

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

EUI Working Paper **SPS** No. 2004/5

**Does a Public Sphere Exist in the EU?**  
**An Analysis of the Content of the Debate on the Haider-Case**

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© 2004 Marianne van de Steeg  
Published in Italy in June 2004  
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**Abstract:**

This article suggests studying the public sphere via an analysis of the contents of a specific debate, i.e. by analysing a certain public discourse. A public discourse can be said to pertain to an EU-wide public sphere in case the following three conditions are met. First, it has to be significantly different from that developed in non-EU countries. Second, differences should not be nationally defined. Third, in one way, or another the debates in the individual newspapers (which provide the fora for a public sphere) should be connected.

## **Does a Public Sphere exist in the EU?**

### **An analysis of the content of the debate on the Haider-case<sup>1</sup>**

#### ***1. Introduction***

On a regular basis, in opinion and scientific articles, the further development and democratisation of the EU is questioned on the ground that a sphere in which a European public opinion can be formed, is lacking. The reasoning is that without a public sphere encompassing the EU as a whole, a common direction cannot be developed. Without a public sphere, there cannot be a true political community of EU citizens. Thus, in this view, the EU is confined to being a political and administrative apparatus, detached from its citizens. Considering the centrality of this rather pessimistic vision of the European public sphere, empirical knowledge might help to open up a new horizon in thinking about European integration. This article wants to make a small contribution to this objective by presenting an analysis of the debates in various countries inside and outside the EU, unleashed by the coming to power of Jörg Haider's FPÖ in Austria.

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<sup>1</sup>The data for this article come from a research project sponsored by the DFG, and led by Prof. Bernhard Giesen (University of Konstanz) and Prof. Thomas Risse (Free University, Berlin). I would like to thank my fellow-coders Valentin Rauer and Sylvain Rivet for their efforts. Only by working together in an international team it has been possible to code such an array of

The investigation of the public sphere in the EU is a young research field. So far, a standardised, and generally accepted approach has not developed. As a result, special attention needs to be paid to making assumptions and choices explicit. (This is also an invitation to the reader to let me know where too much is left implicit.) For the purpose of this article, the public sphere is defined as a space where citizens - in practice, an elite of citizens - discuss with each other issues in the presence of a public that has (at least theoretically) the possibility to intervene and become a participant itself. In the era of the modern society, a space that can serve as a forum for a public sphere is mainly provided by the mass media. The fact that the mass media are the main forum for a public sphere has led the earlier literature<sup>2</sup> on this topic to conclude that since characteristics, such as language and a delimited public, constrain a mass medium to a specific geographical area, these same characteristics would also define the boundaries of a public sphere. From this point of view, the public sphere in the EU consists of a series of (fragmented) national public spheres.

In my point of view, it is not possible to decide *ex ante*, on the basis of exogenous variables what the boundaries are of a public sphere. Given that the public sphere has been defined as a discussion on a specific topic between people in front of, and possibly with, a specific public, depending on the topic that is being discussed, the composition of the participants and their public will change. As a consequence of this, the character of the public sphere, i.e. its geographical circumscription, will also be variable in correspondence with the topic that is being discussed. From this follows that the character of a public sphere is not necessarily defined by the particular characteristics of a forum (e.g. a mass medium, or a newspaper), but by the characteristics of the specific debate that is being held in that forum.

To identify the character of a public sphere, for each specific debate has to be studied how it is developing. Who are the participants? To what public do they appeal? How do they interact? Are there indications that the various actors are discussing this issue with each other? To make such an analysis, I have already developed a series of criteria on an earlier occasion (Van de Steeg 2002).

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newspapers. Thanks to Prof. Jaap Dronkers for having been my coach for the quantitative analysis.

Presently, a full analysis will not be made. The focus will be especially on investigating whether the argumentation put forward in a debate that is developed in various separate fora - in this case, a number of newspapers - is part of a more encompassing debate that transcends the boundaries to which the particular fora are constrained. For this purpose, a rule of thumb formulated by Eder and Kantner (2000) is useful. They argue that one can plausibly define something as a shared debate when at the same time, the same issue is discussed with the same degree of relevance.<sup>3</sup> From the consideration that two people who are engaged in a conversation end up talking about the same topics and mentioning the same arguments, it can be inferred that when in several fora, i.e. newspapers, similar topics and arguments are being put forward, there is likely to be a shared debate (Van de Steeg 2002: 509-10).

Now, following this rule of thumb, what kind of public spheres could we find? According to the earlier literature, since the mass media are nationally constrained, the hypothesis should be that the public sphere is distinctly nationally oriented. I want to falsify this hypothesis and demonstrate that, as far as a European issue is concerned, there is a shared public sphere in the EU. In that case the following two hypotheses have to be confirmed:

Hypothesis 1: The public discourse in the EU is significantly different from that in non-EU countries (in this case the US);

Hypothesis 2: Differences in public discourse are not nationally defined.

