It’s a long way to EUrope: The Post War Process of Integration

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Abstract:
Various theories claim to account for the development towards a unified Europe. Many of these offer an explanation of the contemporary process with regard to the European Union as a politico-economic entity at present. Yet, more often than not the history of Europe as a multifarious collection of national states is hardly taken into account in a systematic way. In addition, the role of political parties, or the elites, representing the different populations as governmental agents is often overlooked in view of their capacities by means of ‘symbolic politics’ to develop a lasting ‘permissive consensus’ of the different populations vis-à-vis EUrope. In my view the slow and complex process of European integration can be understood – at least in part - as a path dependent development that is defined by a nation’s collective memories of (in part coercive) conflicts between and within nations and the resulting ‘multiple’ identities. Europe’s conflict-ridden history, especially during the 20th century, is relevant for understanding national responses of the political elites and the respective populations to the integration of Europe into EUrope at present.

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References
1. **Introduction**

23 March 1957 is considered as the beginning of the development towards unifying Europe. In fact the European cooperation got under way in April 1951 (re. Coal and Steel: ECSC). Hence, the development towards Europe is more than half a century old now. Although many commentators and political scientists have discussed this endeavour mainly in terms of political integration and economic cooperation, a basic European wide experience, shaping the national identities of the various nation-states is often ignored: the conflict-ridden history in Europe, especially between 1850 and 1945. Conflicts occurred not only between (often emerging) nations, but also within many countries, sometimes bordering on civil war (Taylor, 1971). Both types of conflict and their eventual consequences have shaped the collective memories of people and developed into stereo-types and forms of ‘symbolic politics’ that are still relevant for contemporary political behaviour in Europe and – so I argue – as regards the politics of integration with respect to Europe. Hence the study of inter- and intra-national political and military conflict is important to understand European integration. For one would expect that – given this conflict-ridden past – that the actual tempo of establishing European wide economic cooperation and the political integration would have been much slower and less smooth as it appears to be.

Twentieth Century Europe has experienced three major clashes: World War 1 (1914-1918), World War 2 (1939-1945) and the Cold War. The first two ‘wars’ implied the end of a historical phase that centred on a (bitterly fought) contest for power resources and the hegemony over and within Europe (the war ‘theatre’). At the same time these wars also signified a historical watershed: the First World War meant the end of Europe as the geopolitical ‘centre’ of the world (instead the US became the centre of gravity), the Second World War implied a new division of power between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ (forming the basis for a renewed struggle for power and hegemony: the Cold War). To put it even more dramatically: these ‘wars to end all wars’ turned out to result into the demise of a fragmented Europe in geopolitical and economic terms, in particular the Cold War manifested this by drawing the ‘Iron Curtain’ between Eastern and Western Europe till 1989. The eventual political integration and economic cooperation of the Western part should be seen in light of these developments. And, in this light, the European project of uniting a hitherto deeply divided and fragmented Europe has been quite successful:

- no more ‘open’ war in Western Europe since 1945;
- a peaceful process of denationalization across Europe;
- freedom to travel, to work, to study, to live within Europe;
- relative high levels of per capita income, one currency and a single market.

In summary: in retrospect the EU at present looks like a success story, if not a ‘miracle’. Especially so, if one cares to take into comparative account other endeavours in this respect (like in Latin America, LAFTA, and North America, NAFTA). In these regions initiatives for closer economic cooperation were also launched but have had little effect as yet that resembles the present state of affairs of the EU (McCormick, 2002: 18-27). In retrospect the speed and comprehensive coming about of Europe is indeed remarkable and this development cries out for an explanation. In fact, there are many explanations on offer, but – and this is the thrust of this story – leave out often two crucial elements:

- The ongoing development of Europeanization (albeit with hick-ups and unintended turns) notwithstanding its conflict-ridden history that was in part also influenced by strongly felt nationhood (and related identities) after 1945.
The emerging forms of cooperation on a ‘transnational’ level has mainly been
developed by the political ‘elites’ (or governing political parties) without much or
effective opposition at the domestic level of politics.¹

These are rather surprising observations that seem to have been ignored in many
explanatory accounts of how and why Europe has come about since 1951 in a
comparatively successful fashion and – until recently – with a relative high level of
‘permissive consensus’ of its population. The question we shall address in this paper
is therefore: How to account for the paradox² of successful political integration and
economic cooperation in Western Europe in spite of collective identities fed by war
(and concomitant occupation) experiences and also intra-national adversities (and
related party behaviour during most of the first half of the 20th Century in most of
these sovereign states?

