

The EU as a Political Community

A Media Analysis of the 'Haider Debate' in the European Union

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1. Introduction

There is huge skepticism in the scientific literature published during the 1990s whether a “European public sphere” actually exists. Many scholars have linked the democracy deficit of the European Union (EU) to a so-called *Öffentlichkeitsdefizit* (literally a “public-sphere-deficit”). Since the existence of a public sphere uniting the whole EU is often indicated as a precondition for taking up any democratization project, demonstrating that this public sphere actually extends beyond the nation-state’s borders could be an argument in favor of a Constitution that gives the European citizens a voice. This makes this field of research of crucial importance for the political future of the European Union.

Unfortunately and until fairly recently, only a few empirical studies have been available that actually measured the (non-) existence of a European public sphere. Nevertheless, authors such as Grimm (1995), Kielmansegg (1994), Schlesinger (1995) and others have maintained that a European public sphere does not exist. Their claims were based on rather unsubstantiated assumptions concerning the character of the public sphere and its relation to key concepts such as language, the media system and the state’s frontiers (see Thomas Risse’s paper). Since each of these have different boundaries, which, moreover, do not coincide with those of the EU, it has been suggested that there cannot be a ‘community of communication’, and thus a European public sphere cannot emerge. At this point, a series of case studies is needed in order to verify whether these theoretical theses correspond to empirical evidence. This paper explores empirically whether we can meaningfully speak of a European public sphere despite the fact that there is no common European language, no common European media, and no European nation-state. Our central claim is that we can still discuss the same topic at the same time using similar criteria of relevance and meaning despite the absence of common language and common media.

From Habermas on, there have been various attempts at providing an operational definition of the public sphere (see Risse’s paper for the following). Eder and Kantner, for example, developed a definition on the basis of Habermas’ recent notion (1995) that there is a public sphere when people talk about the same topic at the same time and at the same degree of relevance, even though they are not physically present in the same location (Eder and Kantner, 2000, 315). We would like to add to the Eder-Kantner criteria of ‘the same topic, at the same time, at the same level of relevance’, that there is only a public sphere in a meaningful sense if people also share some sense of political community. This minimum degree of a ‘common identity’ can be defined as being aware to belong to the same community of fate, and can be observed by the existence of a discursive community with a shared system of meaning, i.e. with a shared horizon of reference. In this sense, the public sphere does not exist independently from what is being discussed. Thus, our starting point is not a pre-existing community that then translates into a public sphere, but a discursive community that emerges around debating a specific issue. Thus, in order to judge the nature of a public sphere in the EU, we need to know whether the same topic is framed in similar ways across national boundaries.

To evaluate whether this criterion of a shared horizon of reference is fulfilled at the European level, we studied media representations of the “Haider debate” in five EU member states, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Austria. In early October 1999 Jörg Haider’s right-wing populist *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) won a major electoral victory in Austria. The coalition formed by the FPÖ and the center-right *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP) in February 2000 led to protests all over Europe as a result of which the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers decided in favor of so-called “bilateral sanctions” of EU member-states against the Austrian government. Eventually, these sanctions were withdrawn in September 2000 when a commission of “Wise Men” judged the situation in Austria in line with the founding values expressed in the EU Treaties.

In a certain sense, the Haider case and the debates surrounding it constitute a most likely case for the study of a European public sphere. As we demonstrate below, this was a debate about some core features of the European Union, about core values and principles governing relations among EU member states. As a result, if we do not find a discursive community with a similar horizon of reference and similar meaning structures in this particular case, we can as well forget about the existence of a European public sphere. Yet, in the absence of strong empirical evidence concerning a European public sphere, we decided to pick a most likely case as an exploratory study. The results presented below have to be taken with a grain of salt, therefore. They cannot be taken as evidence of a common European public sphere irrespective of topics and issues.

As indicated above, we define a public sphere as a communicative space in which people not only talk about the same topic at the same time using similar criteria of relevance, but also express some sense of belonging to the same community which could be expressed by the same horizon of reference with regard to the stories and narratives told. The purpose of our research hypothesis is to examine to what extent this concept of a public sphere can be validated empirically.

With regard to the concrete operationalization of our definition, the first part is rather simple to realize: it can be measured in what way a same topic is discussed at the same level of intensity in different places.¹ However, the part of our operationalization regarding the question of identity is less straightforward. In this type of research, Bernhard Giesen's (1998) and Margaret Somers' (1994) concept of "cultural" or "narrative identity" offers the possibility of dealing with identity in discourse, for they stress the importance of collective speeches in the construction of social identities.² While this concept already works well for the study of individual identity, it seems particularly well adapted to the study of identity as far as the treatment of the Haider case in the European newspapers is concerned. The reason is that our data are discourses, i.e. pieces of narratives, that already exist. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, the major frames of our media analysis concern a common European history and thus European identity. Especially, one of the two main frames that will be presented in this paper can be seen in this light, namely a frame that talks about Europe as a moral community which is all about a common vision of European values and how these values refer to a common traumatic past (Giesen 1999).

In sum, we studied the following research questions:

1. Can the concept of a public sphere as debates on the "same topic at same time with the same intensity and structure of meaning" be validated at a European level with regard to the Haider debate? Or is the framing of the Haider affair is a rather universalistic one? In other words, can we talk about a European public sphere versus an generalized Western one? Is there any difference between the EU and the US public discourses on this issue? Where are the boundaries of the political community that we are looking for?

As we show below, we can indeed see the emergence of a genuine European public sphere in the case of the Haider debate. European newspapers reported the issue as one of central concern for the European Union as a political community of fate, while U.S. media discussed the Haider case from the distance and from a much more neutral position.

¹ Of course, as a first approach, we also looked at the issue cycle of the Haider affair. From this we learned that for the various newspapers there is a similar issue cycle, i.e. a few publications in the last months of 1999, a peak in February and March 2000, which then slowly descends. In our operationalisation, 'the same intensity' has to be ascertained on the level of the frames.

