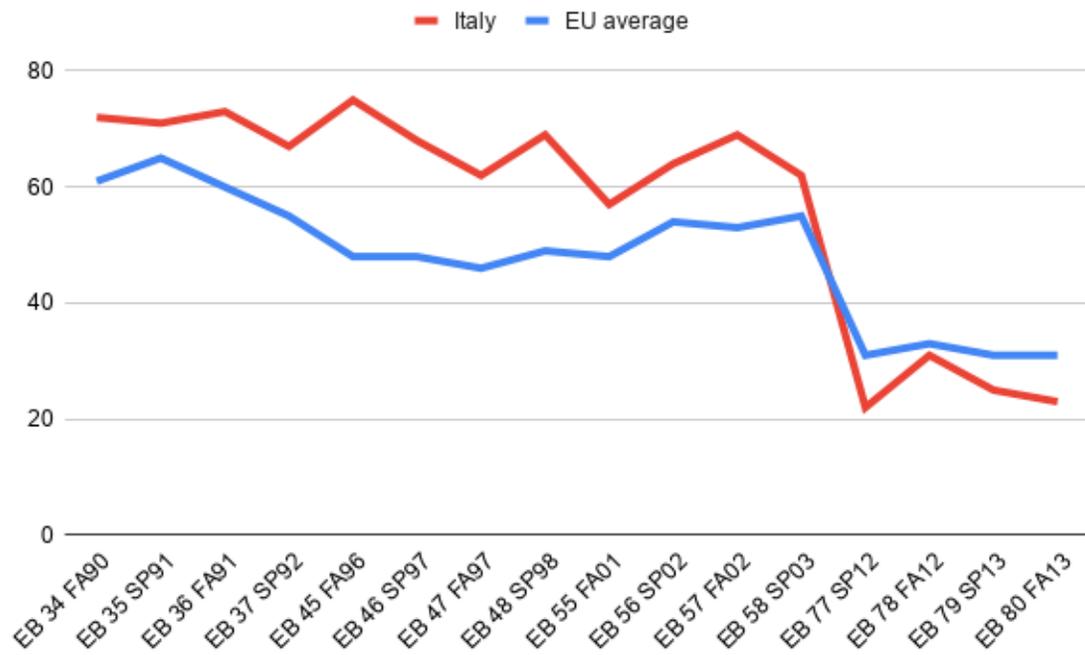


Figure V.3: Identity of Respondents. Italy.

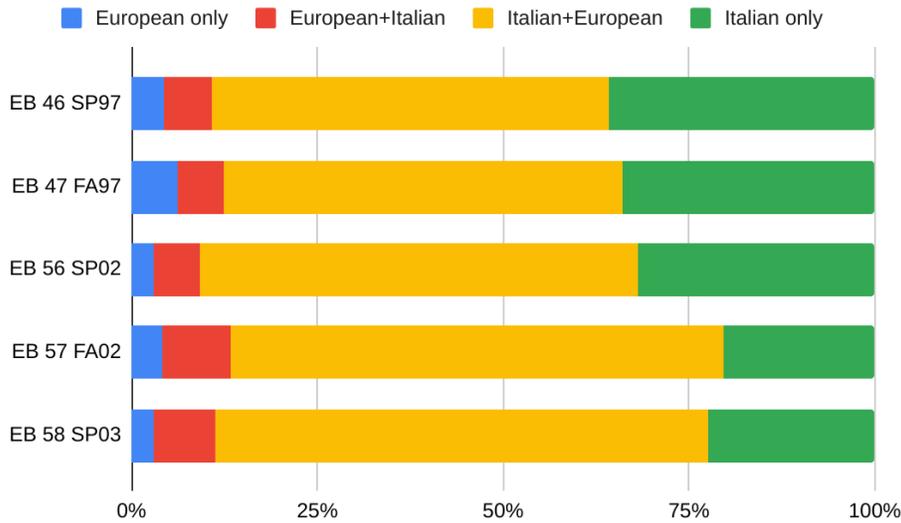
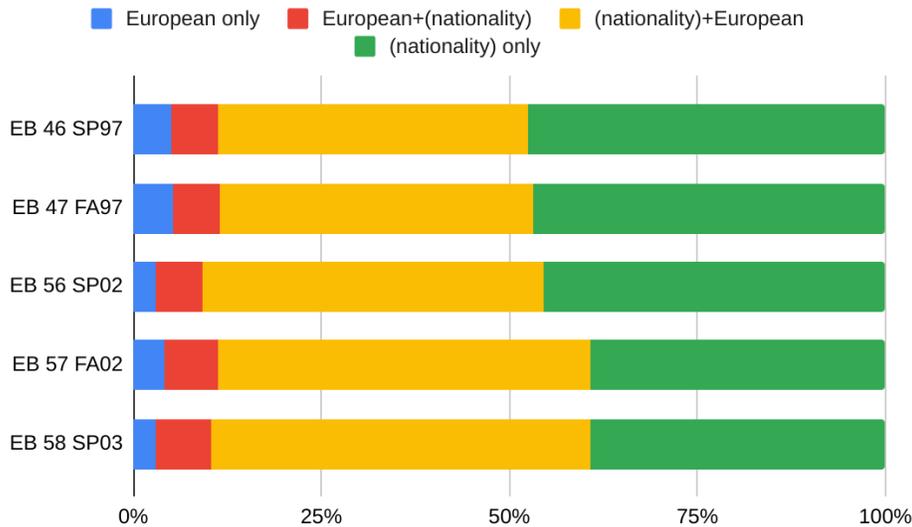