The answer to this question structures the remainder of this paper as follows:
first, I will cursory highlight the importance of European history to understand the
winding road to the EU and focus in more detail on the political developments after
the Second World War. In Section 3 and 4 I shall introduce the analytical approach to
study the role of the political elites by means of the concept of ‘symbolic politics’
accounting for the ‘permissive consensus’ across most of the participating member
states of the EU. In Sections 5 and 6 these ideas will be examined empirically by
investigating party behaviour (representing the political class). Finally, in Section 7 I
shall draw together the historical development and the contemporary behaviour of the
political elites in view of the ‘quiet revolution’ of reconciling national identities and
Europeanization.

2. Liberalism and Nation-states: from empires to national democracies

After the Napoleonic wars (1793-1815) Europe was reconstructed by the victorious
powers (Britain, Prussia, Austria and Russia). In fact this has been a geopolitical
exercise where the powers that be promised each other mutual assistance in case of
internal disruption and external threats (Taylor, 1971; Hobsbawm, 1990). At the same
time the industrial revolution got under way and was conducive to higher levels of
international trade, the quest for raw materials and labour. Hence, the nature of the
geopolitical game changed (colonialism and international trade) and led to custom
unions as well as treaties on trade (preferential rights) and often bi-lateral agreements
of military support between the greater powers in Europe. It also induced ideas on
cross-national cooperation, if not (pan) European integration (Stirk, 2001). However,
little came of it and instead ‘nationalism’, and the emergence of (constitutional)
liberalism, drove the political events within the European countries up to the Great
War in 1914 (see Box 1). The ‘modern state’ was built on the principles of economic
(self) interest, centralizing political authority within its territory, and organizing
industrial society to further the national identity and nation’s wealth (Joll, 1976;
Therborn, 1996). Three ideological streams thus emerged during the 19th century that
designed these political and economic developments across Europe:

- **Nationalism**: signifying the importance of national states and by strengthening
  political control and developing larger policy capacities (e.g. the military).
- **Liberalism**: urging the creation of constitutional polities, on the one hand, and
  legitimizing the role of the state with regard to industrialization and markets.

¹ On Euroscepticism and Electoral protest in relation to the fear for a 'democratic deficit':
²
Colonialism: the drive towards extending the power resources of the nation by gaining control outside Europe for raw materials (and enhancing national pride). The outcome of this process was a delicate and vulnerable equilibrium within Europe between the bigger nation-states, an aggressive behaviour (militarism) of these nation-states, in particular outside Europe (but also by the USA and Japan, and – among other things – violating the autonomy and integrity of the Chinese empire; see Box 1), and an increasing role for nationalist (if not chauvinist) politicians and Heads of State (mostly monarchs) who focused on politics, pride and prejudice regarding other nations. Due to these developments the idea of economic cooperation within Europe did not flourish (any more) and instead political rivalry blossomed and found its expression in strong national identities.

Box 1: Geopolitical events in Europe during the 19th Century:

1815: Battle near Waterloo (Belgium): Napoleonic France defeated
1830: Revolt in France to restore the Republic (defeated)
1834: Customs Union within the German area: Economic cooperation
1848: Revolutionary mood across Europe demanding constitutional rights for the bourgeoisie (successful in a number of countries)
1852: Crimean War between (Tsarist) Russia and (Ottoman) Turkey. Intervention by UK and France. Beginning of ‘pan-Slavism’ and of competition between Austria and Russia for the Balkan area.
1866: Prussian-Austrian War by Kanzler Bismarck over the domination of the fragmented German area.
1870/1: Franco-Prussian war. Foundation of the 2nd German ‘Reich’: empire.
1878: Demise of Ottoman Turkey in Europe: independence of Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and enlargement of Greece.
1885: Berlin Congress dividing up Africa and Asia in ‘spheres’ of colonial influence among European states (imperialism).
1880ies: Tariff wars within Western Europe driven by protectionism and 1890ies: violent conflicts in the Balkan area over national territories.
1896-1902: Chinese-Japan wars and intrusion of Chinese sovereignty by European powers seeking preferential trading rights in China (Boxer Revolt).