² (...) *people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories (...)* (Somers, 1993, 614).

2. As to the EU itself, do we observe a transnational public sphere as opposed to distinct nationalist discourses? What are the boundaries inside the EU, to what extent do we find an ad hoc coalition of EU member states against Austria as “the other”? And how did Austrian media react? Do they react in a similar nationalist manner, or do they enter into a debate with their partners within the EU? Can we observe other divisions with regard to the Haider debate, e.g. along the “left/right” cleavage in Europe?

The results with regard to this second set of questions have been most surprising to us. Generally speaking, we have found a common transnational European public sphere among the five countries studied that even encompasses Austria. Across all countries and all media investigated, the debate was framed with reference to three over-arching themes:

- Haider was constructed as Nazi and/or xenophobe, as representing everything that Europe is *not* about.
- Europe and the EU were represented as a moral community of collective values of democracy and human rights which go beyond economic integration.
- Europe and the EU were also portrayed as a legal community which is constituted by the rule of law.

The controversy about the so-called “European sanctions” was then framed around these three themes. We did not find particular nationalist constructions or frames of reference in any of the five countries. Nor did we find substantial differences between Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy, on the one hand, and Austria, on the other. We did, however, find some evidence for an emerging “left/right” cleavage in the debate about Haider, particularly with regard to the evaluation of the appropriateness of the “European sanctions.” But the latter division was not confined to any of the nation-states, but emerged as a transnational cleavage across national boundaries.

2. Methods

For the analyses of the data, in addition to content analyses (e.g. Weiß 1989, Wirth 2001), frame analyses were applied (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). A frame is an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses 'the world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, and situations (Snow and Benford, 1992:135). Such simplifications can only be applied, if the public sphere shares a certain knowledge or *horizon of reference*. If, for instance, Haider is framed as “Hitler”, then the horizon of reference is the past experience with National Socialism. So, the main focus of our analysis asks for the dominant interpretative schemata, which had been used by the various print media of different countries to encode and judge the Haider-issue and the reactions of the European countries. To put it in a nutshell, the aim is not only to know, how, for instance, the media judged the new Austrian coalition or the sanctions, but which frames, i.e. interpretative schemata had been used within these judgements. Or to say it in other words, the aim is to provide a comparative typology of the most dominant interpretative schemata.

In order to construct a typology of interpretative schemata of a *total new* political issue like the Haider case, we faced some crucial methodological problems. It was not possible to determinate the coding categories deductively in advance, since the risk of missing salient frames would have been too high. Instead the process of coding needed an explorative, inductive approach. Unfortunately such an inductive proceeding risked to clash with inter-coder reliability and the quantifying and comparative research question.

To avoid this danger of creating *ex ante* artifacts, we applied a computer based “mixed coding strategy”, by using the software program Winmax³. Before coding the data we developed a first pre-coding-tree and tested its validity within a pilot study in which everybody coded a number of the same articles. Significant parts of texts have been grouped together under the heading of one subsuming category, i.e. a “frame” (Donati, 1992:140). The aim of this pilot study was twofold: firstly, we adjusted the coding tree to the empirical findings and secondly we assured the inter-coder-reliability. The language problem was solved by using English articles about the Haider cases of the British newspaper *The Guardian*. Thus the finally confirmed coding tree was inductively constructed out of the pre-coding of *Guardian*-articles.

However, since the only commonly pre-coded newspaper was taken from the British context and we only used a small sample of it, we still could not solve the problem of unexpected national specificities, and *ex ante artifacts*. Here, the advantages of computer assisted coding could be used. As Kelle & Kluge (1999) have argued, it is useful for the development of computer assisted typologies of on text-based sequences, to keep the categories merely abstract. This assures the avoidance of systematic *ex ante* artifacts. Accordingly we started with abstract categories like “Haider and NS-past”, “European values”, or “European legal standards” and specified them afterwards. The process of specification was fourfold: firstly, on the grounds of all codings, the core meaning of each category had been defined. Secondly, due to that definition, all text-sequences that did not fit anymore in the new more concrete definition had either been deleted, or recoded elsewhere. Thirdly, the general abstract meaning of the frame was subdivided in different subcontents and connotations. Fourthly the “authors” of each (sub)framing or interpretation were coded according to profession (politicians, journalists, intellectuals, citizens, other media etc.). Concretely we worked out a coding protocol that enabled us to be reasonably certain that under same frame were indeed coded similar meanings and pertain thus the same horizon of reference. By this protocolled strategy of an alternating inductive-deductive coding, we assured both a high intercoder-reliability and an explorative processing of the meanings and contents of the debate.

Data: The method outlined above was very time consuming, thus we needed to reduce the analyzed articles in terms of *data retrieval*. The time period of selected articles was restricted from October 1999 when the Austrian elections were held until September 2000, when the EU-sanctions had ended. All papers were either available on the internet or on CD-ROMs. We used the search word “Haider*” to select the articles within this period. Since the total number of articles was above six thousand, we decided to reduce the number of texts randomly by selecting every third article for the analysis (and, if possible, have at least all front-page articles included). We opted for this mode of sampling (instead of for instance all articles every third day) to avoid systematic errors by missing crucial days of the debate.

Countries: For studying of the Haider-Debate throughout Europe, we chose Austria as the Haider’s home country as well as Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the USA. All four European countries played an important role within the debate: Belgium and France conducted the campaign against the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition. Furthermore, like Austria, Belgium is facing a problem of the presence of an extreme-right wing party: the *Vlaams Blok*. The new left-green German government joined Belgium and France. We picked Germany because of its own history of the Nazi past. Italy also has powerful right-wing parties such as the *Alleanza Nazionale* and the *Lega Nord*, thus the Italian public attention towards the EU-sanctions was considered as highly important as well. Finally, we picked the U.S. as a non-European control case. We wanted to know whether there were European peculiarities to the “Haider debate” or whether there was just a generalized Western public sphere surrounding the issue which included the U.S., too.

