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THE EUROPEAN DILEMMA OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTIES.
A STUDY OF DEBATES AT NATIONAL PARTY CONFERENCES
OF THE PS, SPD AND LABOUR PARTY.

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Abstract

While the extant literature of EU politicization has revolved around parties anchored at the margins of the political spectrum, this working paper considers the political and electoral implications of European integration for social-democratic parties, and the EU-related debates within these parties. My extensive study of speeches at the national party conferences of the British Labour Party, the French Parti Socialiste and the German Sozial-demokratische Partei Deutschlands reveals that members and leaders of each party have to contend with a tension between their perceived (country-specific) constraints and opportunities in relation to European integration. Faced with differentiated motivations – on the one hand, the perception of a strong adaptive pressure as regards social-democratic programmes; on the other, strategic responses to European integration designed to maximize electoral scores – leaders and representatives of the party minority tend to opt for different trade-offs. Among all three party organizations, EU-optimistic views tend to predominate while EU-contestation stems mainly from representatives of each party's internal opposition. Studying party internal debates thus reveals the existence of a contestation of European integration stemming from mainstream parties, carrying the potential of considerable consequences for EU-politicization and European integration.

Keywords

European integration; social-democratic parties; Euroscepticism; party internal debates; national party conferences.

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Introduction

European integration and the Europeanization of public policy have a significant impact on domestic parties' opportunity structure. On the one hand, the process transforms the space of party competition by transferring some competences towards the supranational level and by limiting the instruments at the disposal of governments, with considerable repercussions on the resources of political parties competing along historical cleavages. On the other hand, critical moments on the path of European integration see the emergence on the domestic political agenda of new issues around which some organizations may mobilize. Scholarship on the Europeanization of party competition has so far focussed on this second dimension and explored how political parties politicize the EU (among many others, see Kopecky and Mudde 2002; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Steenbergen and Marks 2004; Hellström 2008). These studies tend to present European matters as a "touchstone of dissent" (Taggart 1998), which is used by extreme parties – often called "Eurosceptic", "populist" or even "demagogic" – in order to challenge the Europhile official discourse of mainstream parties.

This hypothesis poses problems in a number of respects. First, given the political implications of the adaptive pressures and resources that derive from integration, the space for contesting Europe may amount to more than just opposition between "Eurosceptics" and "Europhiles", and European politics are probably not only politicized for strategic purposes. The classification of some political parties as "Eurosceptic" or "populist" is furthermore ambiguous insofar as these expressions are used by partisan actors themselves in order to stigmatize some of their opponents (Neumayer 2008; Pellen 2008). Second, I have shown elsewhere that the episodes of great media and political salience in European politics are rarely due to the mobilization of marginal parties, but rather to that of dissident members of mainstream parties who have the necessary resources to affect the political agenda (Guinaudeau 2012). To account for how European issues are integrated in partisan discourses therefore implies not only extending empirical observations to the largest parties, but also looking at the political competition which takes place *within* these organizations.

This working paper seeks to contribute to a better knowledge of these issues on the basis of an exhaustive study of the speeches made at the national party conferences of the British Labour Party, of the French *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and of the German *Sozial-demokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD). Social-democratic parties seem particularly interesting with regard to the relatively strong adaptive constraints exerted by the EU on their traditional economic programmes. An analysis of references to European integration in their national party conferences allows us to grasp their perceptions of the transformations linked to this process and the way their responses are developed: which facets are emphasized over time? Are they framed as constraints or as opportunities? Do the speeches generally handle European politics similarly or do different perceptions coexist?

The European dilemma of social-democratic parties

The Europeanization of the domestic space of competition

European integration may alter the resources of competing domestic parties in various ways. For instance, the progressive extension of Community competences and the resulting process of Europeanization of public policies probably affect parties' capacity to implement their political objectives. Peter Mair formulated three well-known hypotheses on this matter. In the first place, he assumes that the communitarization of certain policies and the more or less voluntary convergence that takes place between Member States tend to reduce the available *space* for domestic electoral competition. Second, the transfer of some competences to supranational agencies, which excludes the representation of partisan interests, according to Mair, causes a restriction in the range of instruments at the disposal of governing parties. Third, Europeanization confines the policy repertoire of national parties by eliminating numerous practices which interfere with the realization of the common market (Mair 2007).

These tendencies may affect political parties in different ways, according to their preferred issues and to the degree of fit between their project and European policies, and also according to their

relation to power, since governing parties exert a stronger influence on these policies. Given the deeper integration of economic policies, Europeanization has repercussions above all on the resources of parties that compete along the socio-economic left-right cleavage, which in particular structures the political landscape in Western European parties. Parties which advocate strong state interventionism in order to regulate markets, redistribute wealth and ensure social protection are exposed to a strong adaptive pressure in the context of opening domestic economies. The asymmetry between institutional capacities of negative and positive integration, and the Europeanization effects that emerge as a result (Scharpf 2000), generally work to the disadvantage of interventionist policies. In other words, a limitation of governments' macro-economic room for manoeuvre, combined with a relatively modest degree of integration of social policies, generates particular pressures on interventionist parties such as social-democratic parties. The transfer of competition and monetary policies restricts, for instance, the room for manoeuvre of governing parties, so that it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain certain practices inspired by Keynesianism, some classic interventions in industrial policy, and the tradition of state monopolies and public services that previously prevailed in several Member States, while growing constraints on budgetary and fiscal instruments diminish the distributive and redistributive capacities of states.

This reduction in political alternatives is felt particularly in France and, to a more limited extent, in Germany, where macro-economic and fiscal policy, public services and the systems of social protection face important adaptive pressures. Because of a relatively distinct starting situation, the impact of European integration on the forces that oppose each other across the class divide is probably of a different nature in the United Kingdom. As early as the 1980s, this country had anticipated the structural reforms that would take place one or two decades later in the rest of Europe and which featured an advanced stage of deregulation and liberalization. Not only did it not face adaptive pressure as strongly as France and Germany, but British leaders kept more room for manoeuvre by staying outside of monetary union. Nonetheless, the UK had to adjust its social and environmental legislation, notably after Tony Blair decided to adopt the European Social Charter. European policies in the field of environmental protection, labour law, consumer rights and public health contributed to the adoption of measures previously advocated by Labour and rejected by the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties.¹ It thus becomes particularly interesting to compare the internal discourses in the Labour party, whose positions were reinforced by the process of Europeanization, and those in the SPD and the PS, whose traditional positions were partly put under pressure by market integration.

The intrusion of EU-related issues into the domestic electoral agenda

European integration can also alter the modalities of electoral competition through the agenda-setting of new issues that cut across traditional divides. Some EU-related events – intergovernmental conferences, treaties, referendums, etc. – lead to a punctual intrusion of European issues into the domestic political debate, which generates new spaces for political competition, which parties are more or less obliged to enter. Scholarship on this matter suggests that above all these new spaces benefit challenger parties, which are not involved in the drawing up of European policies and which seek to relocate the political joust to other fields than those in which the mainstream parties have acquired their primacy. From this point of view, protest parties are those which may capitalize on the voters' growing distrust towards the EU, while governing parties, which social-democratic parties mostly are, work on depoliticizing European politics and on keeping the debate on more traditional terrain.