Figure V.4: Identity of Respondents. EU average.



When evaluating the feeling of belonging to either their own nationality or to a shared European identity, the differences between Italy and the EU average are significant especially in the “(nationality)+European” category. While both “European

only” and “European+(nationality)” remain consistent over time and across both Italy and the EU, Italy separates itself from the EU average by having a particularly high value in the “(nationality)+European” category (see *Figure V.3* and *Figure V.4*). The underlying belonging to a shared European community remains significantly higher than the EU average throughout the Eurobarometers during which the national/European identity question was asked in this way.

A clear understanding that arises from the analysis of this case study is the confirmation that it is NPLs’ messaging that affects public support and not vice versa, which was a point of contention in the literature reviewed in Chapter II. PMs Mario Monti (2011-2012) and Giuseppe Conte (2018-2019) were two recent cases of non-elected government leaders who shaped the discourse of Italian politics with regards to EU integration. While the Italian electoral process does not expect the PM to be chosen by direct election, they usually are the chosen leader of whichever electoral faction receives the majority of seats in the two chambers of the Parliament. But with Monti and Conte in particular, the experience is that of two leaders that were chosen from outside of the national political arena. Their discourse then does not depend upon a particular party-specific electorate, but it does hold direct influence over the messaging received by the public during their time of leadership.

Another piece of insight that has been gained from this research is the value of discursive recurrence. Clear and consistent messaging from NPLs is important in order for the public to receive and internalize those frames of understanding the EU. For some discursive categories, the lack of recurring material from an NPL can signal that a leader

does not particularly utilize that specific frame. Related to this question of volume of messaging, another area that this research does not consider but should be brought in for future consideration, is the proliferation of these messages through media systems and channels. A recurring and consistent message is more likely to be picked up by media in the construction of a discursive narrative, and the assumption is that those NPLs' messages remain consistent in the time frames considered.

Overall, this study suggests that with external factors remaining mostly constant for all EU countries, the differences in Italian public support were caused by the changing dynamics of discourse between Italian NPLs. Events like the introduction of the euro, the Great Recession or the refugee crisis are impacting all Europeans in some way, what truly matters is how NPLs frame their messaging directed at the population. Perceptions of Europe, rather than actual data or events, are what guide the popular understanding and support for the EU and the project of greater European integration.