A confirmation of these two hypotheses leaves open the possibility that within this distinctly EU public sphere, systematic differences can be detected. These differences could be cross-cutting. Examples of this type of systematic differences, tested here, are the political ideology of the newspapers (being left or right), and the social-economic background of the newspaper and its target public (being a quality, i.e. elite, newspaper, or a more popular newspaper). Another explanation could be that the particular course an individual newspaper decides to follow, explains most of the systematic difference between the discourses developed in various fora. In that case, hypothesis 1 and 2 would still be confirmed, however, there is so

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<sup>2</sup>For a literature review and more on the disputable assumptions underlying this 'older' notion of the public sphere, see Van de Steeg (2002).

<sup>3</sup>For a more elaborate treatment of this rule of thumb and an operationalisation, see Eder and Kantner (2000), Dereje, Kantner & Trenz (2003), and Risse (2002)

few similarity in content, that it would not be accurate to define this as a shared European debate. Therefore, hypothesis 3 needs to be confirmed too:

Hypothesis 3: An individual newspaper may not form an isolated forum. Or, in other words, the individual particularity of the newspapers may not be the main explanatory variable of the systematic differences in public discourse.

It might be noted that while in the introduction to the hypotheses, I used the concept of public sphere, instead, in the hypotheses themselves I referred to ‘public discourse’. The reason is that the public sphere cannot be studied directly. It is an analysis of public discourse that enables us to judge the type of public sphere valid for that particular debate. In order to make the public sphere an object of study, and to prevent loading it *ex ante* with the characteristics of its forum – i.e. the mass media - it is necessary to separate, as far as terminology is concerned, the empirical from the theoretical part. The empirical part of this article deals solely with a selection of newspapers, their set characteristics (the independent variables), and the differences and similarities to which these might lead in their articles (the dependent variables). Only when it is clear what is happening in this selected debate concerning the features we are interested in, we return to theory and see what light this empirical knowledge sheds on our understanding of the public sphere in the EU.<sup>4</sup> That is, to study the public sphere, we have to focus first on the public discourse.

The public discourse can be analysed in various ways. For the Haider-case two papers are already available in which the public sphere in the EU is described by way of a qualitative analysis of this specific debate (Rauer et al 2003; Risse, Van de Steeg 2003). Currently, for other debates as well research results have already been, or are shortly being, published.<sup>5</sup> However, as far as I know, so far, no statistical analysis has been published. To discuss this way of studying the public sphere with the relevant research community, the three hypotheses

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<sup>4</sup>For more on using the concept of public discourse instead of that of the public sphere while giving an account of an empirical analysis, see Van de Steeg (2002: 507-8).

<sup>5</sup>The following research groups are empirically studying the public sphere: the Eder-Trenz-Kantner group at the Humboldt University ([www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/struktur/forschung/transoeff/transoeffzuss.html](http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/struktur/forschung/transoeff/transoeffzuss.html)), the Europub group ([europub.wz-berlin.de](http://europub.wz-berlin.de)), and Bernhard Peter’s research group in Bremen ([www.staatlichkeit.uni-bremen.de](http://www.staatlichkeit.uni-bremen.de))

will be tested by way of a quantitative analysis of the Haider-case. In addition, where necessary the statistical results will be illustrated with the qualitative material.

## ***2. A quantitative analysis of the Haider-case***

The main advantage of a statistical analysis is that it provides a generally accepted standard for making an informed judgement. In this case, we want to know what can be considered as significantly similar and different in the argumentation put forward in a specific debate that is developed in various newspapers. The question is whether it is possible to group the various newspapers on the basis of the contents of their articles. Does it matter for the coverage of the Haider-case that a newspaper is centre-left, a more popular newspaper, Austrian, or French? Considering the concern expressed in the more general debate on the future of European integration, it is especially important to find out whether national fault lines and polarisations can be identified. Knowing that a European issue is discussed irrespective of national borders - e.g. on ideological lines or in a genuine European manner - might clear up the air somewhat.<sup>6</sup>

**The case.** Jörg Haider's FPÖ arrived second only to the SPÖ at the Austrian national elections of October 1999. In February 2000, after lengthy coalition negotiations, the Christian Democratic ÖVP entered into a coalition with ministers from the FPÖ. Haider, however, remained governor of the region Carinthia. There was a general outcry, for Haider had turned the liberal FPÖ into a populist party, not averse to racist slogans. Quickly, Haider became branded as 'a Nazi', a second Hitler. Shortly before the official presentation of the new government, the fourteen other member states of the EU instigated Austria to refrain from taking this step; if not, bilateral sanctions of the EU-14 would be imposed on Austria. The bilateral sanctions were lifted in September 2000, after a commission of Three Wise Men judged that the Austrian ÖVP-FPÖ government had not done anything against the spirit of the Amsterdam Treaty.