The European dilemma of social-democrats

In a nutshell, social-democrats face a diversified and multifaceted Europeanization of their opportunity structure. On the one hand, their socio-economic programme is subject to EU-related adaptive pressures, with the British Labour Party being in a different situation from that of the PS and the SPD.

¹ The impact of such policies was smoother in France and in Germany, where the legislation was already relatively developed.

On the other hand, politicization and contestation over these pressures may divide large parties and benefit their more radical challengers, which are more united around EU-critical discourses.

A precise knowledge of how these trends are perceived and handled in mainstream parties is essential to better understand the mechanisms of the Europeanization of domestic electoral competition. To the extent that parties cannot be forced to take EU-related transformations into account, or to get involved at the EU-level or even to make their proposals conform to European law, the trends described above may have only very limited consequences if they are not perceived and emphasized by partisan actors. An operational approach for dealing with these questions consists in scrutinizing the speeches that are made at the national conferences regularly organized by the three parties. In all cases, the conference is the highest decision-making body of the party. It establishes the broad lines of the party's policy and designates its leaders. National conferences are held annually by the Labour party, while ordinary conferences take place every two years in the SPD and every three years in the PS (see overview in Table 1). Early and extraordinary congresses are regularly held for specific reasons, such as the need to overcome the deep divisions that were revealed by the socialist congress of Rennes in 1990 or by the 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty. The SPD organizes extraordinary conferences in the run-up to general elections in order to validate the party manifesto, and also to endorse the coalition agreement once the elections are won.

Party conferences are covered by hundreds of journalists and offer us an observatory of the different conceptions of Europe which compete at given moments. They are the scene of the deliberation of broad programmatic lines, with contributions from party members on a relatively broad basis.² Not only do party leaders contribute to the debate but also ordinary delegates, and, in the case of Labour, trade unionists. Voters and activists are also, even though indirectly, represented through the reflection by some speakers of their expectations and reactions. The content of these speeches thus reflects much better the diversity of conceptions at work than do official documents. An analysis of the conference minutes reveals the contested and fluctuating character of the parties' responses to EU-related constraints and opportunities. It is possible to distinguish four main phases in all three cases: (1) the re-launching of European integration from 1986; (2) the discussion and adoption of the Maastricht Treaty; (3) the seizure of power by the three parties by the end of the 1990s, which placed them at the heart of European policymaking; and (4) the controversies over the European constitution project in the mid-2000s.

How to deal with the dilemma? The sequences of EU-related debates within social-democratic parties.

Integration as a driver of peace, prosperity and progress

The second half of the 1980s marked an acceleration of the process of European integration, in a favourable climate of opinion in most Member States.³ New European social and environmental standards and the Social Charter project initiated by Jacques Delors were in line with the demands of the Labour Party, which had been in opposition since 1979. Significant constraints on the implementation of Keynesian-inspired measures were nevertheless taking shape because of the predominance of conservative governments in the Council and of the modalities of market-making and

² In the SPD and the Labour Party, the national committee prepares the broad lines of the programme to be submitted to the debate, but each section or constituency can submit a thematic contribution. These are sorted, prioritized and sometimes merged before the conference by a commission called *Antragskommission* by the SPD and *National Policy Forum* by Labour. Since the creation of *New Labour*, the influence of party members has been limited to the advantage of the leadership. In the PS, the motions – which are previously voted for by party members and debated at the conference – derive from numerous general and thematic contributions proposed by members of the national council and drawn up in consultation with some constituencies. During the conference, a synthesis of all or several of the motions is generally negotiated by the representatives. When this is not the case, the majoritarian motion sets the political line of the party until the next conference.

³ Eurobarometer surveys show a progressive reabsorption of British citizens' scepticism, in particular among Labour supporters.

progression towards monetary union. Nevertheless, the members of the three parties do not seem to have dedicated the same level of attention to these transformations. European issues were given top priority in SPD conferences, which all saw specific, and particularly lively, debates on the matter.

Table 1: Party conferences held by the PS, the Labour party and the SPD between 1985 and 2009⁴

	Labour	PS	SPD
1985	Bournemouth (9/29 – 10/4)	Toulouse (10/11-13)	
1986	Blackpool (9/28 – 10/3)		Nürnberg (8/25-29) <i>Offenburg (10/25)</i>
1987	Brighton (9/27 – 10/2)	Lille (4/3-5)	<i>Bonn (6/14)</i>
1988	Blackpool (10/2-7)		Münster (8/30 – 9/2)
1989	Brighton (10/1-6)		<i>Berlin (12/18-20)</i>
1990	Blackpool (9/30 – 10/5)	Rennes (3/15-18)	Berlin (9/26)
1991	Brighton (9/29 – 10/4)	<i>Arche de la Défense (12/13-15)</i>	<i>Bremen (5/28-31)</i>
1992	Blackpool (9/27 – 10/2)	<i>Bordeaux (7/10-12)</i>	<i>Bonn (11/16-17)</i>
1993	Brighton (9/26 – 10/1)	<i>Le Bourget (10/22-24)</i>	<i>Essen (6/25)</i> Wiesbaden (11/16-19)
1994	Blackpool (10/3-7)	Liévain (11/18-20)	<i>Halle (6/22)</i>
1995	Brighton (10/2-6)		Mannheim (11/14-17)
1996	Blackpool (9/30 – 10/4)		
1997	Brighton (9/29 – 10/3)	Brest (11/21-23)	Hannover (12/2-4)
1998	Blackpool (9/28 – 10/2)		<i>Leipzig (4/17)</i> <i>Bonn (10/25)</i>
1999	Blackpool (9/27 – 10/1)		<i>Bonn (4/12)</i> Berlin (12/7-9)
2000	Brighton (9/24-28)	Grenoble (11/24-26)	
2001	Brighton (9/28 – 10/1)		Nürnberg (11/19-22)
2002	Blackpool (9/29 – 10/3)		
2003	Bournemouth (9/28 – 10/2)	Dijon (5/16-18)	Bochum (11/17-19)
2004	Brighton (9/26-30)		
2005	Brighton (9/25-29)	<i>Le Mans (11/18-20)</i>	Karlsruhe (11/14-16)
2006	Manchester (9/24-28)		
2007	Bournemouth (9/23-27)		Hamburg (10/26-28)
2008	Manchester (9/20-24)	Reims (11/14-16)	
2009	Brighton (9/27-10/1)		Dresden (11/13-15)

Sources: Fondation Jean Jaurès ; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung ; Labour History Archive and Study Centre.

These issues were far more marginal in the discussions held within the PS, and even more so in the case of Labour. The latter also differed from the others in its exclusive focus on the perspective of *opportunities* linked to integration, while French socialists and German social-democrats were more ambivalent.

Labour speakers shared an optimistic view of European integration as a driving force for their social objectives and as a field in which their party could favourably demarcate itself from its Conservative Party opponents. All the discourses structured by the opposition portray a reluctant

⁴ Extraordinary or early conferences are shown in italics. The PS Toulouse conference was studied while it was being organized in October 1985 in order to understand the conceptions of Europe prevailing in the party on the eve of the 1986 legislative elections.

