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Do all roads lead to the same Europe? Reconsidering the pro-/anti-integration yardstick to measure national party positions towards the EU: the case of Belgium

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Mapping national political party attitudes towards the EU is crucial in explaining the current state of the EU and is key to understanding political alliances on European affairs. Although important, literature on the topic remains constrained by the idea that positions on European integration can be located on a single "pro-/anti-" axis. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate why one-dimensional typologies lead to cumbersome and misleading evaluations of party positions. Based on Easton's theory of political support, the research undertaken hypothesises that such classifications are unable to solve the problem of divergent orientations from one sector to another. I begin by showing conceptually how Easton's distinction between public policies, political regime and political community at the EU level highlights differences otherwise hidden. Taking Belgium as an example, I then explain why Belgian political parties – generally labelled as unanimously "pro-integration" – can be considered as divided regarding the EU. The research is primarily based on qualitative analysis of 2009 European manifestos, and interviews with party elites conducted from May to July 2010.

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, comparative research has shed new light on the limits of international theories in understanding the variety of positions towards the EU. Studies on voting patterns inside the European Parliament (Hix, Nourry Roland 2007) and on parties' attitudes towards Europe at the national level (Gaffney 1996, Hix and Lord 1997) have highlighted the way in which supranational and subnational divisions between parties have progressively gained the upper hand on conflicts between Member States as key to understanding the state of the Union. This new direction within the research subsequently led to new classificatory tools, aimed at organising the plurality of party attitudes regarding European integration (Steenbergen and Marks 2004). In addition to the general acceptance that conflicts occur on the question of how much national sovereignty should be shared at the EU level, scholars increasingly asserted that parties are also divided on European issues along a left/right axis. But as long as a typology is based on the axiom that such a thing as a single "pro-/anti-integration" scale exists, it remains restricted in its ability to interpret the complexity of a party's relation to the EU. Without defining any standard, only an abstract "quantity" of a given Europe is evaluated. Positions are taken as "black boxes", shuffled and then compared on the same scale without paying attention to their nature. For this reason, current typologies must be reviewed.

By questioning how to map political party attitudes towards the EU, this paper demonstrates that the European reality involves a plurality of discourses that cannot be merged without causing a major loss of meaning. In the present research, I hypothesise that this situation – the *"European Gordian Knot"* (Morin 1987) – could be solved by referring to the concept of political support as theorised by David Easton (Easton 1975). By introducing different objects of support – i.e. political community, political regime, and public policies implemented by political authorities – Easton helps us to think outside the one-dimensional box, and leave room to conceptualise the plurality of "Europes" desired by parties.

The present contribution is organised as follows. First, it critically reviews how conflicts on European issues have been theorised, and what the resulting limitations are. Second, an original typology is established in order to include a multidimensional classification of political parties towards the EU. Third, the typology is finally tested on the Belgian party system, generally labelled as unanimously "pro-integration". Data collected come mainly from 2009 European manifestos, and interviews with party elites conducted from May to July 2010.

Theorising conflicts on European integration

At first, the European construction process was presented as an apolitical project, relying on a functional legitimacy determined *a posteriori* by the degree of perceived benefits enjoyed by European citizens. In the 1950s, research agendas were indeed driven by theories of international relations where ideological subnational oppositions are regarded as irrelevant (Saurugger 2004: 166). The two dominant paradigms in the field – Neofunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism – put the emphasis on institutions and states as key players in the integration process, but parties were largely marginalised at both the subnational and the supranational levels (Hix and Lord 1997: 202). According to these approaches, European issues are only discussed by supranational elites or governments, which tend to promote national interests or European institutions respectively. Conflicts on Europe are not unlikely, but happen only between states, not within. And because any move forward in the integration process requires an agreement between all member states, the EU

was often evaluated as a fundamentally consensual project (Marks and Steenbergen 2002: 881). In such a scenario, attitudes towards the EU are thus summarised on a single continuum, going from the defence of national sovereignty to the support for more supranational cooperation.

Two structural changes in the integration process have however challenged this original conception. First, the emergence of the European Parliament as an essential player – the *"Parliamentarisation"* of the EU (Costa and Brack 2011: 44) – significantly modified the rules of the game. Since 1979, the direct and proportional elections of the European Parliament have allowed small parties to gain representation at the EU level. In addition, the continuous strengthening of the EP powers contributes to balance the EU decision-making process dominated by the national governments, hence opening new windows of opportunity for the expression of divergences.