This complex and often vulnerable situation made the First World War perhaps (with the help of hindsight) not avoidable, but certainly understandable: national pride and an unstable network of treaties of mutual assistance were conducive to the exhaustion of options to settle conflicts peacefully by means of ‘quid pro quo’. This dangerous concoction triggered a relatively minor disagreement in the Balkans and set into motion a four year military conflict that, in retrospect, did not know winners, but mostly losers (and more than 10 million soldiers killed). As a result, the map of European nation-states was redrawn (see Map 1): the German, Austrian and Russian empires were destroyed and dissolved, in most European countries parliamentary democracy with universal suffrage was introduced (Therborn, 1977), and last but not least: the Russian Revolution had taken place leading up to the communist USSR (Hobsbawn, 1994). This latter development, together with the intervention of the USA in the war (in 1917), meant the demise of Europe as the dominant geopolitical force in the world (Joll, 1976).
In fact, a ‘new’ Europe emerged with more independent sovereign states than before (see Map 2). Most of these nations were characterised by parliamentary democratic governance, and – last but not least - where Social Democracy had become a legitimate political force. According to Stein Rokkan, a famous political sociologist, this meant not only that by now all societal conflict-prone cleavages (social divisions in society) were politicised, but also were incorporated to the political system and represented through political parties. In other words, both national identities and intra-national identities were represented and mobilized within the nation-state (Rokkan, 1999). This situation implied that in most European nations the state had been transformed into a democratic organised polity where political parties with different ideological backgrounds formed the new political class. This political class, however, was quite different from those before the First World War. First of all it was organised through electoral parties and often competing fiercely amongst each other in parliament. In many cases this led to unstable government if not to a deterioration of the democratic state during the inter-war period (like: Italy, Portugal, Greece, Poland, Austria, Germany; see: Lee, 2000).

Although most European nations had developed a shared identity as a ‘demos’ within the ‘nation’, political differences were simultaneously organised in parties and represented in all its varieties within the nation³. Both world wars would only reinforce this and makes it even more puzzling why the process of Europeanization could have been so successful in retrospective!

3. **Post-war Political Development in Europe**

After 1945 most West European countries regained their full status as sovereign states and re-installed their pre-war political regimes: parliamentary democracy. However, a major difference concerned the electoral representation of the major party families. Both Social Democracy and Christian Democracy became the main political forces (Keman and Pennings, 2006). Hence, in particular these parties set the tone of how and in what way the nation-state was resurrected (and how the war experiences were absorbed!). Three elements stand out:

- Coping with reconstructing the economy (and often with the loss of colonies).
- Developing a ‘better and kinder’ Society for all (by means of the ‘welfare state’).
- Achieving a new international ‘order’ under the ‘aegis’ of the US.

These elements are seen as having been conducive to European Integration (McCormick, 2002; Stirk, 2001; Therborn, 1996). In addition to the foundation of NATO in 1949 as a ‘firewall’ against the alleged threat of the USSR, the ECSC (European Community for Coal & Steel) was founded (1951) and consequently the EEC in 1957 (European Economic Community) by Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Table 1 below). The fundamental idea was that by means of economic cooperation one of the causes of inter-European warfare would be diminished and at the same time economic integration could well substitute for the loss of the colonies and the weaker position on the world market (vis-à-vis the USA and later Japan, on the one hand, and due to the closure of Central and Eastern Europe: the so-called “Iron Curtain”, on the other hand).