Conservative Party and an enthusiastic Labour Party, willing to let Britain benefit from all the opportunities generated by European integration. Some expressed regret that their country had missed huge opportunities linked to the common market, in terms of investment, innovation and growth.⁵ Others deplored the fact that the opacity of the Council allowed ministers to distort their true positions in the national media.⁶ Above all, critiques were aimed at the deliberate resistance of the government to the adoption of social and environmental standards: numerous speakers regretted that their country was the only one to have rejected the Social Charter and other rights, rules and liberties in force elsewhere.⁷ All these contributions underlined how differently a Labour government would behave, how it would end the suspicions regarding British involvement in Europe, respect European law, and deepen its excellent relations within the European social-democratic family:

It is clear in so many ways, as we look at Britain from Strasbourg and Brussels, how much we need a Labour government, not just for the United Kingdom, but for the whole of Europe.⁸

Contrary to their British counterparts, many PS and SPD speakers addressed different types of European “constraints”. The Europeanization of German policies received much attention in SPD conferences, where the contributors underlined the binding character of European obligations and analysed their consequences in precise policy fields. For Norbert Wieczorek, MP and member of the national committee, “the European Community is concretely and in many respects perceived as an instrument opposing what we wish to achieve nationally”.⁹ Deep concerns were expressed on assumed threats to the functioning of federalism and on the shrinking relevance of regional elections.¹⁰ For Hans-Jochen Vogel, president of the SPD, “Europeanization” was a slogan used to challenge the German model of joint management of firms and for dismantling the *Bundespost*.¹¹ Several conferences saw the formulation of fears related to the impact of market-making on workers’ rights¹², as well as to the related restriction of the available room left for macroeconomic policy.¹³ In 1988, Oskar Lafontaine illustrated this argument by referring to the example of the French socialists’ difficulties in fighting unemployment.

It is precisely in order to account for some aspects of the record of the PS that the French socialists referred to “constraints”, among which “Europe” played an important role, even if its impact was not analysed as precisely as among the German social-democrats. In 1985, for instance, Lionel Jospin noticed the consensus on “the reality of the constraints that put us, and the global choices of economic policy, under pressure”, notably in the context of the European monetary system, and Pierre Mauroy detailed the list of constraints that justified his *politique de rigueur*:

[It is] exasperating to encourage consumption, in 1981, and to see that, eventually, German industry benefits more from it than French industry. [It is] exciting, though, the challenge of European integration, and this is why, from the first day on, we remained in the European monetary system, out of realism and political choice ...

⁵ Bill Jordan and Jim King, 1991.

⁶ Lord Clinton-Davis of Hackney, 1991.

⁷ Jim King, Bill Jordan, Glyn Ford and Lord Clinton-Davis of Hackney, 1991.

⁸ Glyn Ford, 1991. See also the ironic words of Bill Fry.

⁹ Norbert Wieczorek, August 1986.

¹⁰ The 1991 conference hosted a lively discussion on the consequences of European integration for the balance of power between the *Bundesländer* and *Bundesregierung*. See for instance the speeches by Karsten Voigt, Johannes Rau, Henning Voscherau and Jürgen Büssow.

¹¹ Hans-Jochen Vogel, 1988 (see also the speech by Ernst Breit, president of the German federation of trade unions).

¹² Hans Urbaniak, Willi Rothley, Norbert Wieczorek and Karl-Heinz Mihr, August 1986; Gerd Walter, 1988.

¹³ Peter Glotz, August 1986; Rudi Ardnt, Magdalene Hoff and Gerd Walter, 1988.

Pierre Mauroy's ambiguity is representative of the attitude of most of the PS and SPD speakers. Many of them saw the limitation of their room for manoeuvre as a necessary evil to achieve European integration, considered an end in itself.¹⁴ While some socialists, such as Laurent Fabius and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, advocated adaptations such as a better harmonisation of economic policies or the abandonment of certain fiscal practices, the Labour and SPD members were more prone to proposing reforms of the European Community. Given both parties' confinement in opposition since the early 1980s, many complained about the transfer of competences to the European Council of Ministers and pleaded for more transparency regarding governments' decisions at the EU level and a redistribution of power in favour of the European and national parliaments. In a similar vein, several contributions recommended strengthening EC capacities in the fields of employment, social policy and environmental protection. While the French socialists emphasized the European record of Jacques Delors and François Mitterrand, their German and British counterparts regretted the modesty of the Single Act and wish for more audacious institutional compromises.

Despite this perception of European constraints within the PS and the SPD, overall the advantages of Europe tended to prevail in speeches on the EU. There seems to have been agreement to consider integration as the best option for winning back the room for manoeuvre that had been lost at the domestic level in the context of globalization and the Cold War.¹⁵ Within the PS, European integration was frequently referred to as a hope for the regulation of international capitalism and as a suitable level at which to restore public action in the face of economic pressures. A German specificity may explain the comparatively higher level of attention dedicated to Europe by SPD members. For many of them, European integration was expected not only to serve the social-democratic project, but also to pursue German interests. European and German politics appeared to be intrinsically linked, in the sense that German involvement in European integration was expected to ensure the country's security and the appeasement of its European partners who were suspicious of the consequences of the country's reunification.¹⁶

In a nutshell, the majority of the speakers of the three parties saw European integration as a means to defend social-democratic interests. Everywhere, speeches pleaded in favour of fairer redistribution of the wealth generated by the common market and of a stronger Europeanization of social protection, employment policy, labour law and environmental policy. The words "social Europe" were used as a slogan to express such demands. The opportunities linked to a "social Europe" were particularly palpable in the discourse of the Labour speakers, who welcomed the pressure exerted on the Conservative government by European directives and standards. They were less emphasized by the French and German social-democrats, who had benefitted from high national standards from the beginning. Several PS members even perceived important resistance to the realization of a "social Europe" on the part of conservative governments and regretted the virtual character of this Europe.¹⁷ The European dilemma described above seems to have been perceived by French socialists with growing clarity conference after conference, as illustrated by a speech made in 1990 by Lionel Jospin:

On the EEC, dear comrades, we know the dilemma very well. Without it, we are not strong enough; in it, if it is too exclusively conservative and liberal, we run the risk of losing ourselves. We thus have to be fully involved in the EEC and, at the same time, to move it towards justice, towards our socialist ideas.

¹⁴ See for instance the interventions by Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Michel Rocard.

¹⁵ In France and in Germany, speeches portrayed the association of European states as a means to assert themselves politically and economically when faced with "giants" such as the United States, the USSR or Japan. Members of all three parties advocated European actions in favour of a "new internationalism" promoting peace, human rights and development.

¹⁶ Among others: Hans-Jochen Vogel, Markus Meckel, Willy Brandt, Egon Bahr, Gerd Walter and Rudi Ardnt, December 1989.

¹⁷ This aspect was debated at length at the 1990 conference in Rennes by Jean Poperen, Jean Auroux, Louis Mexandeau, Jean-Pierre Cot, Laurent Fabius, Michel Rocard and Jean-Pierre Chevènement.