Second, the nature of the debate and the highly symbolic competences transferred to the EU led to an increasing dynamic of *"Politicisation"* of the Union (Hooghe and Marks 1999: 78). With the successive ratifications of the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht, new issues in both economic and political areas started to emerge. In the 1990s, the increasing pressure of popular movements in opposition to Europe put an end to the thesis of a "permissive consensus", where elites and citizens of the same country agree on how to conduct the integration process. If it is increasingly argued that opposition to the EU did not arise at that time (Guieu 2009), it is widely assumed that divergent opinions benefited from the new context in order to break through. Organising referenda on European treaty ratification also contributed to give a symbolic face to opposition forces in the European debate.

Taken together, the processes of "Parliamentarisation" and "Politicisation" gainsaid the theoretical representations of conflicts on European integration inherited from international relations. Among scholars, Comparativists were at the forefront. In contrast with what had been done before, they started to pay attention to positions on Europe within member states. Furthermore, they intended to do it on the basis of the usual tools of political attitudes classification. Along with the model of international relations, three new models appeared, aimed at understanding European conflicts (Marks and Steenbergen 2002).

The first model was developed by Simon Hix and Christopher Lord (1997), who found the international relations model not inclusive enough. For both scholars, political parties are not only divided on the question of how much integration should be achieved, but also compete for Europe from an ideological perspective. Hence, party positions towards the EU are defined by the attitude they adopt on both a pro-/anti-EU and left/right axis. According to Hix and Lord, the positions taken on each axis are independent from each other; that is to say that positions on the left/right scale do not influence positions regarding the wished degree of sovereignty that should be transferred to the EU, and vice-versa.

Tsebelis and Garett (2000), who have studied the EU legislative process, have developed a second model. Following this model, the level of sovereignty which delegation parties are likely to accept depends on their left/right profile, not on national considerations. In such a case, debates on Europe take place in a more encompassing environment, and are subsumed along a left/right axis. As in the model of international relations, the model developed by Tsebelis and Garett conceptualises the European political space as a one-dimensional spectrum. But in opposition to the former, the latter considers that left/right positions are dominant (Marks and Steenbergen 2002: 886).

Finally, a third model proposed by Hooghe and Marks (Hooghe and Marks 1999: 76) suggests a synthesis of the Hix – Lord and Tsebelis – Garett models. Like Hix and Lord, Hooghe and Marks identify two dimensions underlying the European political space. On the one hand, parties conflict on a left/right scale according to ideology; on the other hand, they oppose each other on a European axis, going from defence of national independence to support of further integration. Unlike Hix and Lord however, Hooghe and Marks argue that a correlation exists between the two. But because the correlation is not perfect, the two axes cannot be merged, as suggested by Tsebelis and Garrett (Steenbergen and Marks 2004: 9). The theoretical relation goes as follows: if the European debate is about market regulation, left-oriented parties will tend to support further integration, whereas right-oriented parties are likely to support it if regulation turns out to be about market liberalisation. Depending on the European agenda, party positions are likely to change. For Hooghe and Marks, the achievement of the Economic and Monetary Union corresponds to a shift in support for further integration from right-wing to left-wing parties.

Whatever the model, focusing on European attitudes within member states helps to identify sources of tension otherwise hidden by the international relations model. It also allows us to go beyond the notion of a "permissive consensus" and to conceptualise relations to the EU in a different way. But if the above models complete and critically review the international relations model, they are not themselves exempt of criticisms.
First, the basic possibility of expressing constructive criticism is not allowed in the reviewed models. Contesting the path undertaken by the European construction is necessarily regarded as a plea for "less integration". Criticising the EU in the name of "more" or "another" Europe is, however, different from campaigning for renationalisation. Conversely, it could be misleading that a party favouring the status quo – i.e. expressing support for the current trajectory of the EU – is measured rather highly on a less/more integration scale, not to mention instead at the highest. Without paying more attention to the nature of the message delivered by parties, and without defining any standard, the evaluation of the wished "quantity" of Europe is doomed to remain evanescent.
Second, these models all suggest that parties have one single position regarding European integration or that all their positions can be reduced to a single one, by calculating the mean one for instance. Over-reliance on mean calculation is problematic however, as it groups antagonist positions together, making it difficult to distinguish one from another.

Research on Euroscepticism has recently tried to overcome these difficulties. By showing that opposition to Europe – even radicalised – does not necessarily lead to rejection of the integration process, scholars have increasingly challenged binary representations of European positions. For a while however, publications on Euroscepticism did not make such a distinction, and have even corroborated one-dimensional classifications.