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<sup>6</sup>Of course, no definite conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the Haider-case alone. Not only because it is just one of many debates held in the EU, but, particularly, because it is a 'most likely' case. Seeing that the discussion evolves around the European reaction towards Haider's party in the Austrian government, one is likely to find something European.

**Method.** For the period October 1999 to September 2000, newspaper articles have been selected from fifteen newspapers from a total of five EU countries and one non-EU country (the United States) (see Appendix A). For each country, a centre-left and a centre-right quality newspaper have been chosen. In the cases of France, Italy and Austria, a more popular newspaper has also been included. From each newspaper, a sample containing every third article and all front page articles (if possible) has been drawn, making it a total of 2160 coded articles.

A content analysis has been made using *Winmax*, software for qualitative text analysis. The main part of the coding scheme consists of the dominant frames of this particular debate. Following Snow and Benford (1992: 135), a frame is defined as an interpretative scheme employed to make sense of the ‘world out there’. Objects and situations from the social environment are simplified and condensed into a frame. In the Haider-case, the frames often contain a judgement in shorthand: e.g. Haider is framed as a Nazi, Europe as a moral community, and Austria as being European.

The coding scheme is developed both inductively and deductively. At various points, the three coders checked each other’s codings. At first, the coding tree was developed by coding together the same set of articles from *the Guardian*. By following the logic of the ‘*Guardian*’ typology, this coding scheme has been expanded. For instance, while the frame ‘Haider is a xenophobe’ was taken from *the Guardian* sample, we allowed in the coding tree for the possibility that Haider might just as well be framed as ‘not being a xenophobe’. Secondly, when describing each frame, again, all the coded material has been scanned through and discussed. By cancelling the codings that were considered as being too implicit, a nucleus remained, which for each of the three coders is similar. In the end, the resulting *Winmax* file has been transformed into a database that can be read by the statistical software *SPSS*.

Table 1. Skewed distribution: the presence of four key frames in the articles (N=2160) (frequency within an article by frame)

	<b>Haider Nazi</b>	<b>Haider xeno</b>	<b>Eur. legal standards</b>	<b>Eur. moral community</b>
0	1753	1756	1901	1802
1	303	325	210	261
2	71	66	37	71
3-7	33	13	12	26



**Factor analysis.** The unit of analysis is the newspaper article. From the perspective of a single frame, this produces a very skewed distribution. As can be seen in the frequency tables of four of the key frames of this debate (see table 1), even these very frequent frames are not mentioned in many articles, only once in some, and twice or more often in very few articles. Moreover, a statistical analysis of each single frame would lead to a mountain of test results that are difficult to interpret in relationship to each other. In order to summarise and improve the quality of the data, a factor analysis has been made.

By way of a factor analysis can be calculated to what extent several items are related to each other, and in reality measure various aspects of the same phenomenon. An analogy can be made with the practice in the social sciences to use various questionnaire items in order to measure the extent to which the respondent has an authoritarian personality, or is a post-materialist. Here, instead of indicating a respondent's personality or political disposition, the extent to which an article reflects an underlying dimension of this debate is unravelled. Just like with the questionnaires, the various items of the coding scheme are combined in a certain proportion to each other. The contribution that each item makes to the score of an article on a dimension, i.e. its relative weight, depends on the degree to which the item is correlated to the other coded items. How much an articles scores on a dimension is the total sum of the relative weight of each item multiplied by the number of times this items appears in the particular article.

The factor analysis contains all the codes that are related to the contents of the articles. In practice, this means that it contains all the 22 frames, which might sometimes include a set of sub frames,<sup>7</sup> together with the codes that identify who uses this frame, i.e. either the author of the article or a cited actor, and the type of article (descriptive or symbolic mobilisation). This makes a total of 47 items.

Via the factor analysis, four dimensions can be identified in the content of the articles:

- \* *'Waving the European flag'*: Europe as a community that is based on moral values and legal standards, pro sanctions;
- \* *'Holding up the law'*: Europe as a legal community, against the sanctions, against interfering with a democratically elected government, defending Austria's image;

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<sup>7</sup>An example of a frame with a set of subframes is 'Europe is a moral community'. The 'Europe is a moral community'-frame can be used pro (sub 1) or contra (sub 2) the sanctions,

- \* *'Haider and Austria are Nazi'*: the author of the article uses strong evaluative frames, Haider and Austria are Nazi and xenophobe;
- \* *'Haider is said to be a Nazi'*: the evaluative frames related to Haider used by a cited foreign actor.