The members of the faction *Socialisme et République* around Jean-Pierre Chevènement were the most sceptical Socialists.¹⁸ At that time, contrary to what may be assumed, none of those who represented this faction, neither Chevènement himself nor Max Gallo or Pierre Guidoni, were fully hostile to the principle of European integration, but all of them called for analysis and debate of its consequences, as would have been the case for internal policy. In Rennes, the negotiations over the Declaration of Principles acknowledging the end of the Cold War were long and difficult regarding European matters. Chevènement, alternately acclaimed and shouted down, shared the fears expressed by others on the liberal orientation of European policies, but also argued in favour of a patriotic defence of France's interests, in particular against Germany. The members of other factions, such as Gérard Fuchs, replied by underlining that the EC was the only possible guarantee of sovereignty and independence in a globalizing world.

The Europeanization of policies was perceived in various ways, yet the members of all three parties seemed to have considered the politicization of Europe as promising electoral terrain. Given the relative popularity of the EC in public opinion, notably among supporters of left-wing parties, the French Socialists stressed the European record of Jacques Delors, François Mitterrand, and of the PS in general since 1981.¹⁹ Placing European politics at the forefront seemed all the more attractive given the perception of the RPR, the main opponent, as being incapable of defining a line for its European policy.²⁰ The SPD and the Labour party were in opposition and could therefore not praise the recent steps of European integration but their members nonetheless assumed the agenda-setting of European issues to be favourable to them and pursued a strategy of systematic criticism of conservative governments in Europe. Within the SPD, contributions cast irony on the inertia of the Kohl government, its reluctant attitude towards certain European policies and on the supposed gap between pro-European "Sunday speeches" and the actual policy of the Christian-Democrats.²¹ British Labour members had recourse to the same type of argument:

No matter what John Major thinks, no matter what John Major does, conference, Europe will be a key issue at the election and we must resist the temptation simply to watch the Tories self-destruct. Maggie's 'No, no, no' has been replaced by John Major's impersonation of an ostrich or of a latter-day King Canute thinking that the tide of Europe will either not be there or can be turned back.²²

Nuances and divisions over the Maastricht Treaty

The intrusion of questions related to the Maastricht Treaty marks a turning point in the deliberations of all three parties, but not simultaneously. The PS and Labour conferences had already witnessed controversies on this subject during the 1991 intergovernmental conference, while the SPD did not debate the text before the conferences of Wiesbaden and Mannheim, in 1993 and 1995. This was largely due to the schedule of SPD conferences: the 1991 meeting took place in May, long before the intergovernmental conference, and the 1992 one only in the autumn. In the meantime, several leftist and rightist leaders campaigned against the principle of a common currency, which split the German parties and nourished citizens' fears. In this context, the Social-Democrats were reluctant to expose

¹⁸ Since the foundation of the PS in 1971, Socialists close to Chevènement had been organized in a faction, the "Centre d'études, de recherches et d'éducation socialiste" (CERES, rebaptized 'Socialisme et République' from 1986). This group opposed several aspects of European integration, including the modalities for the creation of the European monetary system.

¹⁹ The members of *Socialisme et République* probably did not share this strategy but they remained relatively discrete on European issues in the period before the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

²⁰ Lionel Jospin, Pierre Mauroy, Laurent Fabius and Louis Mermaz, 1987.

²¹ Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, Barbara Simons, Karsten Voigt, Beate Weber and Rudi Arndt, August 1986; Hans Appel, October 1986. In Offenburg, the resistance of some CSU members was mocked by Horst Ehmke using the slogan: "Yes to Europe, but Bavaria above everything".

²² Alex Smith, 1991.

their divisions at the conference and they focused instead on relatively consensual aspects, such as the democratization of European institutions.

By way of comparison, the treaty was abundantly discussed by the PS and by the Labour party, following similar dynamics, with, in both cases, a minority from the left of the party opposing the ratification of the treaty. In the Labour Party, this position was represented by Tony Benn, a member of the national committee, as well as by several trade unionists. Three main arguments were mobilized: first, the text was said to be too liberal, to be too modest with respect to workers' rights and to empower an independent ECB "run by bankers for bankers".²³ Second, the EU, as outlined in Maastricht, was not seen to be democratic enough and did not put an end to the primacy of the Commission over the European Parliament.²⁴ Third, several speakers considered that the adoption of such an important treaty required a referendum.²⁵ In the PS, only Jean-Pierre Chevènement and his follower Roland Carraz frankly pleaded for a rejection of the Maastricht treaty, which, according to them, should be substantially revised.²⁶ Their arguments, most of which echoed those from the left of Labour, invoked the lack of democracy and the opacity of European negotiations, the consecration of an independent ECB with "immovable" governors, the "sacrifice of socialism in the name of liberalism and of nation in the name of a monetarist and supranational Europe"²⁷ and the restrictive scope of the "social Europe", which "may interest some countries, but the less advanced ones much more than France".²⁸

In the PS as in Labour, anti-Maastricht pleas triggered a torrent of protests and led the members of the party majority to assert their pro-European orientation. Their arguments were twofold. On the one hand, tactical reasoning presented European integration as a favourable battlefield given the divisions in the RPR and in the Conservative Party.²⁹ On the other, we find a series of substantial arguments in favour of the Treaty. A first argumentative line started from the conviction that it was impossible to renegotiate the treaty in a favourable direction in view of the predominance of conservatives in Europe. Referring to the constraints that derived from globalization, it presented the text as a positive, yet insufficient and imperfect, step towards the re-conquest of the margins for manoeuvre that were no longer available at the domestic level.³⁰ The treaty was eventually defended by looking at its intrinsic advantages. Labour speeches praised the greater powers of the European Parliament, the majority voting on some social and environmental issues, the structural funds, the Social Charter adopted by eleven countries and a series of aspects related to the idea of "a People's Europe" – the free movement of workers, European citizenship, and the right to vote of EU citizens at local elections.³¹ In the PS, speeches welcomed steps forward in the fields of democratic scrutiny of European politics, European citizenship and some social matters.³²

The stigmatization of anti-Maastricht speakers by the followers of the majority line shows that mobilizing on European issues was seen as a resource in the internal competition which took place in

²³ Malcom Crane, Paul Gallett, Thomas Murphy, Julie Grimble and Alison Miller, 1992.

²⁴ Joan Abrahams, 1992.

²⁵ Tony Benn developed the most detailed argument in favour of a referendum.

²⁶ Their motion nonetheless obtained over 12% of the vote in 1991.

²⁷ Roland Carraz, 1992.

²⁸ Jean-Pierre Chevènement, congrès de Bordeaux.

²⁹ Among many other representatives of the Socialist majority, see Pierre Moscovici, Laurent Fabius and Jean-Pierre Bayle, 1991; Gérard Lindeperg and Gérard Fuchs, 1992. Concerning the majority of the Labour party, cf.:

Gerald Kauffman, Glyn Ford and George Robertson, 1992. Most Labour members argued nevertheless against a referendum, given the risk of the resurgence of old tensions within the party.

³⁰ Alan Tuffin, Glyn Ford, Mike Griffith and Peter Bury, 1992; Gérard Collomb, 1991; Gilles Martinet, Laurent Fabius, Gérard Fuchs and Jean Poperen, 1992.

³¹ Gerald Kaufman and Diane Hayter, 1992.