Implications of Findings

Given the overview of the results and trends analyzed in the previous sections, this study can be strongly placed within the literature on the topic of elite messaging and public support as analyzed in Chapter II. The results of the discourse analysis point towards confirmation of the idea of permissive consensus as outlined by Della Porta and Caiani (2006) and Sanders and Toka (2013). The early phases of the EU experience were linked, at least in the case of Italy, to NPLs' vested interest in a stronger European integration and the political and economic benefits it would entail. The agreement in messaging between Andreotti and Occhetto, Prodi and Berlusconi, and Berlusconi and Fassino,

shows that regardless of political belonging or ideological roots, the central NPLs in these time periods were all in favor of further European integration, and the public was particularly receptive to their messaging. The literature points that the signing and ratification of the Maastricht Treaty might have been the breaking point for the elite-led process of integration, bringing the worries of the public into the conversation, but the results from this study suggest that the public was still receptive to consistent positive framing until the 2001-2002 time frame.

This research project also confirms the importance of focusing on the country's internal dynamics as the level of analysis that is the most effective in understanding the correlation between elite political discourse and public support for the EU. Across the speeches and interventions analyzed for the Italian NPLs selected for this study, the recurring focus was on what would be good for Italy, how the EU would impact the country, and which role Italians should play in the Union's politics. The literature suggested that the lack of a European public sphere (Della Porta and Caiani 2006, Bee at al. 2008) and the nature of EU institutions (De Vreese et al. 2006) lead to a elite messaging that is focused around country-level analysis rather than a EU-level approach. Across all discursive categories (political, economic, and identity-cultural), NPLs focused solely on presenting Italy in relation to a general sense of Europe, but without ever embracing a sense of a shared political sphere with other specific countries in the Union.

Methodological Considerations

Having concluded and overviewed the results of the analysis carried out in the previous chapter, methodological questions can be discussed. The first part is understanding

whether or not the categories utilized for discourse and public support — economic, political, and identity-cultural — have proved to be valuable for this research. While NPLs in the 1990-1991, 1996-1997, 2001-2002, and 2006-2007 biennia were consistent across their own discursive categories, categorical differences within the discourse of single NPLs appear in the 2018-2019 analysis. As analyzed in the previous section, this time period was also one in which public support for the EU dropped significantly. As introduced in Chapter II, public support for the EU tends to be uniform, but the increasing nuance in the contemporary discourse does justify the use of these three categories as adapted from Pirro and Van Kessel (2012).

On the topic of analytical categories, a major point of consideration is that of the positive-negative dichotomy utilized for this paper. This dichotomous split fails to consider much of the spectrum over which the NPLs' discourse can be found. Given more time and resources and still employing the same analytical categories, future research should build a more inclusive scale that allows for better engagement and evaluation of what “negative” or “positive” discourse is. According to the current methodology utilized in this research, two statements like “the European Parliament is somewhat undemocratic” and “the EU will destroy national sovereignty and take citizens' rights away from them” would be equally categorized as simply negative. The value of discourse analysis is in capturing those more subtle nuances in the context of a wider corpus of material, and expanding the level of analysis to include more values on the positive-negative scale would have made for a more detailed approach.

Another interesting methodological decision relates to the difference between direct discourse and quoted speech. To build the catalog of material for analysis (see *Appendix I*), a combination of parliamentary records and newspaper articles was utilized to find what NPLs had to say about the EU and the process of European integration. Parliamentary addresses were a great source for material for this research, as they often provided extensive and in-depth opportunities to analyze a significant part of the NPL's discourse. Interviews and newspaper articles were valuable in adding material especially for NPLs on the opposition — particularly those working mostly outside of the House or Senate — but they do raise the question of validity for the material gathered from those sources. Interviews are still a valuable source of direct discourse, but quoted speech from newspaper articles are directly determined by whatever messaging and framing the journalist or editor wanted to provide to the readers. As journalists actively select what to include in their articles, they are eliminating context and material that are both important in the discussion of discourse as a whole.

Future Research

Italy represented a worthwhile first case study for this approach, given its long history in the context of EU politics and the dramatic changes in public support over the time frame analyzed here. Italy's case shows that this significant drop correlates to the variation in NPLs' discourse over time, going from shared and consistent messaging to a more nuanced and often disjointed framing. Taking into consideration all the methodological limitations, future research must expand on this initial analysis by adding comparisons with NPLs across other EU countries over the same time periods and analyzing what the

consequences on EU public support in those states are. A longitudinal cross-country study would give better insight into whether it is the shared majority-opposition messaging that affects public support, providing answers to a major research puzzle that this study uncovered.