³ For a detailed description of Winmax see Kuckartz 1999.

Newspapers: Our empirical data sources are daily newspapers of the selected countries. All newspapers are distributed nation-wide (except for the French *Le Parisien* and the Italian *La Nazione*). We picked the newspapers according to a center-left/center-right scheme. We chose as moderately conservative newspapers the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the French *Le Figaro*, the Italian *Il Corriere della Sera*, the Belgian *De Standaard*, *Die Presse* from Austria, and the *Washington Post* in the U.S. As moderately center-left newspapers, we chose the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the French *Le Monde*, the Italian *La Repubblica*, the Belgian *Le Soir*, *Der Standard* in Austria, and the *New York Times* in the U.S. All these newspapers are considered quality press. We also selected two examples of the popular press, *Le Parisien* (French, center) and *La Nazione* (Italian, right). The also selected Austrian *Neue Kronen Zeitung* is a highly complex case, which would need a special account.⁴

3. A Western or a European Public Sphere? The Haider case in US and European newspapers

The first question that has to be examined is whether the Haider debate was really a *European* debate. At first sight, there is reason to believe that the debate had a much more universal character. Since a major part of the debate is on values shared by both the US and the European countries, such as anti-Nazism, anti-racism, pro-democracy, and pro-Human Rights, and both the US and European governments took a firm stand on the new Austrian government in order to defend these values, there was a chance that this was a Western rather than a specifically European debate.

Our evidence leads us to conclude that we have to reject the argument about a generalized Western public sphere in this case. Even though US newspapers also reported on the Haider case, they did it in a distinct way - compared with all EU newspapers. For US newspapers, the debate unleashed by Haider's FPÖ entering into the Austrian government was newsworthy, but experienced at a distance. In stark contrast to the European newspapers, it was not an American identity that was felt to be at stake here.

There are various indications that argue for this claim. First, we can infer from various instances that, from the US perspective, the Haider case was something happening "over there in Europe." It was in 'Europe' where this conflict took place, i.e. elsewhere. U.S. newspapers did not report the Haider case as a Western problem, but as a European problem. This can already be seen in the headlines, for example *Europe moving cautiously in punishment for Austria* and *Report clears way for Europe to drop Austrian sanctions* (QUOTES NEEDED), and in the designation of some of the actors in the news stories, e.g. *the Europeans*, and *European diplomats*.

Second, the crucial framing in the debate dealing with a definition of the political community, were not made by the (American) authors of U.S. newspaper articles, but consisted of citations of European politicians. This could be observed with regard to our most important frames identifying central features of what Europe means (see below) – "Europe as a moral community" and "European legal standards." The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* only mentioned the 'Europe as a moral community'-frame by citing a European actors. The same holds true for the 'European legal standards'-frame, again as a cited frame. In general, almost all the actors come

⁴ For instance, one out of third articles concerning the Haider case had been "letters to the publisher". They content was mostly of very aggressive anti-European statements which could not be found as such, within the ordinary articles. However, as Ruth Wodak has find out, these letters are presumably written by the journalists themselves.

from abroad.⁵ For example, there is only one American politician who is cited as using one of these frames himself. This was Pat Buchanan during a rally for the presidential campaign of Rudolph Giuliani who had dinner with Haider and was being blamed for that by the Democrats. In general, U.S. newspapers did not report the Haider debate as an issue which directly involved the American polity. This constitutes a very strong contrast to our findings from the European newspapers.

Third, the reports in the US newspapers were usually written in neutral language (especially, in comparison with the EU newspapers). Both facts and statements by the major actors were reported, but the newspaper did not leave its mark or commented on them. One indication for this is that by far the most frequent type of article was the purely descriptive report. These are reports that merely describe what is happening, and do not contain any opinion or judgement of the newspaper itself. In comparison, descriptive reports were not the most frequent type of article in any of the European newspapers. In contrast, a type of article that was very important in the EU newspapers, namely articles in which the author tried to mobilize readers symbolically for a certain cause, can hardly be found in the two US newspapers.⁶

A final indicator for taking a neutral and more distant stance on the Haider affair, is that U.S. journalists hardly made any accusations. In the EU newspapers, it was rather common to find journalists portraying Haider as being Nazi and a xenophobe, Austria as being a Nazi country and to denounce that xenophobia is on the rise in Europe. These types of comments or statements were usually reported in U.S. newspapers as statements by other actors who were being cited. However, it is not always possible to lead the accusation back to a more or less well-defined actor. In cases such as “a man some label a neo-Nazi,” or “Mr. Haider’s allies (...) seem deaf to accusations of racism,” the phrase is constructed in a way that the journalist distances him/herself from the accusations by shifting the responsibility to vague ‘others’.⁷ Another strategy, which has the same effect, is to leave it to the reader to label Haider as a Nazi by mentioning just Haider’s Nazi statements or elements from Haider’s background that are related to Nazism.⁸ The third way in which U.S. newspapers kept their distance was by neutralizing the accusation that Haider is a Nazi by immediately following it with an excuse, by pointing out, for example, that others are also bad people, or by showing that one can have different positions on this issue.⁹ For instance, one of Haider’s Nazi statements was put into perspective by adding “but the endorsement was one sentence in the heat of a debate for which Mr. Haider later apologized.” All in all, the *New York Times* author only accused Haider as being a racist and a Nazi in three articles (and only a few more in the *Washington Post*). In one case, this was a letter to the editor. In contrast, portraying Haider as Nazi was usual business for the Italian *la Repubblica*. NEED SOURCES FOR THESE QUOTES!