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³ Sartori (1976) distinguishes between regular parties and anti-system parties. The latter are those parties that do not accept the existing political system as valid and legitimate. Hence these parties are considered to challenge the democratic state. Often it concerned extremist parties from the Left [e.g. Communist] and from the Right [e.g. Fascist parties]. In some cases these parties were declared illegal.
Although the ‘pan-European’ idea was not new and had been discussed during the Interbellum (1919-1939) in many states the post-war development took a different trajectory than was originally thought. Instead of a geopolitical ‘assemblage’ of alliances or the instalment of a supra-national type of governance, the integration took shape by means of economic cooperation on specific areas first (energy, coal and steel, agriculture) and was then further developed by means of a step-by-step process of closer collaboration and through negative integration (i.e. removing barriers for cross-national economic activities, e.g. the Single Market). It is only during the 1990s that the political dimension of European integration is taking off (with the Treaties of Maastricht, 1992; Amsterdam, 1997; Nice, 2001). At the same (slow) speed this process of deepening (regulative cooperation across the EU) was accompanied, if not overtaken by an increasing rate of broadening (new members) of the European Union:

Table 1: Basic Facts on Member-States of the European Union [2002]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member States (…..) = Year of entry</th>
<th>Democracy &amp; State format</th>
<th>Population in millions</th>
<th>Trade to non-EU</th>
<th>GDPpC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria (1995)</td>
<td>PR/PD/SF</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>27.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (1951)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Fed*</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>26.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark (1973)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni*</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>27.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (1995)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>24.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (1951)</td>
<td>MAJ/PD/Uni</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>25.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1951)</td>
<td>MMP/PD/Fed</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24.940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece (1981)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland (1973)</td>
<td>STV/PD/Uni</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>30.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (1951)</td>
<td>MMP/PD/SF</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>23.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg (1951)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni*</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>46.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (1951)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni*</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>26.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal (1986)</td>
<td>PR/PD/Uni</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>17.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (1986)</td>
<td>PR/PD/SF*</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>21.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un. Kingdom (1973)</td>
<td>MAJ/PD/Uni*</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>27.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU (N = 15)</td>
<td></td>
<td>379.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In fact, the ‘broadening’ has gone quicker of late than the ‘deepening’ of the EU. Between 1957 and 1973 no new members were invited to join, whereas since then until 2000 nine countries joined (and after 2000 another twelve - almost all former communist countries). In other words: the territorial space and population size of the present EU has grown dramatically over the past 20 years (in total the EU has 27 member states, it covers 4,325,000 square km [equal to Australia], and its population is just over 460.1 millions in 2006) whereas regulative cooperation – although progress occurs – moves at a slower pace. Although Simon Hix (2005) claims that the EU as a policy-making body is quite important, it should be noticed that this is only the case since the mid-eighties. In addition it can be put forward that the regulative capacity of the EU vis-à-vis national states is (still) constrained by its procedures (like comitology and co-decision procedures; see: Hix, 2006: 54-44; Hooghe and Marks,
2001: 94 ff). In fact, there is quite some variation in the policy areas where the EU dominates as well on cross-national variation as regards which members benefit (in terms of cross-subsidizing) while others do not (Héritier, 1997). Apart from Agricultural policy (CAP) and the structural funding of (weaker) regions through the Cohesion policy the EU does not regulate much by means of public expenditures. Yet, regulative policies – aiming at creating a single market for Europe – are quickly becoming organized at the supra-national level (see also: Majone, 1996; Scharpf, 1999). The introduction of the Euro and the concomitant development of a Central European banking system are examples (see also: Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 123; Apel, 1998; Hix, 2005: 10).

Why this is the case is not the subject of this paper though. What is, and what needs to be analysed in more detail, striking is that for the larger part of time, both the process deepening and broadening of the European Community has gone relatively unchallenged at the national levels of politics and appears to be – albeit lukewarm - accepted by the majority of the citizens involved. Only recently one discerns serious signs of disapproval and tends the ‘permissive consensus’ of the European population to erode (see: Acta Politica, Volume 42: 2 & 3). The question is thus: why did this not happen much earlier?

The answer, as already stated, is to be found in the role of the national political elites across Europe in bringing about and furthering the process of European integration. Without explicitly politicizing the European integration issue in domestic politics, the main parties colluded on it and supported the government of the day in the negotiations and related outcomes with the other members. Hence, parties in government and parliament were always the main actors driving the process of European integration: it was a game played by the various national elites, legitimizing their actions by means of ‘symbolic politics’. To this we turn now.