Euroscepticism: from heresy to normality

Inherited from the British press, the concept of Euroscepticism has gained acceptance within the scientific literature through the work of Paul Taggart, who defined it as *"[a] contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration"* (Taggart 1998: 366). In his founding contribution, the author already underlined that support and opposition are not all of a piece; that attitudes regarding Europe as a political project

may differ from attitudes towards the European Union as it exists. But despite this introductory remark, Taggart's definition regards political parties opposed to European integration as belonging to a single category, ordered linearly according to the level of hostility towards the EU. Since then, several authors have followed in Taggart's footsteps and developed new typologies with the objective of specifying and splitting the all-encompassing category of Eurosceptic parties. Among the typologies that emerged, the distinction made by Taggart and Szczerbiak between "hard" and "soft" Euroscepticism – outright rejection vs. contingent or qualified opposition – is now used as a benchmark (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001). In this first wave of research, the will to define and classify the different kinds of opposition to Europe was largely dominant, as well as the idea of a strategy-driven Euroscepticism. Little efforts were made however to understand the message delivered by Eurosceptic parties. As for general models of conflict on Europe, positions towards the EU remain conceptualised as general attitudes ranging from rejection of the core ideas of integration to wholehearted agreement. And even if some nuances are admitted, support and opposition are presented as mutually exclusive.

Emphasising ideology rather than strategic calculations, another approach to Euroscepticism has nonetheless developed at the margin. Instead of evaluating to what extent national conflicts are transposed into European issues, it observes if it is possible to identify different European doctrines behind the plurality of (op)positions to Europe. That is to say, to open the "European black box" by breaking EU attitudes down. This approach originates in the work of Kopecký and Mudde, who criticized Taggart and Szczerbiak's distinction between "hard" and "soft" Euroscepticism for being too encompassing (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). The main issue they addressed concerns the need to make a distinction between the core ideas of integration on the one hand, and the European Union as it currently exists on the other hand. Referring to David Easton's theory of political support, Kopecký and Mudde argue that the two cannot be merged because they correspond to rather independent kinds of support – respectively diffuse and specific support.

Over the last decade, the events that have affected the integration process – the 2005 French and Dutch 'No' votes on EU Constitution, the Irish refusal of the Lisbon Treaty, and more recently the Eurozone crisis – have confirmed the breach opened up by Kopecký and Mudde. For an increasing number of scholars, the automatic association of strong criticism of the EU with rejection of European integration is no longer acceptable. Particularly enlightening, the French-speaking literature on "resistances" to Europe shows how, in comparison to the 1990s, criticisms that have arisen in the 2000s are more specific, and do not call into question European integration in itself (Lacroix and Coman 2007). Focusing on concepts, Crespy and Verschueren have criticised the notion of Euroscepticism as being outdated for three reasons (Crespy and Verschueren 2008: 14). First, the conceptual tools used suffer from a lack of precision as they do not define clear criteria for classification. Second, the concept of Euroscepticism is historically rooted, and suffers from a radical overtone that fits badly with current forms of protest. Third, the concept is negatively connoted, and is used in political competition to disqualify opponents. According to Crespy and Veschueren, it is thus necessary to get rid of the notion of Euroscepticism in favour of "resistances to Europe" defined as "an individual or collective hostility, latent or manifest, towards one (or several) aspect(s) of

European integration and perceived as a threat"[1] (Crespy and Verschueren 2008: 20). Referring to the plurality of "resistances" also allows for the variety of actors and reasons to oppose Europe to be taken into account.

By the critical review it offers, research on resistances demonstrates that Europe, as any political system, is not exempt from criticism; criticism which has always existed. Without casting doubt on the existence of anti-systemic forces at the EU level, this "second generation" literature works to broaden the recognition of the right to express democratic criticisms towards the EU. In that respect, the choice of the French word *"résistances"* is not entirely neutral either. Focused only on the "oppositions", this literature suggests, however, that strong boundaries exist between opponents and proponents – at least implicitly. Paradoxically, it supports the stigmatisation that research on resistances aims to eliminate. Furthermore, the excessive attention paid to opposition to Europe reduces support to a narrow group of wholehearted supporters. Taking into account that European integration is constantly evolving, this is even truer, as total satisfaction appears to be only a theoretical position (Pilet and Van Haute 2007: 222).