Each dimension is saved as a new dependent variable and has a distribution that is more in line with the requirement of a normal distribution.<sup>8</sup>

The results of the factor analysis have been checked by repeating the procedure for a smaller set of newspapers: namely, only the European newspapers, only the quality newspapers and only the European quality newspapers. Each time, the composition of the four dimensions remained the same. This implies that all the newspapers use the same frames in the same combination. Consequently, these four dimensions can be used safely as a yardstick for all types of newspapers. Next, we will discover how the newspapers score on this yardstick.

**Design of the regression analysis.** I want to know which (set) characteristic of a newspaper can explain the debate in that newspaper. The dependent variables are the four dimensions generated by the factor-analysis. The independent variables, necessary to test the hypotheses, are:

- \* Being a newspaper from an EU-country or a non-EU country (i.e. the US, in this case),
- \* The nationality of the newspaper,
- \* The socio-economic background of a newspaper, i.e. being a quality or a more popular newspaper,
- \* The ideological background of a newspaper,
- \* The newspaper's own identity (i.e. *le Monde* being simply *le Monde*).

As the independent variables partially overlap each other (in the end, we are always dealing with the same fifteen newspapers), it is necessary to enter the independent variables in blocks into the regression model. The regression analysis is designed in such a way that the

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or without an explicit link in favor or against the sanctions (sub 3), by the author of an article (sub 4), or by citing an actor (sub 5).

<sup>8</sup>Contact marianne.vandesteeg@iue.it for the file with test statistics. The Durbin-Watson has for all four dimensions a value of around 2 (1,818 - 1,956), meaning that the test residuals are independent. The scatter-plots show that there is not a perfect normal distribution for any of

hypothesis from the (theoretical) literature – namely, debates are discussed from a distinctly national perspective - has most chance to be confirmed. For this reason, first the countries are entered, then the more general independent variables (quality-popular press, left/right), and, finally, the individual newspapers only as a last step.<sup>9</sup> By following this order, more (systematic) variance is left over for the nationality of a newspaper. In other words, this increases the chance that from the analysis emerges that, for example, the German newspapers are similar enough amongst each other to be grouped together, and, simultaneously, in their German-ness they are significantly different from the other newspapers.

For the regression analysis to work, all the independent variables are binomial. The variable ‘quality or popular press’ is already binomial. For all the other independent variables dummies are created. The ideological variable consists of three ordinal categories: centre-left, centre-right, and other.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the dummy ‘centre-left’ has to be understood as ‘the centre-left newspapers in comparison to all the other newspapers, both centre-right and other’; and the dummy ‘centre-right’ as ‘the centre-right newspapers in comparison to all the others’. For the nationality variable, a dummy is created for each country apart from Austria. The reason is that for the calculation of the regression model, it is necessary that some articles can be used as a standard on the basis of which the relative distances of the other categories are being calculated. In this case, Austria, has been chosen as a point of reference for, since it is the country from which the Haider-case emanated, it is the one who stands out. Dummies have also been created for the newspapers. Here, one of the two Austrian quality newspapers, *die Presse*, will function as the point of reference.<sup>11</sup>

It will be calculated which of the independent variables contribute to explaining the variance between the various newspaper articles. For each independent variable entered into the model, it will be indicated at what level the reported coefficient is significant. The general rule is to take only those variables into account that are significant at a 5% level or lower. This

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the four dimensions. The problem of heteroscedasticity can be excluded for two of the four dimensions.

<sup>9</sup>An independent variable remains in the model, even if it is no longer significant after variables from another block have been entered.

<sup>10</sup>See the table of the newspapers in annex A of how the newspapers are classified for ideology.

<sup>11</sup>Just in case, I have repeated the calculations also with the other Austrian quality newspaper as a reference point. The final conclusions remain the same. However, since the models with *die Presse* have more explanatory power (higher adjusted R<sup>2</sup>), I will only report these.

means that for these variables there is only a 5% risk that the real value of that variable is not deviating from zero; or, in other words, we can be at least 95% sure that the value is correct.

Now, how to interpret the lists of independent variables that are found to significantly explain some of the variance in the newspaper articles? I have developed the following criteria to test the hypotheses (see table 2). Of course, the definition of the criteria to interpret the outcome of the linear regressions is open for discussion.

Table 2. Criteria to test the hypotheses

Hypotheses	Criteria
1. The public discourse in the EU is significantly different from that in non-EU countries (in this case the US)	The US is significantly different
2. Differences in public discourse are not nationally defined.	Maximally one of the EU countries is significantly different, and the EU countries account for less than half of the explained variance
3. An individual newspaper may not form an isolated forum.	Only a few – max 3 – newspapers are significantly different, the individual newspapers account for less than half the variance, and the general background variables are found to be significant.