We conclude that U.S. newspapers took a far more distant viewpoint of the Haider debate in comparison to the European papers we analyzed. As a result, we can disconfirm the assumption of a general *Western* public sphere or community of reference in this particular case.

⁵In the New York Times, there are only five actors from the US making a frame as to 75 actors from abroad (to a great extent from EU countries).

⁶Only 3 of this type of articles in the New York Times, of which one is a letter to the editor by Rabbi Schneier who grew up in Vienna before the War. Instead, 23 purely descriptive reports in this newspaper.

⁷In the New York Times, for the accusation that Haider is a Nazi 7 of the 19 cited frames are like this, and for the accusation Haider is a xenophobe it is 3 out of 17 cited frames. Moreover, there are the less well-defined actors of a cited frame like ‘abroad’, ‘non-Austrians’, and ‘foreigners’.

⁸The New York Times and the Italian *la Nazione* are the only newspapers in which the number of direct, explicit accusations is surpassed by this more indirect way of accusing Haider of Nazism.

⁹In the New York Times, of the 33 ‘Haider is a Nazi’-frames 10 are neutralised in this way.

4. Emerging Patterns in the Haider Debate

After having argued that there is a difference in the newspaper debate on the Haider case between the US and the EU countries, we will now focus on the European newspapers themselves. We distinguish two levels of argumentation. On the first level, we claim that all European newspapers which we analyzed share common frames of reference and meaning structures in their discussion of the Haider case. On the second level and with regard to the newspapers' particular position in the debate, we can observe the emergence of a left/right division and cleavage. But this cleavage emerged as a transnational one and was not confined to particular national public spheres.

The first level of argumentation consists of the frames that are invoked in this debate. All in all, we identified 18 frames that were commonly used in all newspaper articles. We only found two frames with a particularly restricted reach, namely a frame depicting 'Austrian patriotism' which occurred mainly in Austrian newspapers, and a frame portraying 'Austria as unjustly treated.' This latter frame, however, was confined to one particular newspaper, the Austrian *Neue Kronenzeitung*. All the other 18 frames seem to be shared by all newspapers we analyzed across Europe. In other words, we did not find national differences with regard to these 18 most frequently used frames.¹⁰

"Europe" as a horizon of reference

To develop this argument further, we conduct a more in-depth analysis in the following of two specific frames, namely 'Europe is a moral community' and 'Europe has legal standards'. 'Europe is a moral community' frames the Haider issue and the "European sanctions" in the context of a shared *morality* and commonly held *values* in Europe. 'Europe has legal standards' frames the debate in terms of the institutionalized *legal structure* of the European Union and the rule of law as a guiding principle of the EU. We selected these frames for the following analysis for two reasons. First, in terms of frequency, they are among the most important frames for all newspapers in all five countries. Second, these two frames assume a special importance concerning our definition of a public sphere. Both contain a significant identity component. By framing the Haider affair in terms of 'Europe - a moral community' and 'European legal standards', the issue acquired a meaning that surpassed its particularities. The Haider case became a catalyst for an examination of fundamental questions of what the EU is all about, and where it should go.

The 'Europe is a moral community' frame constructed a vision of the EU as a distinct political community based on values and principles, such as democracy, human rights etc. The EU is referred to as a family, as a single body that has a soul, an identity and a common political project. The values and principles on which this EU is founded are thought in relation to Europe's history. On the one hand, reference is made to the founding fathers and founding ideas of European community. On the other hand, the shared values and principles that are worth fighting for, are presented as the negation of those repugnant values, i.e. Nazism and racism, that provoked the Second World War.

A different, not necessarily contrasting¹¹ vision of the EU arises from the 'European legal standards' frame. Here, the EU is identified as a legal institutional structure in which the rule of law reigns. There are Treaty provisions, rules and procedures which should guide the actions of its members, and to which one can appeal in case a problem arises. All the possible steps that the EU

¹⁰ This point needs to be further confirmed through a statistical analysis which will be presented orally at the EUSA convention and was not yet ready when we had to write this paper.

¹¹ These two frames present two different visions on the EU which sometimes are combined. One could, for instance, state that the EU is a moral community based on certain legal standards codified in the Amsterdam Treaty.

may take are (or, should be) codified in its legal system, binding as well as protecting its member states and providing protection for all of them. The legal standards are a way to unite the members in a common framework.

Table 1. The number of articles and number of frames per newspaper¹²

	DP	DS(A)	NKZ	FAZ	SZ	LF	LM	LP	DS(B)	LS	IC	LR	LN
Art.	185	412	115	196	232	55	133	23	96	73	181	237	131
EMC	54	105	7	47	28	25	54	6	16	44	29	43	17
ELS	38	81	12	41	19	13	26	4	11	30	13	23	9

The first point to be made here is that all EU newspapers basically refer to the same connotations when they use these frames. In other words, there is a general consensus on what it implies to say that the EU is a moral community or that it is based on legal standards. In table 1 can be seen that, though not always to the same extent, these two frames are mentioned in all newspapers (particularly in the quality newspapers). Furthermore, the affirmation that there is a general consensus on the meaning structure of these two frames is illustrated by the following examples which represent the whole range of articles.

‘Europe is a moral community,’ as in *Der Standard* (Austria): *The EU is not a pure economic community any longer, instead it is a union of values (Werteunion) since Amsterdam, which rejects radical left or rightwing parties. The question whether the FPÖ is radical rightwing, thus cannot be decided by Austria alone. (DS(A) 13.03.00.; 67/74)*¹³

‘Europe is a moral community,’ as in *Il Corriere* (Italy): *[president Ciampi:] (...) ‘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.’* cs0201004

‘Europe is a moral community,’ as in *Le Figaro* (France): *Mr. Haider affirms that the government, in which he will not take part personally, will work ‘on the basis of the common values of Europe’.* lf020400b

‘Europe is a moral community,’ as in *Die Presse* (Austria; article on the opinion page): *The reason indicated for the sanctions of the 14 is that in the united Europe inhuman politics should already be fought from the outset. The participation in government of the FPÖ and its propagated agitation against foreigners is against the European thought and therefore rightly criticized. But, why are they not getting together and discussing the problem together?* dp11.p000517e

‘European legal standards,’ as in *Le Figaro* (France): *[Schüssel:] ‘The refusal of dialogue, the ostracism, the boycott 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*

¹² For the list of newspaper abbreviations see Appendix A. Art. = number of articles coded; EMC = ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame; ELS = ‘Europe has legal standards’ frame.