Given the scope of analysis of this project, there was no case in which both NPLs's discourse was negative across the three analytical categories. Analysis was provided for cases in which there were discrepancies either between NPLs (2011-2012) or within the discourse of NPLs and between the two (2018-2019). Since it did not appear as a scenario in this case study, future research should seek to understand what the effects on public support are when both NPLs are using negative frames in their discourse about the EU. Would an agreeance on negative framings lead to an even sharper decline in public support, or would the levels remain similar to those with cases of disagreement like those analyzed in this project?

A final suggestion for future research would be a more in-depth focus on the dynamics of discourse of leaders that move in and out of executive power. This project analyzed Silvio Berlusconi during two time periods, 1996-1997 while at the opposition and 2001-2002 as Prime Minister, but he maintained positive messaging in all categories in both time frames. Future analysis could focus on if and how NPLs' discourse changes when occupying executive positions in the government. Given the nature of multilateral diplomacy as the core of EU politics, one might expect that NPLs with negative messaging while at the opposition might try to reconsider or reframe the issues to more moderate positions when in a ministerial role.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study represents the first endeavor into the analysis of the evolution of EU discourse and its effects on public support over time. While acknowledging the methodological limitations presented in the previous section of this chapter, the results of this study show that the initial assumption of changes in elite messaging affecting public support to be true. This single case study has allowed for the initial unraveling of the complicated case of Italy, whose population has gone from leading supporters of European integration to often sceptic members of the European community. As the EU continues to grow and evolve in its political, economic, and cultural declinations, NPLs must consider their vital role in framing the Union as either the higher calling or a major obstacle for their countries. As long as ideological disagreements are communicated through inconsistent and clashing discursive frames, public support for the greater project of European integration cannot be expected to increase. This research model has exposed that the dynamics of national politics are fundamental for understanding what the population will believe in, as they look to NPLs for guidance in their informed decisions. In consideration of a lack of a shared European public sphere remains a constant in the EU, this model can be used to analyze the correlation between NPLs' discourse and public support in other countries of the Union, creating a stronger network of knowledge on this important topic.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Christopher, and Jason Hecht. 2018. "The Preference for Europe: Public Opinion about European Integration since 1952." *European Union Politics* 19(4): 617-638.
- Baun, Michael. 1995. "The Maastricht Treaty as High Politics: Germany, France, and European Integration." *Political Science Quarterly* 110(4): 605-624.
- Bee, Cristiano, Riccardo Scartezzini, and Alan Scott. 2008. "The Development of a European Public Sphere: a Stalled Project?" *European Political Science* 7(3): 257-263.
- Blondel, Jean, Paolo Segatti and Patrick John Barr. 2002. "Introduction: The Second Berlusconi Government." *Italian Politics* 18: 19-35.
- Borriello, Arthur. 2017. "'There Is No Alternative': How Italian and Spanish Leaders' Discourse Obscured the Political Nature of Austerity." *Discourse & Society* 28(3): 241-261.
- Borriello, Arthur, and Samuele Mazzolini. 2019. "European Populism(s) as a Counter-Hegemonic Discourse? The Rise of Podemos and M5S in the Wake of the Crisis." In *Imagining the Peoples of Europe. Populist Discourses Across the Political Spectrum*, eds. Jan Zienkowski and Ruth Breeze. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Clark, Nicholas, and Timothy Hellwig. 2012. "Information Effects and Mass Support for EU Policy Control." *European Union Politics* 13(4): 535-557.
- Coleman, Stephen, and Julie Firmstone. 2017. "The Performances of Mainstream Politicians: Politics as Usual?" In *The Mediated Politics of Europe*, eds. Mats Ekstrom and Julie Firmstone. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cramer, Jennifer. 2010. "'Do We Really Want to Be Like Them?': Indexing Europeanness Through Pronominal Use." *Discourse & Society* 21(6): 619-637.
- Dallmayr, Fred. 1984. "After Babel: Competing Conceptions of Language." In *Language and Politics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Daniels, Philip. 1993. "Italy and the Maastricht Treaty." *Italian Politics* 8: 178-191.
- Del Palacio Martin, Jorge. 2015. "La Nueva Lega Nord." *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Politico* 46: 157-173.