Table 3. The regression models for the four dimensions. First, the nationality, second the general variables, and third, including also the newspapers themselves. Clarification symbols: \* 5% significance level, \*\* 1% significance level, () not significant, adj. R<sup>2</sup> explained variance. For abbreviations of the newspapers see Annex A. (N=2160)

Waving the European flag			Holding up the law			
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1a	Step 1b	Step 2	Step 3
Fr. .10**	Fr. .09**	France .12**	It. -.10**	It. -.11**	It. -.11**	Italy -.25**
Belg. .09**	Belg. .08**	Belg. .21**		US -.07**	US -.15**	US -.15**
	Pop. -.07**	Pop. -.13**			Lft. -.29**	Left -.28**
	Lft. .05*	(Left) (-.03)			Rt. -.15**	(Right) (-.06)
		DS (B) -.16**				LR .15**
		DS (A) .09**				DS (B) -.10**
		LN .07**				DS (A) -.06*
adj. R <sup>2</sup> .015	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .024	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .040	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .009	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .013	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .040	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .059

Haider & Austria are Nazi			Haider is said to be a Nazi			
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1a	Step 1b	Step 2	Step 3
It. .07**	It. .09**	Italy .11**	US .09**	US .14**	US .14**	US# .09**
Fr. .07**	Fr. .07**	France .09**		Germ. .07**	Germ. .07**	Germ. .05*
	Pop. -.05*	Pop. -.08**				WP# .07**
		LF -.07*				LR -.05*
		DS (A) -.06*				DS (B) -.05*
		IC -.06*				NKZ -.05*
adj. R <sup>2</sup> .008	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .010	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .015	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .017	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .021	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .021	adj. R <sup>2</sup> .027

# Repeating the regression analysis using SPSS version 11.5, the *New York Times* instead of the *Washington Post* is introduced into the model: US .20\*\*, NYT -.09\*

**Interpretation regression models.** Following the criteria formulated above, for each dimension will be seen what the test results tell us about how the Haider-debate is discussed in the various newspapers. Of the regression models of table 3, two elements will be taken into account. First, which are the types of newspapers that are found to be significantly different? These can be groups of newspapers, e.g. the French, or the popular newspapers, or various individual newspapers. Here, the value and direction of the coefficients do not matter, only that a certain independent variable is entered into the model. Second, how much adds each consecutive step to explaining the systematic variance in the discourse? This can be inferred from the change in adjusted R<sup>2</sup>. Thus, at this point, the only figure that matters is the exact value of the adjusted R<sup>2</sup>.

When testing the hypotheses, I will focus on the differences between the newspapers - e.g. by indicating that x-type of newspapers hardly treat dimension y. However, it has to be

kept in mind that these dimensions can be found in every single newspaper. The differences between the newspapers consist of focusing more or less on a certain dimension. To answer the research question it is necessary to know which groups of newspapers can be identified that treat the Haider-debate in a similar manner. That is, following the Eder-Kantner rule, what groups of newspapers are there which attach the same amount of relevance to a certain dimension of the Haider-debate?

First, in order to test the first hypothesis, we have to see whether the EU newspapers as such are similar enough to be considered a single group. In table 3 can be seen that the US newspapers treat this debate distinctly different from the EU newspapers on the dimensions of 'Holding up the law' and 'Haider is said to be a Nazi'. This is the same as stating that in respect to the US newspapers, the EU newspapers, indistinctively from any other background characteristic, deal with this debate in a particularly European way.

Second, for three of the four dimensions there is not a nationally defined grouping. On these dimensions the EU countries account for less than half of the explained variance. Only for the dimension 'Haider and Austria are Nazi', the second hypothesis cannot be confirmed. Two countries, namely France and Italy, are found to be significantly different. Moreover, these two account for more than half of the explained variance (.008 of a total of .015). While refuting the hypothesis that the differences are not nationally defined, it has to be kept in mind that, simultaneously, it does not matter whether a newspaper comes from Germany or Belgium, and that the Austrian *der Standard* is found to be significantly different from the other Austrian newspaper used as a reference point.

Third, this public discourse is not fragmented in individual newspapers following merely their own course. On most dimensions, just three of a total of fifteen newspapers are found to be significantly different, and there are general background characteristics, which link the various newspapers-fora. For example, on the dimension 'Holding up the law', ideology – especially, in comparison with not pertaining clearly to an ideological camp – accounts for almost half of the explained variance (.027 of a total of .059). Only on the dimension 'Haider is said to be a Nazi', four newspapers stick out, and none of the general background variables are found to be significant. However, in this case, another cross-cutting variable comes into play: the fact that a newspaper is published in an EU country accounts for more than half of the explained variance (.017 of a total of .027).

The hypotheses were tested by simultaneously taking into account all four dimensions. Now, per dimension a more detailed analysis will be made. At this point, the coefficients of

the regression models come also into play. The value as such is not the most relevant indicator, but whether a coefficient is positive or negative. A positive coefficient means that this group of newspapers is stronger than the other newspapers on this dimension; a negative coefficient indicates that this group of newspapers puts less emphasis on that dimension. For each dimension, the most salient results will be discussed in relation to the meaning of the frames that define the dimension.