Taking into account the plurality of Europe(s) wished for by political parties implies the breaking up of one-dimensional typologies of European positioning. It also requires considering simultaneously the full range of attitudes towards the EU. In this respect, the work of David Easton appears as required reading.

Opening the European black box: one, two or many dimensions?

In his pioneering study on political support, David Easton demonstrates the necessity of distinguishing between specific and diffuse support (Easton 1975). Specific support, mainly characterised by its short-term nature, depends largely on perceived performances of political authorities and institutions (Easton 1975: 439). The better they are evaluated, the higher the level of specific support. To put it simply, the underlying logic works as follows: "I support the regime because I think the Government is implementing effective public policies". Conversely, specific support tends to disappear when the actions implemented by the Government stop being evaluated positively. Diffuse support, in contrast, does not account for what authorities do, but for what they are. Because of its high level of inertia, this form of support is evaluated by the author as more sustainable. Diffuse support is made up of two dimensions (Easton 1975: 447). First, it can come from confidence in the goals, the rules, and the structures of a regime. A regime is positively evaluated if its current configuration is regarded as the most likely to generate positive outcomes – "I support this regime because I trust in its goals and how it is organised to produce results that fit with my expectations". Second, it can come from the legitimacy lent to the regime in regards to its founding principles – "I support this regime because I am convinced that it acts in accordance with values I am defending". According to Easton, specific and diffuse support evolves independently in the short and middle term; that is why criticizing the Government does not automatically lead to a criticism of the regime as a whole, and vice-versa.

The distinction made between specific and diffuse support can be read in two different ways. On the one hand, it is possible to look at how support is expressed – the mode of support – if attention is being paid to the reasons for support: efficiency of public policies implemented, confidence in the regime organisation, or legitimacy of its founding principles. On the other hand, it is possible to study

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[1] "Une hostilité individuelle ou collective, latente ou manifeste, envers un (ou plusieurs) aspect(s) de l'intégration européenne perçu(s) comme une menace" (own translation)

the orientation of support – the object of support – if attention is being paid to targets of support: public policies, political regime or political community. "Modes" and "objects", despite being related to each other, involve different kinds of research. Working on modes involves questioning what motivates positions, their origins. For instance, defining if the position of a political party is structural or strategic asks the question of why it is acting that way. Working on objects requires determining where the support goes, whatever the underlying reasons.

The popularity of Easton's approach in understanding and explaining EU political support stresses the growing trend to refuse to look at the EU as a monolithic reality (Niedermayer and Westle 1995; Norris 1999; Fuchs, Roger, and Magni-Berton 2009; Boomgaarden et al. 2011). But despite a growing echo in the literature, especially in research on public support for the EU, the use of Easton's approach is embryonic regarding studies on national party positions towards the EU. And although Kopecký and Mudde referred to it as the basis of their typology, the way they interpret the Eastonian distinction between specific and diffuse support is rather controversial as they include support to the institutional architecture of the EU as corresponding to specific support (Fuchs, Roger and Magni-Berton: 22). Easton's distinction remains nevertheless useful to establish a typology of positions towards Europe, as long as it is transposed properly. At this point, two remarks have to be made.

First, a consensus is emerging around the idea that positions towards the EU must be regarded as multidimensional. So far however, there has been no agreement on the number of dimensions needed. Focusing on objects of support, it has been noted that Easton makes a distinction between three dimensions: positions towards the community underlying the project of Europe an integration, positions towards goals and institutions establishing the political regime of the EU, and positions towards public policies as implemented by authorities. Instead of separating general ideas about Europe from the current form of integration as Kopecky and Mudde did, I argue it is preferable for clarity to respect the three dimensions of support already identified by Easton.

Second, referring to the general concept of political support instead of using the notions of "opposition to" and "defence of" the EU has the advantage of avoiding an *a priori* separation between opponents and proponents of the EU. As noted by Easton, *"we can describe support as an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favorably or unfavorably, positively or negatively »* (Easton 1975: 436). Speaking of political support while allowing nuances in intensity enables us to avoid making normative judgements. Referring to political support implies, however, a minimum and a maximum, respectively an absence of support and unconditional support. As already pointed out, such a configuration means that every position diverging from the current state of the EU must be mapped as somewhere between the minimum and the maximum. Case study research shows nonetheless that divergences do not necessarily imply denial of Europe but can also come from the desire to deepen the EU (Delwit et al. 2005). To clearly identify these differences, I suggest introducing three theoretical levels of intensity on each dimension, to describe political support for a specific object. First, parties can decide to adopt an *alternative position* if they estimate that what exists is unsatisfactory and want to change it. An alternative position does not necessarily mean an attitude of withdrawal – even if it is an option – but support for far-reaching reforms of what has been done over the past fifty years. Second, parties can adopt a *position of consent,* namely supporting the *status quo*. Those parties neither want to call into question what is done, nor to go beyond, and if they suggest changing some aspects of the EU – because they disagree with or want to go further – their wish is only to implement limited modifications. Third, political parties can also

choose to adopt a *deepening position* when they agree with what has been done but consider it unfinished. Such parties thus want to go beyond what is currently implemented.