4. National Political Systems and the emergence of the EU as a Polity

It should be emphasized that the EU as a political system is not the same as a national one. The main difference is – in addition to how the decision-making process and the related procedures of policy implementation is organized – that most offices (regarding the Executive) are not elected by the population, but are appointed by the governments of the member-states. In fact it is appointment by co-option and more often than not the result of coalitions of member-states finding consensus by means of compromise. In contrast, in most of the 15 West European members that formed the EU up to 2000 the prevailing regime is parliamentary democracy (see: Gallagher et al. 2005 and Table 1). A parliamentary or representative democracy is characterised by its executive/legislative relationship which is dominated by political parties whose representatives are elected by the population (i.e. the electorate; in general all citizens over 18 years of age). The mode of representation is directed by the electoral system (translating individual votes in parliamentary seats). In addition political parties need to find parliamentary majorities to decide and to form government (see: Lijphart, 1999; Keman, 2006) and therefore the need to cooperate (unless one party holds the majority: like in the UK) by means of an often complex process of coalition formation (Budge and Keman, 1990)\(^4\). In Western Europe the pre-dominant mode of representation is based on Proportional Representative electoral systems (PR-systems) which are conducive to multi-party systems and having two or more parties in

\(^4\) In some countries regularly minority governments are formed, mainly in Scandinavian countries. This made these governments more vulnerable as was the case in Denmark and Norway.
government (to have a stable majority in parliament; See: Gallagher et al., 2005. 7). In sum: all member states of the EU are parliamentary democracies with a constitutions safe guarding political and civil rights of its citizens and where the exercise of political authority (the “state”) is controlled by responsible government an is monitored by an independent judiciary (Hix 2005). 4).

The mode of representation or the linkage between population and government at the level of the EU is, however, not only different from national political systems, but quite weak. It is argued that this has been conducive to the so-called “Democratic Deficit” and it has been suggested that – in addition to allow for more direct modes of representation and enhancing the influence of the European Parliament (which is elected at regular intervals since 1979) - the deficit is in large part due to a lack of a common identity across the population (and its development as a ‘demos’) within the EU (Zürn, 2000). Others have put forward that this observed “Democratic Deficit” can be explained by competing identities between the nation-state, on the one hand, and the EU on the other hand. This tension would produce the problem of a “double allegiance” (Van Kersbergen, 2000). Others suggest that the problem will become less, if and when the political institutions of representative governance are introduced and have truly developed at the level of the EU (like having responsible government and a strongly empowered parliament; see: Hix, 2005: 206-207).

In sum: the extant situation of the level of ‘democraticness’ within the EU is in contrast to that within the national systems of the member-states. The idea of a “democratic deficit” is hardly contested within political science, but opinions differ as to what are the causes and feasible solutions. Finally, most commentators point to the fact that this implies that the EU is by and large governed by political elites representing the interests of national governments as well as the interests of the main parties within the context of domestic politics (see also: Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Therborn, 1996). Yet this ‘problematique’ is neither new nor unique for the process of European integration. On the contrary: the development of the nation-state in Europe during most of the 19th and 20th Century was confronted with the same type of lack of legitimacy and democraticness (see Section 2). In most countries there was no homogeneous ‘demos’ or was it politically included into the system of governance. And precisely the diffusion of ‘liberalism’ as the dominant view on the relationship between state authority, political representation and the market economy in combination with an enhanced idea of ‘nationalism’ (one nation – one people) can be considered as the corner stones of accepting the present concept of the democratic state since the Second World War as being the “only game in town”.

All this seems to imply that ‘symbolic politics’ is an important instrument for enhancing the legitimacy of the (national) political elites’ behaviour at the level of the EU. In my view the level and extent of symbolic politics can account for the extant ‘permissive consensus’ of the populations across most if not all member states over the past decades (McLaren, 2006; Steenbergen and Marks, 2004). Although there are serious sources of political contestation over Europe between national parties and among the electorates like the fear of the EU being a regulative Leviathan and a conducive to denationalizing the state, the general trend among the public has been surprisingly positive towards European integration.