³² André Billardon, Gérard Collomb, Edith Cresson and Jean-Pierre Bayle, 1991; Jacques Delors, Louis Mermaz, Gérard Fuchs, Michel Rocard, Jean-Paul Bachy, Laurent Fabius and Gérard Lindeperg, 1992.

the PS. Advocates of “no” were accused of being insincere, of trying to exploit voters’ fears by “playing with disinformation and manipulating emotions”³³ in order to contest the balance of power in the party. However, Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Roland Carraz denied being anti-Europeans:

... There are not on the one hand Europeans and on the other anti-Europeans. There are on the one hand those who make the progress of European integration conditional on the content of policies, and on the other those who follow each measure as soon as it appears to be ‘European’, even if it is a measure that serves the Europe of capital. On the one hand the voluntarists, on the other the ‘followers’.³⁴

The erosion of public support for European integration, palpable in all surveys of the first half of the 1990s, was perceived within the SPD and the PS, where many speakers were concerned with fear of Europe and, in France, with the permeability of the political debate to the thesis of the far right.³⁵ In this context, the speeches tended to become more nuanced. In both parties, citizens’ distrust towards Europe was interpreted above all as a reaction to a liberal orientation and to the inertia of the EU in the fields of unemployment and workers’ rights. French and German social-democrats thus feared the consequences of greater pressures towards liberalization, multiplying business relocations and restrictions on workers’ rights.³⁶ PS and SPD members suggested similar solutions: drawing up a new Social Charter, institutional reform of Europe with an extension of the majoritarian system, measures against the dismantling of labour law, and the implementation of a European industrial policy.³⁷

Certain SPD speakers saw a set of constraints deriving from the future monetary union. Two radically opposed analyses were developed in Wiesbaden and Mannheim. In 1993, two Bavarian delegates vehemently criticized the principle of an independent ECB and the convergence criteria adopted in Maastricht as threatening social protection and employment.³⁸ In Mannheim in contrast, amid a general climate of hostility towards this project, Peter Conradi took up the argument developed by several social-democrats – such as Gerhard Schröder and Henning Voscherau – during their regional campaigns, according to which the Maastricht criteria were not strict enough to ensure the stability of the future single currency. For Conradi, to reject this discussion would be equal to ignoring the fears that he presumed were growing among German electors regarding the future of their currency.

French socialists and German social-democrats addressed a final set of preoccupations linked to the modalities and consequences of eastward enlargement. Whereas all of them were highly enthusiastic in the early 1990s, their speeches become progressively more pragmatic and even more sceptical. On the one hand, the enlargement of Europe “to the Urals” was seen as leading to a dilution of the European project and putting the prospects for deepening the EU under pressure, with the risk of reducing it to a mere free-trade area.³⁹ On the other hand, speakers emphasized that the economic,

³³ Elisabeth Guigou, 1992. See also Gérard Collomb in the previous conference.

³⁴ Jean-Pierre Chevènement, 1992.

³⁵ Regarding the PS, see: Laurent Fabius, Pierre Moscovici, André Billardon and Lionel Jospin, 1991; Geneviève Domenach-Chich, Charles Josselin, Daniel Vaillant and Pervenche Bérès, 1993; Dominique Strauss-Kahn, 1994. For SPD speakers, cf.: Willi Arens, Johannes Rau and Robert Antretter, November 1993; Klaus Hänsch, Rolf Linkohr and Bernd Faulenbach, 1995.

³⁶ Gérard Collomb, 1993; Julien Dray and Pervenche Bérès, 1994; Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul and Christa Randzio-Plath, 1991; Willi Arens and Hans Urbaniak, November 1993; Hans Urbaniak, Ursula Engelen-Kefer and Klaus Hänsch, 1995.

³⁷ Michel Rocard, Gérard Collomb, Henri Weber, Jean-Louis Cottigny, Pierre Moscovici, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann and Pierre Mauroy, 1993; Michel Debout and Laurent Fabius, 1994; Willi Arens and Hans Urbaniak, November 1993; Klaus Hänsch, Hans Urbaniak, Ursula Engelen-Kefer and Bernd Faulenbach, 1995.

³⁸ Werner Schieder and Walter Schweigert, 1993.

³⁹ Jean Poperen, 1992; Pervenche Bérès and Laurent Fabius, 1994; Günther Verheugen, 1992; Klaus Hänsch, November 1993 and 1995.

social and ecological criteria for adhesion should be strictly respected.⁴⁰ Finally, the costs and the funding of enlargement tended to be given importance in the SPD conferences.⁴¹

Despite the growing perception of EU-related constraints in the PS and the SPD, the majority in both parties continued to assert its commitment to Europe and its conviction that a social-democratic policy could no longer be implemented except at the European level.⁴² The representatives of majority streams vehemently attacked the ‘sceptics’. In Wiesbaden, criticisms were levelled at dissident voices within the CDU and the CSU – Edmund Stoiber in particular – who were accused of being cynical and of detracting from the international reputation of Germany by giving the impression that the country supported European integration only because it needed it after the Second World War.⁴³ In Mannheim, speakers from the majority above all stigmatized social-democrats who campaigned on the fears about the single currency. Gerhard Schröder and Peter Conradi faced a torrent of reproaches, notably those of damaging the international reputation of the SPD, of taking up far right arguments and of having given rise to a demagogic controversy without having consulted the leaders of the party:⁴⁴

But Gerhard, it should not happen as you say. Can you imagine how much it hurts when MPs and Austrian MPs who are currently involved in a hard campaign come and say, ‘Thank you for this contribution! Mister Haider walks around the Austrian mountains and abundantly cites social-democrats on the national topic of the euro and monetary union.’⁴⁵

On the whole, the period opened by the 1991 intergovernmental conference and the controversies over the Maastricht treaty was marked in all three countries by the construction of new images of Europe in addition to the ones that prevailed until then. These images were characterized by a stronger attention to EU-related constraints and they were developed by internal minorities in the three organizations. Members of left-wing factions expressed concerns regarding the social consequences of European integration, in particular with respect to monetary union. The appeals of some German social-democrats in favour of adopting even stricter convergence criteria were more surprising in a party defending a programme inspired by Keynesianism. They probably reflected the atmosphere of uncertainty that prevailed in Germany during that period. Given the shrinking popularity of the European project, contesting EU policies could have been a fruitful strategy for candidates who campaigned at the regional level, or for representatives of minority streams who sought to challenge the party leadership. This at least was the analysis of the party leaders, who worked to discredit critical speakers by presenting them as Eurosceptic, anti-European, demagogic, populist or even damaging, since the majority of the parties’ electorate remained favourable to European integration.

This period ended in a state of relative cohesion on European matters in the SPD and in the Labour party, in which leaders managed to bring the challengers who contested their European line to heel. Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, the two most leftist members of the Labour national committee, were in particular marginalized, after the rejection of their proposal for a referendum by 24 votes to two by the national committee as well as by a majority of the conference. The designation of John Smith at the head of the party, the eviction of Tony Benn from the national committee and the withdrawal of Bryan Gould, leader of the Labour MPs who were hostile to the Maastricht Treaty, from

⁴⁰ Charles Josselin and Pervenche Bérès, 1993; Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, November 1993; Klaus Hänsch, 1995.

⁴¹ Christa Randzio-Plath, November 1993; Heidemarie-Wieczorek-Zeul and Magdalene Hoff, 1995; Klaus Hänsch, 1997.