*'Waving the European flag'*: In this dimension, Europe is presented by the author as well as the cited actors as a community that is based on moral values and legal standards, and on account of that should be pro sanctions. By invoking the two frames of 'Europe as a moral community' and 'European legal standards', a discourse is developed on the EU's identity. Via the first frame, Europe is identified as a moral community based on values such as freedom, democracy, justice, peace, and human rights, but also anti-nazism and anti-racism. Triggered by the Haider-case, people state explicitly to view Europe as their larger community of belonging: *My home is of course Belgium, but I have also another home - Europe namely* (the Belgian Foreign minister Michel, *der Standard* 10/02/2000). In the second frame, the EU is based on rules and procedures. In particular, the Amsterdam Treaty is mentioned for it contains a provision for sanctions in case a member state violates the EU's fundamental principles. In the case of the dimension 'Waving the European flag', these two EU-identity frames are used to argue for the claim that in the name of Europe the EU-14 should interfere in the situation in Austria. On this dimension, these two frames are used in favour of the sanctions (it can be otherwise, as we will see next):

*'The EU is not only an alliance between states, but also a supranational unity. Now, the fact that in one of these countries (...) a political party may enter in government that manifests understandings which are not completely respectful of the values founding the Union, and that which I call pax europea, well, that arouses concern.'* (the Italian president Ciampi, *il Corriere* 01/02/2000).

*Chirac only declared that the admission of the FPÖ into the government is already a breach of the spirit of the EU Treaties, and announced consequences. His close party friend Lellouche became even more concrete: Austria's voting-rights in the EU should be suspended (...)* (*Neue Kronezeitung* 11/02/2000)

One could have expected that the Haider-case consists of the media in the other member-states bashing Austria, whose press, in turn, would be defending the national honour. Instead, what we find in the regression model of this dimension is that only two of the member-states, namely France and Belgium (respectively coefficients of .12\*\* and .21\*\* in step 3), have developed a nationally shared discourse of being pro sanctions in the name of Europe. And, what is more, it is the left wing Austrian quality newspaper that provides significantly more space for this type of argumentation than most other newspapers, Austrian and not (.09\*\*). So, a polarisation along national lines does not appear.

*'Holding up the law'*. Both the author of the article and the cited actors use this dimension. It contains three elements that are closely connected to each other. First, here the contrary of 'Waving the European flag' is claimed: Europe, being a moral community based on legal standards, should never have introduced sanctions against the Austrian government.<sup>12</sup> The most often mentioned reason for this claim is that there is no legal basis for sanctions against a government that has not done anything yet. Second, democratic rules have been applied: the Austrian citizens have elected the Austrian government freely. This is often followed by the claim that the outcome should be respected, even if one does not like it. This dimension could be summarised as follows: Austria is defended against the accusations of being a Nazi and xenophobe country. In sum, the moral and legal basis of sanctions that are already in place is questioned; election results that have already been condemned should be accepted; and, an already branded country is presented as not being Nazi and xenophobe at all. This is the dimension of the counter-discourse: often, the discourse of those who think that the reaction generated against the ÖVP-FPÖ government is out of proportion.

By way of an illustration: *And because they are so wise, they confirm that which less wise, but somewhat informed, Europeans also know: In Austria, the democracy is not in danger at all, and the Human and Civil Rights are honoured and taken into consideration. In Vienna, a government is governing, which has been established after democratic elections. A coalition of which one part belongs to the Christian-*

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<sup>12</sup>For example: *The refusal of dialogue, ostracism, boycotts and discrimination are unacceptable in the current Europe and more precisely within the European Union. Being in contradiction with the spirit and the letter of the European treaties, these facts constitute a violation of the basic rights of the European Union. le Figaro 04/04/2000*



*Democratic party family, and the other part is - not exactly, but neither missing the point - usually indicated as being 'right-populist'. Many of the statements of which the FPÖ-leader Haider is accused are not only tasteless, but also go beyond the politically tolerable. Still, that because of that the Austrian democracy is in danger, and even in such a manner, that an intervention from the EU would be necessary, cannot be maintained seriously. FAZ, 09/09/2000*

Here, I would like to focus on *der Standard* and the US newspapers. From the results of the regression analysis can be inferred where the counter-discourse receives more attention. First, the Austrian *der Standard* as an individual newspaper has a coefficient of  $-.06^{**}$ . This indicates that this newspaper pays much less attention to 'Holding up the law' than the other Austrian newspaper, *die Presse*. Even less than could have been expected, considering that *der Standard* is a left-wing newspaper (for as a left-wing newspaper *der Standard* already has a value of  $-.28^{**}$ ). As can also be seen on the dimension 'Waving the European flag', *der Standard* follows clearly its own course: giving much attention to a discourse that calls for sanctions in the name of Europe, and much less to the counter-discourse. The other Austrian newspaper, *die Presse*, follows its own editorial line as well. Since this newspaper is used as the reference point in the regression analysis, the data on *der Standard* convey information on *die Presse*. *Die Presse* scores significantly lower than *der Standard* on the 'Waving the European flag'-dimension, and significantly higher than *der Standard* on the 'Holding up the law'-dimension. The two Austrian quality-newspapers demonstrate to have a different perspective on the matter: *die Presse* giving more space to those who defend Austria against the accusations; *der Standard* dedicating more attention to those who want to defend the EU (and thus also Austria) against the danger symbolised by Haider.