In the next section I shall elaborate the role of elites and ‘symbolic politics’ by focussing on two major factors that shape the format and impact of symbolic politics and their variation across the member states of the EU after 1945: war experiences (including occupation) and cleavage politics. The first factor shapes to a large extent the national attitudes of both elites and population towards European integration.
Cleavage politics – the second factor - is important for understanding how and to what extent these attitudes manifest themselves within the separate political systems. In fact, these factors are interacting.

5. **Symbolic Politics and Multiple Identities**

Symbolic Politics is considered to be capable of developing political support for the elite (i.e. parties) by means of referring to shared symbols that are related to collective identities. The more congruent the views of parties and electorates are, the stronger the support for the behaviour of the political elites, i.e. their policies (see: McLaren, 2006). 5; Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 51-66; Therborn, 1996: 229-249). Four types of identity are relevant here:

1. **Utility**: a symbol, like the nation, equals a positive pay-off for the individual and creates allegiance (e.g. being a citizen of a welfare state or a market economy). Yet if the ‘nation’ fails to provide this can be a source of conflict.

2. **Territory**: the area of where one lives or belongs to is the major point of reference. This can imply a conflict if the territory does not equal the political system (e.g. the state). For example, one can have a ‘multiple’ identity: being a Frisian and a Dutchman and a European.

3. **Culture**: sharing features with others that are ‘internalized’ as a social attribute (of a defined group), like language – relation – ethnicity etc. Yet again this can become a source of conflict as well (see: Therborn, 1996: 230).

4. **Polity**: features of the system defining the political identity of the citizen. For example having a passport, the right to vote, being a tax payer, welfare benefits. These types of identity imply to a large extent for the individual ‘citizen’ that he or she belongs to a (part of) society: he or she is included. Obviously, these symbols not only define an individual’s role and position, but also differentiate this. For example, in Belgium one can be catholic Flemish speaker, or in Germany a protestant Prussian. Hence, the different roles also imply conflicting roles (which role is considered to be more important) and are conducive to differential behaviour. McLaren (2006), Therborn (1996) and Smith (1998) observe that, over time, the national identity in combination with the political identification with the state has become dominant in most European nation-states: evidence shows that the individual identifies first and foremost him/herself with the state where he or she holds citizenship (McLaren, 2006: 109). In addition Therborn (1996: 232-233) argues that the nation-state is particularly reinforced by means of national symbols that refer to its shared war experiences. For example: in most European countries the end of the First and Second World War is (still) celebrated by means of a public holiday and related ceremonies (e.g. flagging, remembering the victims etc.). Finally, as Hooghe and Marks (2001: 56-57) point out, different (‘multiple’) identities do overlap more or less in most countries and are more often than not ‘exclusive’. We argue therefore that to the extent different types of identity do overlap or not is indicative for the support of the party political elites in a country.

It goes almost without saying, that the role of symbolic politics and its effects in terms of political support is a crucial factor for the acceptance and legitimacy of the European Union within a member state. It will be equally clear that the impact of shared identities vis-à-vis Europe is still fragile given the limited time of its development as a polity. It is precisely this paradox of established national identities and the EU-identity in statu nascendi that begs further investigation. This will enable us to understand the emergence of ‘Euroscepticism’, on the one hand, and the existing ‘permissive consensus’ of the EU by many citizens, on the other hand. One obvious
question is, for example, whether or not the national identity overlaps with a European one. Or, conversely, those (latent) sub-national identities are combined with a European identity from a utility-driven perspective (bypassing national barriers).