As established, our typology allows 27 tripartite combinations; that is not to say that each possible combination produces an attitude which truly exists in the current political sphere (see table 1). At this stage, combinations need to be tested empirically. However, even before this point, it is already possible to give a first definition of what is understood by political support for European integration. Political support towards the EU results from the combination of judgments, positive or negative, adopted by actors regarding the political community underlying the EU, the political regime that institutionalises it, and public policies implemented at the EU level. For each of these dimensions, parties can adopt alternative positions, positions of consent, or deepening positions, either in a manifest or in a latent way.

Table 1: Multidimensional Typology of Party Position on European Integration

Objects of Support	Alternative Position	Position of consent	Deepening position
Public Policies			
Political Regime			
Political Community			

« Europhilia » in Belgium …

Although Belgium was rather nuanced in the early stages of European construction, the country quickly became a front-runner in the integration process. After early divisions on the European Coal and Steel Community, and on the appropriateness of the European Defence Community, a broad consensus emerged on the need to support a federalist approach to European integration (Dardenne 1999). Not exempt from strategic considerations, this commitment, implemented by Paul Henri Spaak, is basically a pragmatic one. Belgium is a small country without any pretensions at the international level, oriented towards an Atlantic strategy of defence after the failure of neutrality during the Second World War. It is also a country where the sense of national belonging is weak (Delwit 2001: 181). In addition, landlocked between France and Germany, the open economy of Belgium benefits from common rules. Because Europe allows for security and prosperity in Belgium, the integration project is thus naturally seen as a "good thing" for the country.

As repeatedly shown by Eurobarometer surveys, the consensus on the "appropriateness" of Europe is shared by most Belgians, and the share of the population rejecting membership has always remained low, with a mean score of around 12% for the last two decades. So far, the percentage of Belgians considering membership as a "good thing" has almost always been above the EU mean – the only exceptions happened between 1996 and 1999, when Belgium was facing an important internal crisis. Looking at votes for Treaty ratification in both the House of Representatives and Senate, political parties also show a strong commitment to the EU (see table 2). The "worst" scenario was indeed a majority of 75% of Members of Parliament in favour of the European Defence Community (Delwit 2001: 195). In the 1950s, opposition came from the Communists, parts of the Socialists and –

to a lesser extent – the Christian Democrats. In the 1990s, opposition arose largely from newcomers, respectively the Far-right and the Greens. Reasons to oppose Europe were however strongly antagonistic, given that the former refused to share more national sovereignty while the later wanted to go further (Deschouwer and Van Asche 2002: 6). Since 2001, Green parties have ratified both the Nice and Lisbon Treaties, isolating opposition to the right end of the political landscape.

Table 2: Ratification vote results on European Treaties in the House of Representatives and the Senate

	House of Representatives			Senate		
	+	-	Abs.	+	-	Abs.
ECSC	165	13	13	102	4	58
EDC	148	49	3	125	49	3
Common Market/Euratom	179	4	2	134	2	2
Single European Act	180	0	0	148	0	0
Treaty of Maastricht	146	33	3	115	26	1
Treaty of Amsterdam	105	23	0	49	13	0
Treaty of Nice	106	24	7	46	11	2
Treaty of Lisbon	116	18	7	48	8	1

<u>… And what is to be learned from one-dimensional approaches</u>

Along with conceptual models developed by Comparativists in the 1990s, different studies, involving different methodologies, arose to measure party positions towards the EU (Marks et al. 2007). But in spite of the diversity of data collected, most referenced contributions stick to the one-dimensional assumption previously underlined, hence suffering the same criticisms. This is the case for instance in studies using manifestos as coded by the *Comparative Manifesto Project* (Marks et al. 2007), *Chapel Hill* expert surveys (Steenbergen and Marks 2007, Hooghe et al. 2010), *European Elections Studies'* opinion surveys[2], or Katz and Wessels' elite surveys (1999).