Second, the US newspapers were found to score significantly lower, namely  $-.07^{**}$ . This implies that the European newspapers on account of being published in an EU country dedicate more attention to arguments against the sanctions and Austria's negative image. The EU newspapers dedicate more attention to 'Holding up the law', irrespective of being a left-wing or right-wing newspaper, coming from one country or another, or being in favour or against the sanctions. This is a first clue that the US newspapers do report on the Haider case, but - unlike the EU newspapers - are not much involved in this debate. The Haider-case is a news-item, and that is why US newspapers pick up on various arguments related to the sanctions. Nevertheless, there is not any need to dedicate as much attention to the counter-discourse as the average EU newspaper does.

*'Haider and Austria are Nazi'*. The author of an article develops a highly symbolic discourse. By declaring Haider to be a Nazi and a xenophobe, and Austria a Nazi country, the author tries to convince the reader to feel disgust for Haider and Austria. From the regression model can be seen that the branding of Haider and Austria as Nazi is done more often by the Italian and French newspapers (respectively .11\*\* and .09\*\*), and then, especially, by the left wing and more popular newspapers of these two countries.

There is not much more to say about this dimension than that which has already been pointed out when testing the hypotheses. Namely, that of the three dimensions this is the most nationally defined. Two countries, France and Italy were found to be significantly strong on this dimension. Together they account for more than half the explained variance (.008 of .015). On account of this, the hypothesis that on this dimension the discourse is not nationally defined has to be rejected. However, to conclude that, thus, on this dimension the public discourse is particularly national seems to be a bridge too far. For while nationality matter for the French and Italian newspapers, it does not make a difference whether a newspaper is Belgian or German. Moreover, within Austria there is not much homogeneity, since the two quality newspapers differ significantly from each other.

*'Haider is said to be a Nazi'*. An actor from another country, usually a politician, sometimes experts and opinion-leaders such as another newspaper, an academic, a president of a Jewish community, or a demonstrating concerned citizen, declares that Haider is a Nazi and a racist. In this manner the message is conveyed that Haider is a bad guy via the voice of somebody else. Unlike the dimension 'Haider and Austria are Nazi', here, the newspaper does not render this judgement on Haider as if it were its own. The direct responsibility for this statement remains with the actor who is being cited. This specification has to be kept in the back of our mind when interpreting the regression output.

Especially, the fact that the explained variance is to a great extent accounted for by the US newspapers (.017 of .027), is helpful to understand better the debate on the Haider-affair in the EU. By focusing on the manner in which the US newspapers, in their quality of being non-EU newspapers, deal with the Haider-debate, one can notice in what way the European newspapers, in spite of differences such as ideology and country of origin, emanate specifically and distinctly from the EU as a whole. That is why next I will pick up on an argument made before, when discussing the regression results of the dimension 'Holding up the law'.

We already saw that the US newspapers pay significantly less attention to arguments that question the legal and moral basis of the majority opinion of, and reaction against, Austria and its ÖVP-FPÖ government (-.15\*\* on 'Holding up the law'). Even European newspapers standing on the barricades to defend Europe against the dangers personified in Haider, allow for more space for the counter-discourse to be voiced. Realising this, it can be excluded that the US newspapers dedicate less attention to the 'Holding up the law'-arguments, because they are so in favour of the sanctions and the image painted of Austria. The reason is that for the US newspapers this is one of many news-items that is being covered. Whereas, for the EU newspapers, this is an issue that touches on the way we govern ourselves, and, more importantly, how we define ourselves. For the US newspapers there is not as much at stake. They do not actively participate in this debate, and thus have less the need to acknowledge that the majority opinion is questioned. From the point of view of the US newspapers, the majority opinion is a fact to be reported: the frames are, namely, couched in declarations of EU politicians on the Haider-case having news-value.