¹³ *Die EU ist keine reine Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft mehr, sondern seit Amsterdam eine Werteunion, die radikale Parteien zur Linken und zur Rechten ablehnt. Die Frage, ob die FPÖ rechtsradikal ist oder nicht, kann daher nicht von Österreich allein entschieden werden.*

European Treaties, these facts constitute a violation of the basic right of the European Union. lf040400

‘European legal standards,’ as in *De Standaard* (Belgium): (...) *Grasser (minister of Finance, FPÖ), wanted to ‘show intelligently the limits’, making sure that ‘the EU cannot blame us of violating the Treaties’. ‘There could be delays in the payment of our contribution.’ He also thought that the use of the Austrian veto in the EU would be ‘suitable’.* ds041800

‘European legal standards,’ as in *La Nazione* (Italy), concerning the Committee of the Wise: (...) *A kind of an exam like a judicial appeal for Haider’s country, (...).* ln063000

These examples have in common that the EU is either identified as a moral or a legal community. The participants in this debate – actors cited in the articles or authors of the articles themselves - use the same language and the same concepts indicating that they share the same horizon of reference. This holds also true in cases in which it is rather inconvenient for the actors and the participants in the debate to refer to these meaning structures. Yet, the Haider debate is framed in those terms even in these ‘inconvenient’ cases.

Even members of the Austrian government use these two frames when discussing the Haider case. For example, the solemn declaration signed by Haider and Schüssel in the presence of president Klesstil declared to be *committed to the principles shared by the member states of the EU, namely those of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and the fundamental freedoms as well as the rule of law* (quoted from *Die Presse*). In the case of the legal standards frame, this is even more obvious that Austria is committed to what the EU represents. Because of the EU’s legal structure, Austria has rights, too, and can take legal action to defend itself against the consequences of the sanctions that violate EU law in the eyes of the Austrian government.

Cf. the following quote from *Le Monde* (France): *In an interview with the German magazine Focus, published Monday 28 February, the Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel does not exclude the recourse to legal steps, if the sanctions decided by the fourteen other members of the European Union were to undermine the rights of his country.* lm022900b

Evaluating the sanctions “in the name of Europe”

It is interesting to note that those who are in favor as well as those who are against the “sanctions” use the two frames in order to justify their respective positions. In sum, the same way to set up the argument is used to support two contrasting claims. Further on, we will elaborate on this finding, for now, it suffices to illustrate with some examples that it functions like this.

‘Europe is a moral community’ argued pro sanctions in *Le Monde* (France): *But it is not a question here of a problem of hidden motivations: this government is objectively and a priori unacceptable if one takes the founding values of the Europe after the war seriously. It is not a psychological question; these sanctions are morally motivated.* lm021400d

‘Europe is a moral community’ argued contra sanctions in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany): *The left, which almost half a century joined the European train rather with reluctance or sometimes resistance, acquires now Europe. The Holocaust and the “never again” becoming thus a chiffre of the founding myth of a European nation, where, since then, only “internal politics” exists. Austria is an example for that: classical foreign politics is shut down; EU institutions continue to work. If the left, with these meaning, tries to upraise Europe to a moral superpower, than they (the left) only fill an ideological vacuum of themselves. Hence nothing of the classical*

leftist truth-beliefs (Glaubenswahrheiten) and political proposals remained; the Welfare State despaired of itself, pacifism crashed at its moral dilemmas. Internationalism turned into a NATO-based intervention-readiness, and the global sympathy for the condemned of this world stands also for leftist governments not in way of their restrictive immigration- and refugee-politics. The left arrived in reality. But above of this reality they (the left) need a heaven. In Austria (the left) is looking for heaven on earth, and hence puts the idea of the good above of the stubborn reality of democracy. This is the only leftist mentality-remnants which is still virulently (virulent). (FAZ 11.02.00.d.; 63/92)

‘Europe is a moral community’ argued contra sanctions in Il Corriere (Italy): [Herbert Scheibner, Austrian minister of Defense, FPÖ:] (...) Is Germany thinking about cutting some co-operation programs with Austria in the field of defense? I do not know. Anyway, it would reflect a certain European attitude. But if there is a party-political prejudice against us, that would damage precisely the principles of the EU. cs0302002

‘European legal standards’ argued pro sanctions in Le Monde (France): If this public warning sign [coup de semonce] is not enough, then the Treaties provide the Europeans with other weapons. But for this it will be necessary that a persistent violation of the fundamental principles of the Union is ascertained. lm020200d

‘European legal standards’ argued contra sanctions in the FAZ (Germany): Hoyer the vice-president of European Liberals, blamed the Portuguese EU-Presidency and its German “advisers” for having lost “measurement and reason”. The Amsterdam-Treaty only sees the possibility for reactions, if one member state violates the fundamentals of the EU. However, for that one has firstly to prove the behavior of the new Austrian government (FAZ 03.02.00.e (85/93).

The ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame in particular became one of those concepts which are shared by everybody and, therefore, cannot be avoided in this debate. Even those who do not agree with using this frame in the context of the Haider debate have been forced to mention it. The ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame became part of the common repertoire. Participants in the debate who argued that it is not valid to invoke this frame in the Haider debate, then developed a whole set of arguments to justify why the ‘moral community’ point should not be made in the context of the Haider issue. In order to delegitimize this frame, they had to acknowledge its existence in this debate.¹⁴

Die Presse (Austria): (...) But, please, immediately in the style of chauvinistic soccer parties and without the melodrama of a European moral community! dp13.p000705d

De Standaard (Belgium): (...) However, there are two problems with this incompetent Prinzipienreiterei [German in the original text in Dutch] without any judgement. First, you must not take people for more stupid than they are. They will really see the hypocrisy of waving too pretentiously with the Big Principles. By people who one day shake hands with Kabila, and the other day accuse Haider of everything. (...) Second, who because of the shortsighted political motives favors the pollution of concepts plays a dangerous game. The defense of the Europe of Values is a too important cause to lay them in the hands of amateurs. To call Haider a fascist and compare him with Hitler without backing it up with a sound historical argumentation is light-headed. There is a danger of a ridiculisation of this whole Haider-hysteria. And that is bad. ds0204002

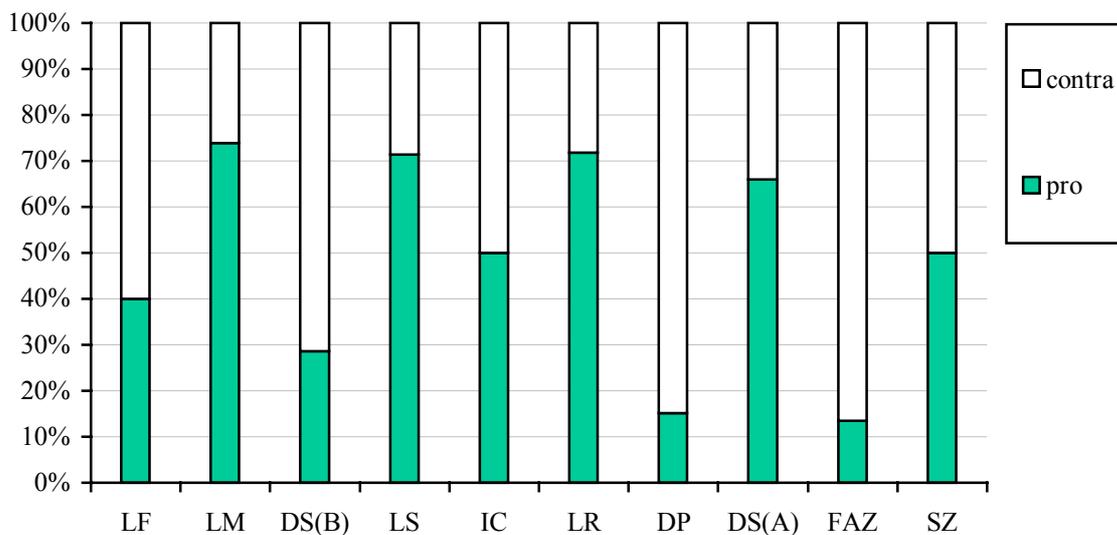
¹⁴Here it has to be noted that this does not hold for the ‘European legal standards’ frame. Instead, see also the table of pro and contra further on, it can be suspected that where this is not considered a ‘good’ argument, this frame is in a way silenced by not being mentioned. However, apparently, with the ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame this is not possible, maybe it is too much in the centre of this debate.

So far, we have made two claims. First, there was a common horizon of reference shared by all the participants in the Haider debate. Second, there also existed a second level in the argumentational structure in which differences emerged among the newspapers. This second level concerned the claims that are made by invoking the frames, particularly in terms of supporting or rejecting the “European sanctions.”

But before we can claim the existence of a common European public sphere in the Haider debate, we have to know whether the issue was constructed as an “us good Europeans” vs. “them bad Austrians.” Was there a major difference in the stance toward the issues at stake, between the Austrian newspapers, on the one hand, the the other European newspapers, on the other? One could imagine, for example, that Austrian newspapers declare that the sanctions are wrong because Europe is a moral community and has certain legal standards (and possibly show also some hurt pride). One could also suspect the newspapers of the EU-14 to vigorously defend the “sanctions.”

In Graph 1 below, we report the data with regard to statements using both the “Europe moral community” and the “European legal standards” frames in favor and against the “European sanctions” for all quality newspapers.

Graph 1: Judging the sanctions EU as moral community and European legal standards (merged): pro/contra in percentages (only quality papers)



What is most surprising in looking at this graph is that only three newspapers consistently use both the “Europe as moral community” and the “European legal standards” as arguments against the “European sanctions”: *Die Presse* (Austria), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), and *De Standaard* (Belgium). These are three rather conservative newspapers from three different countries. We exclude *De Standaard* here from further analysis because of very low absolute numbers (see Appendix B). Interestingly enough, the other Austrian quality newspaper, *Der Standard*, follows a similar pattern as the French *Le Monde*, the Belgian *Le Soir* and the Italian *La Repubblica*. In these four center-left newspapers from four countries (cf. Appendix B), the ‘Europe

is a moral community' frame is used consistently in favor of the "sanctions."¹⁵ We can also see a third group of newspapers using these frames in support of and against "sanctions" in almost equal numbers: *Le Figaro* (France), *Il Corriere* (Italy), and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany). These are two rather conservative and one more liberal newspapers – from three countries once again.

It is abundantly clear from these data that there was no construction of "Europe versus Austria" by any of the newspapers which we analyzed. Neither the Austrian newspapers construed the issue in such a way nor the newspapers in the four other countries analyzed. Rather, we can see that some sort of left/right cleavage emerged concerning attitudes toward the "European sanctions" with three newspapers (from three countries) somehow in the middle taken a more balanced position. The left/right cleavage transcended national public spheres and became a truly transnational European one. We can see no evidence for the development of particular national lines or meaning structures in this particular debate.