Applied to the Belgian case, all corroborate empirically the hypothesis of a political consensus on Europe. In this respect, the results obtained on the basis of the *Comparative Manifesto Project* database are particularly illustrative. As shown in table 3, all the Belgian parties coded by the CMP fall more or less in the same box (>0.75), and thus can be evaluated as endorsing the same degree of European integration.

Table 3: Evaluation of Belgian party positions on Europe based on the *Comparative Manifesto Project* database (Volkens et al. 2011)[3]

	2003	2007	2010
ECOLO	1	0.98	0.81
Groen!	0.98	/	/
Sp.a	0.76	/	/
PS	1	0.94	0.96
Open VLD	1	/	/
MR	1	1	0.99
LDD	/	/	/
CD&V	1	/	/
cdH	1	1	1

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[2] http://www.ees-homepage.net/

[3] Calculations are made as follows: PER 108/(PER108+PER110), where PER108 equals the number of quasi-sentences including favorable mentions of the EU and where PER110 equals quasi-sentences including hostiles mentions of the European Union (for further information, see Volkens et al. 2011).

VB	1	/	/
N-VA	0.86	/	/
Mean	0.96	0.98	0.94

Taking into account that six parties out of the eleven mentioned in table 3 already pointed out disagreements with the EU in the title of their 2009 European manifesto, the calculations presented above seem to be rather misleading. Of course, the CMP coding has already been criticised for its dual conception of the European reality (Marks and al. 2007), and since the mid-2000s, the number of categories to classify EU positions in comparative studies has fortunately increased (Wüst and Volkens 2003). Nonetheless, the latest research projects either avoid gathering positions – and thus miss the point of classification – or continue to reduce EU party positions to a mean point on a pro/anti-EU axis, used as a yardstick for comparison. Hence, in both cases, they do not deal with the issue of positive orientations in one political sector, and negative in another.

Applying Easton to Belgium: a three-dimensional typology of the relation to the EU

As previously noted, the multidimensional approach of political support theorised by Easton allows us to solve the problem of diverging orientations. Respectively based on Easton's distinction between support for the political community, the political regime, and public policies of the EU, I suggest three indicators to evaluate Belgian parties' positions towards the EU. The major guidelines concerning the choice of variables used to build these indicators are developed below.

- "Indicator of political openness": it aims to calculate parties' attitudes towards the EU political community on the basis of their positions on what should be the fundamental values underlying the European integration process, as well as who parties want at their side to achieve it. Regarding the question of values, parties are differentiated between those who tend to support a closed approach to what European identity is, and those who support an open approach. That is to say, those who maintain that an *a priori* European identity exists, defined by cultural criteria such as history, geography, religion, etc.; and those who defend an approach accepting political, but no cultural criteria. Positions taken by parties on past and future enlargements are also measured, as it helps us to evaluate to what extent parties actually conform to the kind of European identity they highlight. In this respect, the case of Turkey is particularly revealing.

- "Indicator of supranational propensity": it measures the relation of parties to the political system of the EU by evaluating the degree of freedom of action they are likely to grant to EU institutions. This indicator is calculated through collecting party positions on the possibility of extending qualified majority voting to all EU competences, of ratifying European treaties by national referenda, or of increasing the EU budget. Furthermore, party positions on the good of direct election of the President of the Commission by the EU citizens, and on the introduction of the right for the EP to initiate legislative directives are also calculated.

- "Indicator of governance": it focuses on attitudes towards public policy choices taken at the EU level. Based on party positions towards major EU policy – adopted, aborted or intensively discussed – the objective of the governance indicator is to evaluate whether a party is likely

to support a deepening of the orientation chosen by EU authorities in different domains, or to oppose it.

Data gathering was organised in two rounds, and the eleventh parties included in our study have been chosen in accordance with the CMP list for Belgium. First, available positions in 2009 European manifestos were collected to evaluate party positions. With an average of around 33 pages, European manifestos represent a valuable and accessible source of data. According to the objective of this paper, they are also unsatisfactory for at least two reasons. On the one hand, they do not guarantee a position for every selected variable; on the other hand, there are huge differences between them. This is why data collected from European manifestos were completed with directive interviews conducted with party elites, allowed to speak officially with the legitimacy of the party. Whenever positions diverging from their European manifestos were collected during interviews, the final word was given to the European manifestos, due to the official status of the document. In such a case, the party elite's position is nonetheless taken into account as a potential source of nuances. Up to now, interviews were held only with French-speaking party elites[4], meaning data for Flemish parties are incomplete. They are, however, represented in an indicative way in table 4, along with French-speaking party data.