In the same direction points the finding that in the US newspapers significantly more often the person who accuses Haider of being a Nazi and a xenophobe is somebody from another country (.09\*\*). Not the newspapers themselves, but the foreign actors they cite are voicing this accusation. Often, these foreign actors are well-defined politicians, experts and citizens from EU-countries. Nevertheless, on a regular basis, the identity of the actor is left rather ambiguous. For example, who is the 'some' in *a man some label a neo-Nazi (New York Times 26/10/1999)*? Or, the 'many' in *[f]or many, Joerg Haider, (...), evokes memories of Europe's unsavory past (Washington Post 10/11/99)*? By using this style, the newspaper remains at a distance from these accusations. Another way to reach the same scope is to put Haider's Nazi-statements into perspective, e.g. by adding that *the endorsement was one sentence in the heat of a debate for which Mr. Haider later apologized (New York Times 01/02/2000)*. In sum, the US newspapers have various ways of remaining neutral on the accusation that Haider is a Nazi.

The US newspapers report on the Haider-case with the neutrality granted to somebody who is not directly involved. From the US perspective the Haider-case is something happening in Europe. To a large extent it does not involve them. It is not their political community that is felt to be at stake here. The simplest way to demarcate the political community involved is to look at the actors: who are the participants in a debate? On the basis of this indication alone one can see that for a non-EU newspaper, in this case two US

newspapers,<sup>13</sup> the Haider-case is to a large extent not more than a news-item. While in the EU newspapers appears always a range of politicians from the own country, in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* US politicians giving statements on the Haider-case are almost absent. In the *New York Times*, Pat Buchanan appears once, and in the *Washington Post* three times the Hillary Clinton campaign team. The Haider-debate was clearly an EU-debate, and not something more global.

### **3. Conclusion**

In the introduction, I have suggested to refrain from using the concept of the public sphere, until it is known what the characteristics of the specific debate are for which the public sphere is being investigated. Now, we can move from a specific public discourse to a characterisation of the public sphere on the basis of this case.

To the extent that a similarity in the content of the discourse is a valid, and sufficient indicator, the Haider-debate can be considered as an example of a genuinely European - in the sense of an EU-wide - public sphere. The three hypotheses of an EU public sphere formulated in the introduction have, in general, all been confirmed. First, the public discourse in the EU is significantly different from that in the US. Second, as far as the EU newspapers are concerned, the public discourse is not nationally defined on at least three dimensions, and on the fourth only the newspapers from two member states form a solid block. Third, there are crosscutting cleavages that link the debates in the various fora.

Had I labelled a certain newspaper as representative for a certain national public sphere from the start, then I would have been inhibited to discover that, in the final analysis, nationality matters little (as far as this specific debate is concerned). Based on the statistical

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<sup>13</sup>The same holds for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* as a non-EU newspaper in a similar analysis of the debate on the EU enlargement with Central and Eastern Europe.

results presented in this article, it is not correct to describe the public sphere in the EU as a series of interconnected national public spheres. Though internal differentiations of various kinds can be identified, the newspapers from the five selected EU countries provide together a forum for the same public sphere. If one wants to define the boundaries of this public sphere, it is only possible to identify a clear-cut demarcation between newspapers from inside the EU, and those from outside the EU, i.e. from the US.

The comparison between the EU and US newspapers has enabled us to open our eyes for the European specificity. The underlying topic of the Haider debate was how the EU should act in the future. The dissent on whether sanctions are the appropriate instrument in such cases provided the fuel for a heated debate between supporters and opponents. This is an example of a public sphere in which being in favour of the sanctions in the name of European, anti-fascist values, as well as judging this as an illegitimate use of the European rules, are legitimate positions. Hereby, the Haider-case has provided the Europeans an opportunity to discuss amongst themselves the EU's identity. By debating this concrete issue, the participants and the wider public were invited to feel that besides being citizens of one of the member states, they have (probably, without realising this) started feeling to be also citizens of Europe, in the sense of the EU. This has been a fortunate, but unintended, by-product of the Haider debate. Further research has to show whether these findings have to do with the particularity of the Haider-debate, or if they can be confirmed for other (EU) debates as well.

## ***Annex A: The selected newspapers***

	<b>Austria</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>USA</b>
Quality press	<i>Presse</i> – DP (R, 185)	<i>Standaard</i> DS(B) (R, 96)	<i>Figaro</i> - LF (R, 56)	<i>FAZ</i> (R, 196)	<i>Corriere</i> - IC (R, 181)	<i>Wash.Post</i> WP (O, 29)
	<i>Standard</i> DS(A)(L, 412)	<i>Soir</i> - LS (L, 78)	<i>Monde</i> - LM (L, 132)	<i>SZ</i> (L, 232)	<i>Repubblica</i> – LR (L, 237)	<i>NYT</i> (O, 56)
Popular press	<i>Neue Kronez.</i> NKZ (O, 115)		<i>Parisien</i> – LP (L, 24)		<i>Nazione</i> - LN (R, 131)	

R: centre-right newspaper; L: centre-left newspaper; O: other, not clearly aligned newspaper.  
Between brackets can be found the number of coded articles.

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