There is a further test to check the validity of the left/right division in Europe in the Haider debate irrespective of nationality. We looked at who is actually cited as using these frames to take a position with regard to the "European sanctions." If we are right, and the newspapers themselves take a principled position arguing in favor or against the sanctions, then we should find that the journalists authoring the articles or the editors are the ones who use the two frames to make their points. In the case of the *FAZ* and *die Presse*, we should find that opposition against "sanctions" is voiced by the authors of the articles themselves, while statements in support of "sanctions" are "cited frames", i.e. stem from other actors reported about in the article (politicians, and the like). The opposite should be the case concerning the cluster of newspapers which supported "European sanctions" against Austria. *Der Standard*, *Le Monde*, *Le Soir*, and *La Repubblica* are expected to express support for "sanctions" by the authors of the articles, while opposition to "sanctions" mostly concern reports from other actors.

For the 'Europe is a moral community' frame, we should find that it is used by the voice of the newspaper itself to make a claim "pro sanctions" and used against the "sanctions" by somebody from the other camp. In order to test this, we differentiate between three groups of participants: the newspaper itself (both journalists and articles written by the editor of the newspaper), articles written by others (both essays by invited authors and letters to the editor), and cited actors (see table 2).

¹⁵ In contrast, the pattern for the 'European legal standards' frame is much less clear. In general however, this frame is used as an argument against the sanctions more often than not (see Appendix B).

Table 2. Pro and contra the sanctions for the two frames split up by type of participants (author or actor)

	FAZ	DP	DS(A)	LM	LS	LR
EMC						
pro by:						
newspaper	0	0	1+7+5	5	4	11
other author	2	2	6	2	0	5
cited actor	6	5	22	19	16	5
	(8)	(7)	(42)	(26)	(20)	(21)
contra by						
newspaper	21	4	3	0	0	2
other actor	4	14	4	0	0	0
cited actor	6	3	9	4	1	4
	(31)	(21)	(16)	(4)	(1)	(6)
ELS						
pro by						
newspaper	0	0	6	0	1	2
other author	1	0	1	0	0	0
cited actor	1	1	15	8	4	0
	(2)	(1)	(22)	(8)	(5)	(2)
contra by						
newspaper	14	2	4	0	0	0
other author	8	9	2	0	0	1
cited actor	11	13	12	8	9	5
	(33)	(24)	(20)	(8)	(9)	(6)

On the basis of this table, various conclusions can be drawn. First of all, only the *FAZ* fits our expectations above of a newspaper arguing against the sanctions. For both frames – ‘Europe is a moral community’ and ‘European legal standards’ - the position against the sanctions is especially put forward by the journalists of the newspaper (21 out of 31 in the case of EMC and 14 out of 33 in the case of ELS). On the few occasions that counter-claims are reported, they are either other authors or “cited actors,” such as politicians Joschka Fischer, Lionel Jospin, Jacques Chirac, or references to the French public in general.

Second however, the center-left newspapers show a somewhat less clear picture than the *FAZ*. In *La Repubblica*, for example, article authors use the ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame in favor of the sanctions more often than not (11 out of 21), but a journalist of the newspaper also uses this frame twice against the sanctions. Interestingly enough, the journalistic authors of the *Le Monde* articles rarely use either of the two frames to support the “sanctions,” even though EMC is used overwhelmingly to back the “sanctions,” but the newspaper overwhelmingly lets other actors speak in such a way (19 out of 26). And *Le Monde* confirms its relative non-interest for the ‘European legal standards’ (ELS) frame in favor or against the sanctions by leaving it completely to the cited actors: for example, the Portuguese EU presidency, the French Foreign minister Védrine, and the Belgian minister Onkelinx (ELS in favor for “sanctions”) and Austrian Chancellor Schüssel and Commission President Prodi against.

Third, the two Austrian newspapers *Die Presse* and *Der Standard* essentially use their editorial pages to express journalistic opinions, if at all. The “pro-sanctions” *Der Standard* finds it less difficult to take an explicit stance. On the editorial pages, there are seven commentaries by

journalists using the ‘Europe is a moral community’ frame to support the sanctions, while the newspaper editor, Hans Rauscher, alone uses EMC five times to make the case. Rauscher never makes the counter-claim, and refrains from using the ‘European legal standards’ frame in favor or against the sanctions. As to ELS in general, this frame is used by the newspaper much more often, but a rather balanced picture emerges. ‘European legal standards’ are used as often in favor as against the “sanctions,” but mostly by other authors or cited actors.

In contrast, the more conservative Austrian *Die Presse* is rather cautious in putting forward explicit opinions by the newspaper itself. While overwhelmingly expressing voices against the “EU sanctions,” *Die Presse* rarely lets its journalists speak out explicitly against them. This is very different from the German *FAZ*. One can speculate that an Austrian newspaper finds it difficult to go against the European grain if it considers itself part of a transnational European public sphere. In contrast, the *FAZ* does not have this problem and can freely express the newspaper opinion through the editors and the journalists writing the articles. *Die Presse* argues against the sanctions in a rather implicit way, namely by carefully choosing its authors and cited actors. The other authors who argue against the sanctions are, amongst others, Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the Danish right wing liberal party Venstre, Siegfried Dillersberger of the FPÖ, and a journalist of the Daily Telegraph. The cited actors speaking out against the “sanctions” are, among others, Antonio Martino of Forza Italia, Angela Merkel, Kurt Biedenkopf, and others of the German CDU, Klaus Kinkel of the German Free Democratic Party (FDP), Chancellor Schüssel, Jörg Haider, and a regional leader of Schüssel’s party (together 11 out of 16 contra arguments for both frames put together). And in sharp contrast to the editor of *Der Standard*, *Die Presse*’s editor, Andreas Unterberger, never uses any of the two frames pertaining to Europe in order to speak out against the European “sanctions.”