⁴² Daniel Vaillant, Michel Rocard and Pervenche Bérès, 1993; Klaus Hänsch, Markus Meckel and Sigrid Skarpelis-Sperk, November 1993; Klaus Hänsch, 1995.

⁴³ Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Peter Glotz, Karsten Voigt, Klaus Hänsch and Johannes Rau, November 1993.

⁴⁴ Christa Randzio-Plath, Willi Görlach, Karin Junker, Klaus Hänsch, Rolf Linkohr and Oskar Lafontaine, 1995. In Wiesbaden already, Peter Glotz warned sceptics with forceful words: “I say this because I can imagine regional SPD politicians who would like to win their election against M. Stoiber or someone else by recurring to keywords such as subsidiarity or false bureaucracy, and who lose sight of the European objective. This shall not happen, comrades!”.

⁴⁵ Willi Görlach, 1995. See also the speeches by Kerstin Griese, Peter Glotz and Monika Wulf-Mathies at the same conference.

the shadow ministry of trade and industry, reinforced the marginalization of the left wing of the party and of arguments centred on European constraints. At the 1996 Labour conference, Europe was thus exclusively presented from the point of view of opportunities.⁴⁶ This pro-European stance became an essential pillar of the Labour opposition strategy, as was illustrated by the publication of an ironic brochure on Conservative Party European policy.⁴⁷

European integration “from the inside”

An essential element began to influence European discourses in mainstream left-wing parties from 1997: on 2 May 1997, the Labour Party won a general election for the first time since 1974; the PS triumphed in the legislative elections that took place in France the following month; and finally, the SPD seized power in September 1998. In 1999, members of the socialist international were represented in twelve out of the fifteen governments of the EU, eleven being led by social-democrats.⁴⁸ In left-wing organizations, this situation raised hopes of rebalancing European integration to the advantage of employment and social policies. On the occasion of the conferences that took place between 1997 and 1998, the members of the three parties congratulated each other and drew up general expectations regarding the reorientation of European policy. In Germany these hopes were already palpable in Hannover, even before the 1998 election.⁴⁹

The atmosphere was euphoric on the socialist benches at the Brest conference that took place in November 1997, simultaneously with the Luxembourg conference. The construction of a “social Europe” was declared a priority by the Jospin government and many socialists already emphasized the strengthening and reorientation of the EU obtained in Luxembourg as an achievement of the new majority.⁵⁰ Speakers promised to work in consultation with other social-democrats on creating a political government, harmonising taxation and salaries and rebalancing the objectives of the EU to the advantage of growth and employment.⁵¹

At the juncture of 1997-1998, the PS was the only party in which this optimistic analysis was contested by some factions, all of them anchored to the left of the party. This specificity may be interpreted in the light of the erosion of EU support fostered by the strike of 1995, controversies regarding the convergence criteria for the single currency and social mobilizations surrounding the Amsterdam Summit. In this context, a part of the socialist electorate may have been sensitive to mobilizations orchestrated by far left organizations against “Maastricht Europe”, even though PS supporters remained predominantly pro-European. The consequences of integration on the left’s opportunity structure were the subject of animated discussion, as shown by debates held in Brest (1997) and in Grenoble (2000). This topic was even subject to opposition from motions presented at the two conferences and it was in view of these divergences that some topics did not rally the majority. In Brest, this is the case of motions B (“Réussir à Gauche”, proposed by Marie-Thérèse Mutin and Alain Vidalies, which scored 5.4%) and C (“État d’urgence sociale: pour une autre cohérence”,

⁴⁶ Tony Blair, Wayne David and Robin Cook, 1996.

⁴⁷ Labour Party (1994), *Whose manifesto? Why the Conservatives are divided on Europe, divided in Europe and divided from Europe*.

⁴⁸ The only exceptions are the governments of Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain.

⁴⁹ This can be illustrated by the optimistic speeches made by Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, Detlev Albers and Oskar Lafontaine. The Bonn conference, in the aftermath of the election, opened with a triumphal speech by Gerhard Schröder. The difficulties inherent in the absence of coordination of economic, social and fiscal policies and in the risk of strengthened dumping after the adoption of the single currency were analysed with growing precision, but the tone was euphoric with numerous references to the expectations raised in Europe by the alteration and a set of promises with respect to the democratization of EU-institutions, the coordination of macroeconomic policies and the adoption of minimum social and environmental standards.

⁵⁰ Alain Claeys, Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, Pierre Guidoni, Henri Nallet, Louis Mermaz, Henri Emmanuelli, Elisabeth Guigou, Claude Bartholone and François Hollande, 1997.

⁵¹ Laurent Fabius, Pervenche Bérès, Lionel Jospin, Pierre Moscovici and Henri Emmanuelli. These hopes were reinforced by the speech by Oskar Lafontaine, guest of the party conference, who promised to collaborate with the PS on these objectives if the SPD won the 1998 elections.

proposed by the *Gauche Socialiste* faction, with Marie-Noëlle Lienemann and Julien Dray, 10.2%). In Grenoble, we again find a motion from the *Gauche Socialiste* (“Attika”, 13.3%), but also a further motion, “Démocratie, Égalité”, presented by Henri Emmanuelli, Alain Vidalies and Christian Bataille (13.8%).

In Brest, the speakers for motions B and C agreed to deplore the “democratic deficit” of the EU, and above all the “disintegration of the European social model”, the deregulation and the “dismantlement of public services”. Julien Dray explained in great detail the macro-economic constraints that, according to him, derive from integration and he appealed to the party to learn from past failure by remembering that the austerity policy decided in 1983 was supposed to be temporary and that political integration never proceeded automatically from economic integration:

As soon as the victory at the legislative elections was secured, the same question reappeared during the Amsterdam Summit: ‘How can France lead a left-wing policy and at the same time be at the heart of the construction of an ever more liberal Europe whose finality is to get rid of all national regulations and social achievements to make the strongest competition possible?’ Will we then be condemned to choose again between Europe and the workers’ interests?

These speeches advocated the renegotiation of the Amsterdam Treaty. Notably, speakers for motions B and C regretted the absence of real economic government to counter-balance the weight of the ECB, the reluctance to adopt a growth pact and the disproportion between the binding character of the budgetary and monetary engagements and the lack of precision in social and fiscal decisions. They thus argued for the adoption of convergence criteria in terms of employment, social rights, a moratorium on the liberalization of public services and a European budgetary revival plan.

Party leaders, such as François Hollande and Lionel Jospin and their followers, responded to these arguments cordially and expressed their satisfaction regarding a debate “without drama, without disunity”.⁵² They did not substantially contest the analysis of European constraints but they appealed to patience and pragmatism. Government members denied having accepted the realization of a “liberal” Europe in Amsterdam. For Moscovici, who referred to the scepticism and the hostility of the European partners at the beginning of the Luxembourg conference, the crisis that would have resulted from a French withdrawal from the single currency would have contributed to the destruction of the Jospin government’s credibility and capacity to influence European integration:

We are not the only architects of the European Union. It is not enough for France to speak for others to listen and to follow us. We do not do what we want in Europe, and Europe is made of 15 today, of 20 tomorrow and maybe of 25 the day after. This is why, in Europe too, our method is to progress, has to be to progress by negotiation, by persuasion, with the others, be they States, Unions or employers.