For each of the 15 selected variables, parties' positions are coded between -1 and 1, according to the degree of agreement with a pre-defined statement (see table 4). When a party explicitly takes positions in accordance to the suggested statement, and without adding nuances of any kind, the party score is evaluated as 1 (++). The score is decreased to 0.5 (+) when the party supports the affirmation, but feels the need to nuance it. When the position of a party is ambiguous, or when the nuances added are strong enough to change the meaning of the statement, a score of 0 (=) is attributed. Conversely, a party will get a score of -0.5 (-) when, all other things being equal, the party disagrees with the statement, but does not completely exclude it as a possibility. Finally, a score of -1 (--) is attributed to parties in radical opposition to the pre-defined statement. Indicators of political openness, of supranational propensity, and of governance are then calculated to produce a mean score of related variables. For each indicator, a party with a mean score of between -1 and -0.33 will be considered as defending an alternative position, and a deepening position if above 0.33. In between, the party is considered as defending a position of consent. In table 4, signs between brackets indicate positions close to the pre-defined statement, but where connections are, however, too loose to be fully binding.

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[4] Interviews were respectively held between May and July 2010 with Dider Reynders (MR's President), Isabelle Durant (Ecolo's former Co-president), Paul Magnette (PS' Minister) and Francis Delpérée (leader of the cdH's group in the Senate)

	PS	cdH	MR	Ecolo	Sp.a	CD&V	Open VLD	Groen!	LDD	VB	N-VA	
IDENTITY: Only the Copenhagen criteria should be taken into account when evaluating the membership of a candidate country	+	+	++	+		(=)	+		-	--	=	0.16
ENLARGEMENT: Turkey should join the EU	+	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	(+)	+	-	--	-	0.18
COUNCIL: Qualified majority voting should be extended to all the competences of the EU	=	+	++	++						=	+	0.5
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: The EP should have the right to initiate directives	+	+	++	++				++				0.8
COMMISSION: Citizens should directly elect the President of the Commission	-	--	++	++				-	+	-	++	0.125
REFERENDA: National referenda are unsuitable for treaty ratifications	+	+	=	=				(+)		-	-	0.07
BUDGET: the EU budget should be increased	++	+	+	++				(+)	-		++	0.57
EMU: It is a good thing that price stability is the only primary objective of the ECB	--	-	=	--	--	(-)	=	--	++		=	-0.4
COHESION: Funds allocated to cohesion policy should be increased	++	+	=	++					-	(-)		0.25
FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX: The EU should adopt a European Tobin inspired tax	++	+	++	++	++			++				0.92
CAP: It is a good thing that the part of the EU budget dedicated to CAP, although still the dominant part, has decreased over time	+	-	+	+		(+)	++	(+)	--	+	+	0.3
ESDP: The EU should become a real political and military power	+	++	++	+	(+)	++	++		++	++	++	0.85
ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: The European blue card is utilitarian and unfavourable for developing countries	--	-	+	--		(+)		=	+	(+)	++	0.06
LEGAL IMMIGRATION: the directive on return of illegal immigrants represents progress in the handling of illegal immigration	--	=	+	--		(+)	++	+	++	--	++	0.15
SERVICES: It is a pity that the Bolkestein directive has been softened	--	--	+	--			(+)		++			-0.12
INDICATOR OF POLITICAL OPENNESS	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.5	(0.5)	0.25	0.5	0.5	-0.5	-1	-0.25	0.2
INDICATOR OF SUPRANATIONAL PROPENSITY	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.8				0.375	0.0	-0.33	0.5	0.32
INDICATOR OF GOVERNANCE	-0.125	-0.0625	0.5	-0.125	(0.16)	(0.4)	0.7	0.2	0.42	0.1	0.7	0.26

Beyond consensus? Belgian parties and the EU

Two main findings can be learned from table 4. First, data collected largely confirm the receptive nature of Belgium to the EU. Alternative positioning is indeed an exception which concerns only LDD and VB, two parties at the margin of the Belgian political landscape. And even in these two cases, what we find is far from a rejection of any form of European integration. Defining itself as "Eurorealist", LDD acknowledges that European integration constitutes historical progress, but considers that it has reached its limits. To avoid a systemic paralysis, the EU should put an end to enlargement – small exceptions being nonetheless allowed – and should work as a confederation, focused on a limited number of competences. Defending a more restrictive approach, the VB supports a Union built as an intergovernmental cooperation agreement between member states, culturally and ethnically defined *a priori*. As shown by table 4, it is important to note that in both cases, there is neither opposition to EU governance, nor a strong rejection of the EU institutional organisation – the VB being on the border line. However, data collection for these two parties is incomplete and does not allow us to come to more general conclusions without further empirical confirmation.