Conclusion

This paper has presented the results of an exploratory study using frame analysis to demonstrate empirically the concept of a transnational European public sphere which is primarily constituted by a common ‘horizon of reference’ leading to common and shared understandings about the meaning of a particular issue.

The Haider case and the EU reaction to it are particularly suitable for such a study, because, like other major media events, it has had extensive media coverage in the newspapers of many countries. The Haider case has been simultaneously discussed in various countries within the EU (we selected Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy), and outside (the USA). It has been discussed in the same manner and with using similar meaning structures. This should be no surprise for these ‘frames’ are not only ‘used’ by the newspapers, but also by the actors of the Haider case themselves who are being quoted in the articles we analyzed. However, as we have argued above (see also Risse’s paper), it is not enough to observe that an issue is discussed at the same time with the same level of intensity and with similar criteria of relevance in order to constitute a common public sphere.

A common public sphere – whether European or national or regional - is not merely a media space that just contains a series of news items, but is a democratic space in which these news items are being ‘debated.’ A public sphere is a forum of joint discussion and controversial debate in which the various speakers and actors relate to each other and refer to each other. In other words, we need to pre-suppose a minimum degree of community if we want to talk about a European public sphere in a meaningful sense.

Here, the comparison between the European newspapers and those of the U.S. is enlightening. In the US news coverage, the Haider case is treated as a foreign affair. The ‘Europe is a moral

community' and 'European legal standards' frames appear mainly as citations of European politicians, they do not appear as statements by the authors of the articles themselves. In contrast, journalists and editors of European newspapers frequently used these two frames to express their own opinion about how the EU treated the Haider case. This is what we tried to show above. As a result, we can see here the emergence of a polity, of a community that treats the Haider issue as an affair that concerns "us" as Europeans. In short, the Haider debate was about core principles of a collective European identity. The two main frames – 'Europe as a moral community' and 'European legal standards' – are precisely about identity, they constitute identity markers.

A further indicator for the emerging European public sphere in this particular case concerns the comparison between the news coverage in Austria and the rest of the EU member states. How do the Austrian newspapers react to this case in comparison to the newspapers of the other member states? Are fellow 'Europeans' treated as legitimate speakers? Or, instead, are the Austrian journalists and editors retreating in their national shells and jointly defending their country "under attack by the EU?" The surprising finding of our study is that this is not the case.

Two points can be made. Firstly, the public sphere (as far as the Haider case is concerned) is not fractured. Even though we still need to conduct a more extensive statistical analysis, we feel safe to say that there is a shared horizon of reference. For those involved in the debate, it was clear what the terms of the Haider issue were, and what was at stake. In a way, the Haider debate then constituted a political community, almost as an unintended by-product of the fierce controversy on how "Europe" should react to a right-wing populist party in government in one of the member states.

Secondly, though sharing the same horizon of reference and reflecting on the identity of the same political community, different and even contrasting positions are put forward and different visions of what this political community should be are given. The Haider case was a real debate in which different positions were argued by the participants who acknowledged the position of the other, thereby also recognizing that those holding different use are nevertheless part of the same community. It is very significant to note in this context that these different positions could not be located as pitching the Austrian newspapers against the rest of Europe. Instead, the two 'camps' were formed by Austrian and German conservative newspapers (with the German *FAZ* even more vigorously against the "sanctions" than the Austrian!), on the one hand, and center-left Austrian, French, Belgian and Italian newspapers, on the other. The Austrian *Der Standard* positioned itself closer to the French *Le Monde* than to its fellow Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* by clearly identifying with the position of the EU. The German *FAZ* became the strongest defender of the Austrian government's position. These are clear indicators that we have seen a common European public sphere in this case, which presupposes a political community whose symbolic boundaries transgress the national boundaries of the European nation-states.

The Haider debate then touched upon core features of a collective European identity. It has been rather easy to find this process of definition and redefinition of identity in a series of frames that referred to the common history and the importance of this shared traumatic experience for Europe's self-definition. Through these fragments emerges a 'common narrative' of a collective European identity. This helps us to understand how important a single case can be in defining and understanding the public sphere. A public sphere is not something out there waiting to be discovered. Instead, a public sphere evolves and is constructed around specific arguments. There is no reason to expect this process of social construction to be different on the European as compared to the national level. Thus, a European public sphere does not in our view emerge as a by-product of European institution-building and European integration. Rather, the more a particular issue is perceived as a common European one by the participants in a public discourse, the more a transnational European public sphere is actively constructed through social practice.

Appendix A:
List of the newspapers

	Austria	Germany	Belgium	France	Italy	USA
right wing*	DP die Presse	FAZ die Frankfurter Allgemeine	DS(B) de Standaard	LF Le Figaro	IC il Corriere della Sera	NYT the New York Times
left wing*	DS(A) der Standard	SZ die Süddeutsche	LS le Soir	LM Le Monde	LR la Repubblica	WP the Washington Post
popular press	NKZ die Neue Kronen Zeitung	Ø	Ø	LP Le Parisien	LN la Nazione	Ø

* This left/right classification is much more a tool than a real typologie, each newspaper has its specific role in its own media landscape, some are rather or slightly leftist but not at all left wing. For the NYT and WP this differentiation is not valid as well.

Appendix B:

Table for all the EU newspapers of the ‘Europe is a moral community’ and ‘European legal standards’ frames used pro and contra the sanctions

	DP	DS(A)	NKZ	FAZ	SZ	LF	LM	LP	DS(B)	LS	IC	LR	LN
EMC+	7	42	0	8	11	6	26	5	3	20	8	21	3
EMC -	21	16	5	31	6	6	4	0	6	1	4	6	0
ELS +	1	22	0	2	4	2	8	1	1	5	2	2	1
ELS -	24	20	9	33	11	6	8	0	4	9	6	6	2

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