- Della Porta, Donatella, and Manuela Caiani. 2006. "The Europeanization of Public Discourse in Italy: a Top-Down Process?" *European Union Politics* 7(1): 77-112.
- De Vreese, Claes, Susan Banducci, Holli Semetko, Hajo Boomgaarden. 2006. "The News Coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries." *European Union Politics* 7(4): 477-504.
- Donoghue, Matthew. 2018. "Beyond Hegemony: Elaborating on the Use of Gramscian Concepts in Critical Discourse Analysis for Political Studies." *Political Studies* 66(2): 392-408.
- Dunmire, Patricia. 2012. "Political Discourse Analysis: Exploring the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language." *Language and Linguistic Compass* 6(11): 735-751.
- Dutceac Segesten, Anamaria, and Michael Bossetta. 2019. "Can Euroscepticism Contribute to a European Public Sphere? The Europeanization of Media Discourses on Euroscepticism across Six Countries." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 57(5): 1051-1070.
- Fairclough, Norman, Jane Mulderrig and Ruth Wodak. 2001. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, eds. Teun Van Dijk. London: SAGE Publications.
- Franklin, Mark N., Cees van der Eijk & Michael Marsh. 1995. "Referendum Outcomes and Trust in Government: Public Support for Europe in the Wake of Maastricht." *West European Politics* 18(3): 101-117.
- Gabel, Matthew, and Kenneth Scheve. 2007. "Estimating the Effect of Elite Communications on Public Opinion Using Instrumental Variables." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 1013-1028.
- Gattermann, Katjana, Claes De Vreese, and Wouter van der Brug. 2016. "Evaluations of Spitzenkandidaten: The Role of Information and News Exposure in Citizens' Preference Formation." *Politics and Governance* 4(1): 37-54.
- Giannetti, Daniela. 2012. "Marion Monti's Technocratic Government." *Italian Politics* 28: 133-152.
- Heft, Annett, Sophia Wittwer, and Barbara Pfetsch. 2017. "Divided They Tweet? A Comparative Analysis of Twitter Networks of Pro- and Anti-EU Parties." In *Euroscepticism, Democracy, and the Media*, eds. Manuela Caiani and Simona Guerra. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hepp, Andreas, et al. 2016. "Appropriating Europe: Communication Repertoires, Citizens' European Public Connections and the Euro Crisis." In *The Communicative Construction of Europe*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Herranz-Surrales, Anna. 2012. "Justifying Enlargement in a Multi-level Polity: A Discursive Institutional Analysis of the Elites-Public Gap over European Union Enlargement." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50(3): 385-402.
- Hobot, Sara, and Catherine de Vries. 2016. "Turning Against the Union? The Impact of the Crisis on the Eurosceptic Vote in the 2014 European Parliament Elections." *Electoral Studies* 44: 504-514.
- Jochen, Peter, Holli Semetko, and Claes De Vreese. 2003. "EU Politics on Television News." *European Union Politics* 4(3): 305-327.
- Kaiser, Johannes, and Katharina Kleinen-Von Königslöw. 2017. "The Framing of the Euro Crisis in German and Spanish News Media between 2010 and 2014: Does a Common European Public Discourse Emerge?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55(4): 798-814.
- Kiratli, Osman Sabri. 2016. "Political Discourse on Europe and European Integration in National Election Manifestos and Party Programmes." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29(2): 636-659.
- Lucarelli, Sonia. 2015. "Italy and the EU: From True Love to Disenchantment?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(1): 40-60.
- Maier, Michaela, Patrick Bacherle, Silke Adam, Melanie Leidecker-Sandmann. 2019. "The Interplay Between Parties and Media in Putting EU Issues on the Agenda: A Temporal Patterns Analysis of the 2014 European Parliamentary Election Campaigns in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom." *Party Politics* 25(2): 167-178.
- Pannico, Roberto. 2017. "Is the European Union too Complicated? Citizens' Lack of Information and Party Cue Effectiveness." *European Union Politics* 18(3): 424-446.
- Parker, Simon. 1997. "The Government of the 'Ulivo.'" *Italian Politics* 12: 125-141.
- Pirro, Andrea, and Stijn van Kessel. 2018. "Populist Eurosceptic Trajectories in Italy and the Netherlands During the European Crises." *Politics* 38(3): 327-343.
- Rodriguez, Javier Lorenzo, and Amuitz Garmendia Madariaga. 2016. "Going Public Against Institutional Constraints? Analyzing the Online Presence Intensity of