Second, the data also bring some important nuances to the all-encompassing European enthusiasm often attributed to Belgian parties. If the consensus seems to be rather strong on the nature of the political community, the gap widens regarding the political regime, and no agreement emerges on the way the EU should act. Among French-speaking parties, all four of them support an open approach to European identity and exclude any form of cultural requirements. The only difference concerns the higher score of the MR, which is explained by the absence of reference to the EU capacity for integration as an additional factor. Regarding the two other indicators, divergences are stronger however, as parties are divided between positions of consent and deepening positions. According to the indicator of supranational propensity, all of them accept the broad idea of sharing more at the EU level, but Ecolo and MR alone are likely to support radical reforms for further centralisation of the decision-making process. These two parties also encourage more direct democracy at the EU level, while PS and cdH are rather nuanced on modifying the founding principles of the community method. Concerning European public policies, the governance indicator shows another fault line. On the one hand, MR adopts a deepening position: the party agrees with choices being made at the EU level, does not support reforms that go against the current trend, and even shows regrets about some of the aborted proposals made by the Commission. On the other hand, PS, cdH, and Ecolo accept the general trend, but express "reticence" (Pilet and van Haute 2007) concerning some of the choices made at the EU level. For all three of them, the dominant point of view is, indeed, that there is more to win in supporting EU choices and trying to change things from inside.

Not entirely surprisingly, the results mentioned above must be put in perspective to be fairly analysed. It is also important to remember that the importance of parties in the debate is deeply related to their weight in the political system, hence that all positions are not equal. However, the data presented in table 4 are encouraging for the purpose of this paper as it clearly appears that positions towards the EU are not only a matter of quantity. More precisely, table 4 helps us to identify some key dimensions regarding EU positions in Belgium, either because of their consensual nature in the Belgian political landscape – e.g. financial transaction tax, ESDP, the role of the

European Parliament – or because of their conflictual nature – e.g. illegal immigration, organisation of national referenda, positions towards the Bolkestein directive.

Conclusions

The starting point of this paper was to demonstrate the limitations of one-dimensional typologies of EU positions, and to find a way to overcome these difficulties. In this respect, the Easton-inspired typology, developed and applied to Belgian parties, appears to be helpful for at least three reasons. First, it allows us to go beyond one-dimensional classifications and suggests solutions to solve the problem of diverging orientations. Of course, the same objection could be raised regarding the way in which variables are gathered under the three indicators identified. I assume, however, that the way in which variables are assembled is more coherent, and does not lead us to compare "cats and dogs". Second, introducing a distinction between the political community, the political regime, and public policies, instead of a difference between what the EU is, and what the EU does, makes sense as each object of support give rise to a separate, independent attitude. Third, this paper opens new perspectives, as it did not intend to classify parties on the basis of how much they support the present Europe. To put it simply, it helps us to answer what Belgian parties want for Europe and under what form. Moreover, the objective of evaluating what the constitutive components are of the Europe which parties wish to construct is twofold. On the one hand, it allows going beyond attitudes measured against a distorted standard, where all kinds of contestants are packed together; on the other hand, it deals with EU positions in a more objective way, and avoids the normative distinction between "pro-" and "anti-".

For the purpose of this paper, Belgium appeared to be both the worst and the best case to study. Despite actual divergences between parties, it is important to emphasise that there is no "European cleavage" as such in Belgium. When the topic is on the agenda, it is only moderately debated, and it is rather common to illustrate the low interest invested in European issues by highlighting how slow Belgium is to transpose EU directives. Thus, at first sight, the topic of EU positions in Belgium is not a very exciting one to study. But if Belgium is interesting, it is precisely because of this low saliency. Evidence from Belgium advocating for the necessity of looking at Europe as a multidimensional reality leads us to believe that the classification initiated in this paper could be easily implemented in other cases, where EU saliency is higher. In further research, less intuitive ways of collecting data must be defined however. In that respect, what has been achieved in this paper should be regarded as a work in progress.

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