The main **hypothesis** that we entertain in this paper is that the **less** hostile or competitive parties are **vis-à-vis** Europeanization, the **stronger** the support for both the national and the EU system will be. However, if and when ‘exclusive’ nationalism is strong or political cleavages within the national system are (still) strong, the **less** the support for the EU will (and can) be. More specifically: the expectation is that both war experiences and related memories and cleavages and their related cultural differentiation are vivid and ‘politicized’ in a country, the more they have an impact on the extent to which ‘exclusiveness’ influences the attitudes vis-à-vis Europe. Conversely, the more overarching parties are in representing the ‘nation’ (like for instance a ‘catch-all’ party) the more ‘permissive consensus’ and ‘multiple’ identities – including a ‘European’ one - may be expected to develop. In other words: the allegiance to the European Union will be determined by the direction of the national party system (representing the party elites) and the extent to which collectively shared national memories (war experience) and cleavage related identities (differences within the population) are.

These explanations of the development of a ‘permissive consensus’ regarding European integration are supported in the literature. Hooghe and Marks, for example, stress that “European integration is no longer determined by insulated elites. Public opinion, party competition, and the mass media are vital ingredients.” (Hooghe and Marks, 2007: 3 in Acta Politica, forthcoming). Public behaviour of party elites and of mass media, carriers of symbolic politics par excellence, plays a larger role than before. Elsewhere (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 60ff) they point out that the experience of coercive conflict, either within a country or between nations, is a source for ‘exclusive’ nationalism or long standing divisions within a society (for example the shared memory of civil war). Hobsbawn (1994) and Therborn (1996) emphasize the shared memory of coercive conflicts as a ‘state driven memory’ reinforcing an ‘us versus them’ identity. Hence, in addition to the ‘big’ wars in Europe one should be also aware of how conflicts live on in a country including the collateral memories of having been **occupied** (as was the larger part of Western Europe during the Second World War; see Map 3) or where a democratic disruption occurred (until the mid-seventies in Southern Europe). Hence, experiencing the absence of war, occupation or dictatorship appears to be a powerful tool for support of a transnational regime like the EU. As Reif (1993) shows from a popular survey amongst European citizens the majority of them mention ‘peace’ as the strongest reason to support the EU.

The same line of reasoning appears to be valid for those polities where socio-cultural divisions – cleavages - are (still) strong. Most nation-states in Europe were politically (re-) formed between 1850-1950 into the direction of responsible and representative democracies (see Section 2). Coinciding with this process of democratization these social and cultural differences were ‘symbolized’ and organized by means of party families within one state (e.g. Belgium and Switzerland). These divisions influence national politics directly, but also indirectly affect competition between party elites on policy choices regarding the EU. In other words: the ‘nation’ does not speak with one voice and this in turn weakens the linkage between the political elites and the population (see: Marks and Steenbergen, 2004; Steenbergen et al., 2007). This weak relationship may well impair the role and position of a member state’s party-government with respect to the EU policy making process. This effect appears to be particularly strong if the party differences are
geared towards issues like ethnicity (and migration), regionalism (and striving for sub-national autonomy) and perceived treats to local culture (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Hill, 2005: 148). In other words, the permissive consensus can be negatively affected depending on the ‘national’ link between party elites and the population at large. In addition, it is almost permanently jeopardised by national and intra-national political issues that are divisive (e.g. farmers versus consumers, i.e. those who benefit and those who have to pay for CAP). From this one may well expect that overtime as both the broadening and deepening of the EU continues and intensifies that the support for the EU as a transnational government will become less, whereas ‘Euroscepticism’ will rise (see also: Hix, 2005; Scharpf, 1999).

To summarize: symbolic politics as expressed in shared identities on the national state and bases on intra-system cleavages will impact on the degree of permissive consensus on the EU. I shall focus in particular on how coercive conflict and the related memories reflect this (or not). Secondly, the cross-national variation in cleavage related politics will be examined as another source of discontent towards the acceptance of the EU as a legitimate political authority within Europe.

6. The Memory of War: Winners – Losers and having been Occupied

Both World Wars that were conducted in the 20th Century are considered to be a historical watershed: one, instead of a short term military conflict between a few contestants the First and Second World War involved many nations – willingly or not. Willingly because declared war at each other or became involved due to treaties that required their participation (for example: Great Britain did not seek war on both instances but was bound by pledges of support). However, other countries became simply involved because they were invaded as part of the military strategy pursued (like Belgium in both World Wars) or being considered as part of a geopolitical plan (like the Netherlands and Norway in the Second World War although both nations had declared themselves ‘neutral’).