- 2014 European Parliament Election Candidates.” *European Union Politics* 17(2): 303-323.
- Sanders, David, and Gabor Toka. 2012. “Is Anyone Listening? Mass and Elite Opinion Cueing in the EU.” *Electoral Studies* 32(1): 13-25.
- Senninger, Roman, and Markus Wagner. 2015. “Political Parties and the EU in National Election Campaigns: Who Talks about Europe, and How?” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(6): 1336-1351.
- Sifft, Stefanie, and Michael Bruggemann. 2007. “Segmented Europeanization: Exploring the Legitimacy of the European Union from a Public Discourse Perspective.” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45(1): 127-155.
- Steenbergen, Marco, and Erica Edwards. 2007. “Who’s Cueing Whom? Mass-Elite Linkages and the Future of European Integration.” *European Union Politics* 8(1): 13-35.
- Svensson, Palle. 1994. “The Danish Yes to Maastricht and Edinburgh. The EC Referendum of May 1993.” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 17(1).
- Torcal, Mariano, Sergio Martini, and Lluís Orriols. 2018. “Deciding About the Unknown: The Effect of Party and Ideological Cues on Forming Opinions about the European Union.” *European Union Politics* 19(3): 502-523.
- Van Dijk, Teun. 2004. “Critical Discourse Analysis.” In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Hamilton. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Vossing, Konstantin. 2015. “Transforming Public Opinion about European Integration: Elite influence and its limits.” *European Union Politics* 16(2): 157-175.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Gilbert Weiss. “Analyzing European Union Discourses.” In *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Zahariadis, Nikolaos. 2012. “Complexity, Coupling and Policy Effectiveness: The European Response to the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis.” *Journal of Public Policy* 32(2): 99-116.

Annex

Andreotti 1990-1991

Andreotti, Giulio. 1990, July 2nd. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.488. X legislature.

Andreotti, Giulio. 1990, November 28th. Stenographic transcription of the Prime Minister's speech at the House for the meeting of the Members of the European Parliament.

Andreotti, Giulio. 1990, December 6th. Stenographic transcription of the Prime Minister's speech at the European Affairs Senate Committee.

Andreotti, Giulio. 1991, April 17th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.616. X legislature.

Andreotti, Giulio. 1991. 'Un Passaporto per l'Europa'. *The Quality*.

Occhetto 1990-1991

Hobsbawn, Eric. 1990, February 23rd. 'Cambiamo per guardare al 2000'. *L'Unità*.

Rondolino, Fabrizio. 1990, October 11th. 'Un partito così non c'è stato mai'. *L'Unità*.

Campeato, Gildo. 1991, April 5th. 'Non più stalinismo, ma regole certe'. *L'Unità*.

Prodi 1996-1997

Prodi, Romano. 1996, May 22nd. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.003. XIII Legislature.

Armeni, Ritanna. 1996, September 22nd. 'Prodi: "Porterò l'Italia in Europa"'. *L'Unità*.

Sergi, Sergio. 1996, September 25th. 'In Europa e senza sconti'. *L'Unità*.

Armeni, Ritanna. 1996, November 21st. 'Prodi: "Mi dimetterò se non entriamo in Europa"'. *L'Unità*.

Berlusconi 1996-1997

Lupoli, Angelo. 1997, February 6th. 'Berlusconi: "In Europa a ogni costo"'. *La Repubblica*.