The second thing is that we cannot modify the course of things by snapping our fingers; we cannot reverse 50 years of liberal European integration in six months, and also in Europe, “everything right now” is not possible, and this is why there are two reasons why, in my opinion, Luxembourg is a good compromise, because it is a compromise for the future and because it is a compromise for employment.

The minutes of the Labour and SPD conferences in the years following their elections to government reveal the existence of concerns that are close to those expressed on the left of the PS. At the 2000 Labour conference, trade unionists Brenda Warrington and Tony Dubbins doubted the benefits of integration and noted that the “European social model” remained vague and that several social directives had not been fully implemented by the United Kingdom. Similarly, single SPD members were preoccupied with the absence of deep institutional reform accompanying the new transfers of competences⁵³, with pressures towards the liberalization of the electricity market⁵⁴ and with the

⁵² Jean-Pierre Bel, 1997.

⁵³ Martin Schulz (Bureau national du SPD) and Evelyne Gebhardt, Berlin (1999).

implications of a stability pact concluded by conservative governments.⁵⁵ It was in the name of such arguments that Oskar Lafontaine, finance minister in the Schröder government, fell out with the rest of the government and resigned as early as March 1999.

These types of constraint remained marginal and European issues paled considerably in importance in SPD and Labour debates, in which European politics was overshadowed by other issues of international policy – Kosovo intervention, terrorism and counter-attacks in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The EU at this time simply constituted one of the fields of action emphasised by the Blair and Schröder governments in their legacies. In Germany, social-democrats liked to refer to the achievements obtained regarding the German contribution to the community budget, enlargement, structural funds, the fight against terrorism and organized crime and regarding the strengthening of the European parliament with respect to the European commission.⁵⁶

In the UK, speakers praised the results of the 1998 British presidency and underlined how much the country, “placed at the centre of Europe”, benefited from numerous European policies.⁵⁷ In the early 2000s, Labour contributors undeniably perceived a certain hostility on the part of British citizens towards European integration and the single currency project, but this awareness did not lead them to mobilize on the idea of European constraints. In contrast, this sceptical atmosphere probably explains the about-face of the party leadership regarding a referendum on the adoption of the single currency.⁵⁸

At the beginning of the Blair, Jospin and Schröder governments’ mandates, “social Europe” seems to have been a powerful rhetorical resource and the subject of hope within the three parties. This interest nevertheless seems to decline over time. The modest results of the Amsterdam and Nice summits had not made Europe an attractive aspect of the records of the three governments. This was reflected in the spectacularly shrinking salience of European politics in Labour and SPD conferences, while substantial divergences persist in the PS on the appropriate response to the European dilemma.

Debates over the European constitution project

Interest in Europe seems to decline at Labour and SPD conferences over the course of the 2000s.⁵⁹ The EU is only briefly referred to, generally in order to draw attention to an initiative of the left wing of the party. Angelica Schwall-Düren evoked, for instance, the Lisbon strategy at the SPD conference of 2003. In 2004 and 2005, Labour ministers for Defence and Foreign affairs, Geoff Hoon and Jack Straw, highlighted their good collaboration with their European partners on several matters.

The work of the convention on Europe’s future is almost absent from the debates⁶⁰ and the content of the European Constitutional Treaty (ECT) and the events that surrounded its aborted ratification process were barely discussed at the conferences in Brighton and Karlsruhe that took place in the autumn of 2005. Jack Straw, on the defensive and facing unfavourable polls on the constitution project, limited himself to asserting his support in very general terms and to promising ratification by referendum. Gary Titley, leader of the Labour group in the European parliament, saw the rejection of the ECT by French and Dutch voters as a call to order, a plea for results before constitutions and

(Contd.) _____

⁵⁴ Anja Liedtke, Nürnberg (2001).

⁵⁵ Sigrid Skarpelis-Sperk, Nürnberg (2001).

⁵⁶ Klaus Hänsch, Gerhard Schröder, April 1999; Gerhard Schröder and Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, December 1999; Gerhard Schröder, Günther Verheugen, Klaus Hänsch and Udo Bullman, 2001.

⁵⁷ Brenda Warrington, Robin Cook, Pammi Taylor and Simon Murphy, 2000.

⁵⁸ Tony Blair reiterated this promise at all the conferences in the 2000s and expressed growing reservations, specifying that all the economic conditions must be met before he would consider a referendum.

⁵⁹ The marginality of the EU in Labour debates can be illustrated by its almost total disappearance from Tony Blair’s speeches, which henceforth centred on domestic policy and on international questions such as anti-terrorism plans and the Iraq war.

⁶⁰ Among the rare exceptions, see the approbation expressed by Angelica Schwall-Düren at the 2003 SPD conference towards the proposition to create a common foreign minister and her regrets that decisions continued to be made unanimously in this field. At Labour conferences, only Jack Straw briefly referred to the constitution project, which he presented as a success, even though he observed that the British “have not heard much about it in the newspapers”.

procedures, and he thus appealed for better information for British citizens on the improvements made possible by European policies.

The SPD, and to a lesser extent Labour, nonetheless held some discussions regarding the Services directive, which had been abundantly politicized in the context of the ratification of the ECT. At the 2005 Labour conference, Linda Lord, delegate from the GMB union, noted the growing public distrust towards the EU and expressed concerns on the social consequences of the directive.

At the Karlsruhe conference, Angelica Schwall-Düren, vice-president of the SPD faction and responsible for European affairs, stressed the interest of the party in this directive and reported lively internal debates: on the one hand, the market in services was considered to have a considerable potential for growth and some social-democrats hoped to benefit from the creation of a real common market in this field. On the other hand, the suppression of borders and bureaucracy brought significant risks linked to social competition. Schwall-Düren believed the directive should be amended to restrict its scope to only certain services and to remove the country of origin principle. She was thus satisfied with the clear rejection of the directive in its then form by Gerhard Schröder. A dissertation by Amandine Crespy allows us to better understand this decision. While originally in favour of the directive, the government had to revise its position due to contestation emanating from members of the SPD parliamentary faction allied to several unions.⁶¹ This mobilization first ran up against resistance from the social-democratic economy minister Wolfgang Clement, who finally had to bow to Schröder's decision not to adopt the directive. Once this question was settled, European issues disappeared from SPD debates. In 2007, the only references to the EU deal with the preparations for the 2009 European elections.

In contrast to the Labour and SPD conferences, the socialist conference in Dijon in 2003 hosted long discussions about the preparation and the ratification of the ECT. The divisions expressed in previous conferences were exacerbated by the necessity of taking a position for or against the work of the convention. This already triggered strong polarization, which would reach its highest point in 2005. Supporters of the majority motion, led by the party leader François Hollande, expressed positive expectations of the convention and wished to progress towards a "federal Europe" by accepting the implementation of common defence, diplomacy and justice systems, as well as economic government. In return, these speakers demanded the preservation of social protection systems and public services, and the reform of the stability pact. In line with their previous arguments, they insisted on the absence of a credible alternative and on the necessity of accepting compromises.⁶²

On the other hand, the signatories of the motion "Nouveau Monde", led by Henri Emmanuelli and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, while also supporting the federalist ideal, observed a deep institutional, social and political crisis in Europe and considered that the convention failed to adequately respond to problems such as the "democratic deficit", firm relocations, the liberalization of public services and the division of Member States over international questions such as the Iraq war. Notably, they regretted the absence of guarantees on the protection of public services and the failure to significantly reform the EU institutions, the statutes of the ECB and the stability pact. As a consequence, they appealed for opposition to any further step towards European integration.

The numerous intermediate positions expressed in Dijon illustrate the discomfort of many socialists when dealing with European integration. The members of the "Nouveau Parti Socialiste"⁶³ agreed with the followers of Emmanuelli and Mélenchon on their diagnosis of a European crisis but they warned against the possible consequences of a rejection of the constitution while the enlargement

⁶¹ CRESPIY Amandine (2010), *Les résistances à l'Europe néolibérale : interactions, institutions et idées dans le conflit sur la Directive Bolkestein*, Doctoral thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

⁶² Jean-Marc Ayrault, Colombe Brossel, Gilles Savary, Elisabeth Guigou and Pierre Moscovici, 2003. François Hollande's motion finally found broad support, including among members of the *Nouveau Parti Socialiste* (see next footnote) such as for instance Julien Dray, and obtained 61.4% of the votes.

⁶³ This faction was founded just before the Dijon conference, under the aegis of Arnaud Montebourg, Vincent Peillon and Julien Dray. It brought together several streams on the left of the PS, among which the "Gauche Socialiste", and made pleas against the liberal directions of Europe a constitutive element of its discourse. Its motion achieved a score of 16.9% of votes in 2003.

had already been decided.⁶⁴ Pervenche Bérès appealed for negotiations with Jacques Chirac for the socialists' support, in order to obtain respect for the laity and public services, fiscal harmonisation and the adoption of social standards.⁶⁵ Hubert Védrine, former minister of foreign affairs, argued against joining a federal Europe with 25 members and hoped that a more generous Europe would emerge out of new transfers of sovereignty:

... several recent events have confirmed that France's positions, and *a fortiori* those of the French left that are more ambitious, are in the minority within the current European Union in many highly sensitive domains: cultural exceptionalism and diversity, European power, a truly European foreign policy, public services, social policy in general... To adopt today majority voting in these domains when we will have about 9% of the votes in the enlarged Union would lead to the triumph of a federal Union, but not a social one, a federal, liberal, pacifist and atlanticist Europe.

In Védrine's view, supporting a federal Europe in "the worst international and European context" that Socialists had ever known, would imply "sacrificing" the party's programme. The debates in Dijon, in particular Védrine's address, reveal a differentiated perception of the constraints and opportunities linked to European integration in the PS, often with both perspectives interlinked in the same speech. The articulation and the mobilization of these conflicting interests led in 2004-2005 to deep divisions in the party in the aftermath of the insurrection by several personalities against the "yes to the ECT" position of the leadership, and then to the organization of two socialist campaigns: one for "yes", the other for "no".

Neither the 2005 conference in Le Mans, organized earlier than foreseen in order to overcome these divisions, nor the Reims one in 2008 gave rise to very precise speeches about European integration. In the interest of putting an end to the controversies that had damaged the party's image during the referendum campaign, supporters of the "yes" and of the "no" campaigns emphasized their willingness to "turn the page" and carefully avoided going into details on European matters. All the speeches converged towards what seems to be a common denominator, a promise to respect "the will of the people", a diagnosis of the problems of a Europe "at a standstill" and reference to very general objectives such as the reorientation of European integration in a more social direction.⁶⁶ In Reims, only the signatories of motion C ("Un Monde d'avance, reconstruire l'espoir à gauche"), Benoît Hamon, Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marc Dolez, which managed to surprise all observers by obtaining 18.5% of votes, went beyond the common denominator defined in Le Mans by worrying about the negative consequences of European integration and arguing for a range of social measures.⁶⁷ While Hamon moved closer to Martine Aubry during the conference, Mélenchon and Dolez left the PS and founded a new left-wing party. This organization is in some regards reminiscent of that created by Oskar Lafontaine in Germany, presenting the EU as a liberal enterprise in which economic and social constraints clearly eclipse the opportunities.

Conclusions

Euro-scepticism cannot be reduced to a "touchstone of dissent", used by challenger parties. Understanding EU-politicization requires us to consider not only *vote*-related motivations, but also *office*- and *policy*-oriented ones. In this respect, social-democratic parties have been shown to face a dilemma with respect to European integration, given strong adaptive pressures coupled with an incentive to depoliticize EU-related issues.

⁶⁴ For instance Christian Paul, 2003.

⁶⁵ Cf. also Harlem Désir's speech at the same conference.

⁶⁶ Harlem Désir, Pierre Moscovici, Françoise Castex, Isabelle Thomas, Vincent Peillon, Dominique Strauss-Kahn and François Hollande, 2005; Elisabeth Guigou, Henri Weber, Bernard Soulage, Nathalie Perrin-Gilbert, François Hollande, Laurent Fabius, Harlem Désir, Bertrand Delanoë and Pierre Moscovici, 2008.

⁶⁷ Benoît Hamon, Anne Ferreira, Pierre Larrousurou, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, 2008. See also the text of motion C.

Party internal debates as reflected in the minutes of the national conferences reveal a relatively precise and differentiated perception of opportunities and constraints linked to European integration among the PS, the SPD and the Labour party. Faced with painful trade-offs, speeches oscillate between a conception of Europe as the only chance to overcome the challenges posed by globalization and a contestation of the adaptive pressures emanating from the EU. The first conception prevailed in the 1980s, notably among Labour members, who were strengthened in their opposition to the Conservative government by European social and environmental standards, but tends to fade to the advantage of the second one. This tendency can be interpreted in the light of the growing public scepticism revealed by polls, but also as an abandonment of the hopes for the emergence of a “social Europe” triggered in the late 1990s by the seizure of power by social-democrats in many Member States. Intensifying adaptive pressures are then emphasized in order to justify some aspects of the government record and to propose EU reforms. In the 2000s, the eastward enlargement and the debates on the services directive contributed to fostering voters’ fears of the consequences of social dumping and an impression of impotence of the social-democrats that were still in government in certain Member States.

In all three cases and over time, it is interesting to note that leaders and representatives of the party minority tended to opt for distinct trade-offs. The former adopted a pragmatic pro-EU stance, invoked the theoretical possibility of implementing social-democratic policies at the European level in the future, and called for realism on the room for manoeuvre in intergovernmental negotiations, on the anyway shrinking domestic possibilities for left-wing macroeconomic policies, and on the strategies of political competitors in European matters. The minority factions were less prone to political compromises in the name of European integration. Their representatives may have in addition capitalized on the agenda-setting of new EU-related issues to challenge the party leadership, which usually reacted by trying to depoliticize Europe and to stigmatize these opponents. Anchored in a party system characterized by higher polarization and by significant far-left organizations articulating critiques on the EU, the PS leadership was less successful than the SPD and Labour party in depoliticizing European integration.

More generally, the growing visibility of social implications of European integration in times of economic crisis could make it increasingly difficult to domesticate and downplay the contestation of EU policies. Given the wider echo of mainstream parties in political debates and in the media (compared to extreme or challenger parties), contestation stemming from their minority factions may have far reaching consequences for public opinion on Europe, European integration and electoral alignments.

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