Lampugnani, Rosanna. 1997, February 22nd. 'Berlusconi offre i suoi voti'. *L'Unità*.

Carollo, Roberto. 1997, March 2nd. 'Berlusconi a sorpresa: "Manovra? Si può fare"'. *L'Unità*.

Luzi, Gianluca. 1997, March 7th. ‘Berlusconi: in Europa con Prodi’’. *La Repubblica*.

Berlusconi 2001-2002

Berlusconi, Silvio. 2001, June 18th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.003. XIV legislature.

Yarnoz, Carlos. 2001, September 28th. “Berlusconi: ‘La civilizacion occidental es superior al islam’”. *El Pais*.

Berlusconi, Silvio. 2001, October 26th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.054. XIV legislature.

Berlusconi, Silvio. 2001, November 7th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.057. XIV legislature.

Berlusconi, Silvio. 2002, January 14th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.082. XIV legislature.

La Repubblica. 2002, January 20th. “Berlusconi: grande Europa comincia Aznar, finirò io”. *La Repubblica*

Marozzi, Marco. 2002, April 14th. “La Russia non può entrare nella Ue”. *La Repubblica*

La Repubblica. 2002, October 1st. “Berlusconi: un esercito europeo”. *La Repubblica*

Tito, Claudio. 2002, December 13th. “Berlusconi paladino di Ankara: il solo paese islamico democratico”. *La Repubblica*.

Fassino 2001-2002

Fassino, Piero. 2002, January 14th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.082. XIV Legislature.

Sergi, Sergio. 2002, February 22nd. ‘Un referendum per la Costituzione Ue’. *L’Unità*.

Mario Monti 2011-2012

Monti, Mario. 2011, November 17th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.550. XVI legislature.

Monti, Mario. 2011, December 14th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.645. XVI legislature.

Monti, Mario. 2012, January 12th. Stenographic transcription of House session n.569. XVI legislature.

Monti, Mario. 2012, February 15th. 'Riconciliare gli europei con l'Europa per una stabile uscita dalla crisi'. *Corriere della Sera*.

Ehlers, Fiona, and Hans Hoying. 2012, August 6th. 'A Front Line Between North and South'. *SPIEGEL*.

Bossi/Maroni 2011-2012

La Repubblica. 2011, April 11th. 'Profughi, la UE boccia l'Italia. Maroni: "Ha senso restare in Europa?"' *La Repubblica*.

Famiglia Cristiana. 2011, August 8th. 'Umberto Bossi l'Europeista'. *Famiglia Cristiana*.

Beghelli, Chiara. 2011, August 16th. 'Bossi a Ponte di Legno: "E' arrivata la fine dell'Italia"'. E torna a parlare di secessione e terroni'. *Il Sole 24 Ore*.

Milano Today. 2012, October 2nd. 'I meridionali stiano "senza l'euro, non se lo meritano"'. *Milano Today*.

Giuseppe Conte 2018-2019

Conte, Giuseppe. 2018, June 5th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.009. XVIII legislature.

Conte, Giuseppe. 2018, December 11th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.070. XVIII legislature.

Sciorilli Borrelli, Silvia. 2019, February 11th. 'Italian PM: We want to shake things up in Europe'. *POLITICO*.

Conte, Giuseppe. 2019, August 20th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.146.

Conte, Giuseppe. 2019, October 16th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.156. XVIII legislature.

Franco, Massimo. 2019, October 17th. 'Il Capo del governo: i partiti non si intestino una misura o l'altra'. *Corriere della Sera*.

Salvini 2018-2019.

Walt, Vivienne. 2018, September 13th. "We Want to Change Things from Within". Italy's Matteo Salvini on His Goal to Reshape Europe". *Time*.

Ferrau, Federico. 2019, May 25th. 'Salvini: meno tasse e più lavoro, basta ricatti UE'. *Il Sussidiario*.

Salvini, Matteo. 2019, August 20th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.146. XVIII legislature.

Salvini, Matteo. 2019, December 2nd. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.169. XVIII legislature.

Salvini, Matteo. 2019, December 11th. Stenographic transcription of Senate session n.172. XVIII legislature.