Secondly, these wars can be seen as the first military conflicts in which the ‘fruits’ of industrialization (weapon technology), on the one hand, and the availability of - seemingly endless - manpower (by means of conscription), on the other hand, led to bloodshed and casualties on a larger scale than before. In addition, the bloodshed was not limited any more to the ‘battlefield’ but the number of civil casualties rose dramatically (the ratio of military/civil casualties went from almost none before the First World War to over 70% of the total death toll in some countries during the Second World War).

Finally, both wars did indeed signify a world wide struggle for geopolitical power and economic resources. For instance the need for rubber and oil led to the involvement of parts of Asia and the Middle East. The urge for additional manpower led to the involvement of (remote) parts of the British Empire, inhabitants of the French colonies and drafting people in occupied countries (like by Germany during the Second World War in occupied territories).

Map 3: Europe during Second World War

In sum: the type and format of coercive conflict was different from earlier times and involved more nation-states and their populations to a larger degree than before.

---

5 The ratio civilian/military victims was even reversed in many cases: the USSR [70% of all dead]; Germany [73%]; China [75%]; France [50%] and in Belgium and the Netherlands, for example, the civilian victims were tenfold of the military killed in action. These are estimates.
Hence, the number of people that have experienced war – also in Europe – has grown dramatically during the 20th Century. Not only soldiers, but also women and children suffered in great numbers and for long(er) periods of time (recall footnote 6). These memories fade but never completely. And, as we already pointed out, the collective memory of war and occupation and its related atrocities remained vivid due (at least in part) to forms of symbolic politics, on the one hand, and in Europe also due to the collateral effect of the ‘Cold War’ which lasted until the ‘Fall of the [Berlin] Wall’ (1989) and the demise of the USSR in 1991 (Stirk, 2001; Hobsbawm, 1994; Crockatt, 1995). Additionally, the Second World War and the threat of the Cold War are still ‘alive’ in many a family and for those who still live (n.b. 17% of the population of the EU in 2005 is over 65 and thus were living during the Second World War). Let us therefore look how the history of war experience is related to the development of the EU after the war.

Box 2: Democratic Inclusion of Population into the Nation-State and Experience with World War 2: 1939-1945 in Europe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>First Constitution</th>
<th>Universal Suffrage</th>
<th>Breakdown Democracy</th>
<th>War experience World War 1</th>
<th>World War 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1934-1945</td>
<td>Lost*</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1930-1944</td>
<td>Lost**</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1791</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lost</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1922-1943</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1932-1974</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1939-1975</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanation: First Constitution = Division of powers and responsible government laid down and adhered to; Universal Suffrage = All adults of age have active and passive rights (to vote and to be elected); Breakdown Democracy = Interruption of democracy as a political system; War Experience: If not neutral, a country experienced war; formally most ‘Occupied’ nations belonged to the ‘winners’. But this is not a ‘shared’ experience or collective memory. * = Austria is the Habsburg Empire as a whole; ** = Finland was not yet independent from the Russian Empire. Sources: Lee, 2000; Hobsbawm, 1994.

Firstly, we can observe that all the ‘Founder States’ (in the period 1951-1957) have seriously suffered from the Second World War. Germany not only lost the war but also 12.5% of its population and in addition the nation-state was divided in two parts: the German Democratic Republic (under the control of the USSR) and the Federal Republic (under control of the USA, Great Britain and France). France, formally among the victors, had been (semi-) occupied and counted 850,000 civilian and military victims. The Benelux had been occupied and suffered from a high number of civilian victims. Finally, Italy was also among the ‘losers’ and had been under Fascist rule for over 20 years (1922-1943). Hence, European collaboration, first through ECSC and since 1957 in the EEC, originated in the war-ridden area of Western
Europe. The enthusiasm among both the political parties and the population was high (at least the ‘permissive consensus’ was). Obviously, those nations that had been in the “War Theatre” for so long (including the First World War) were strongly in favour of European cooperation (Stirk). 5. The initiatives were taken by France and the Benelux (these countries were also rapidly losing control over their colonies in Africa and Asia in the fifties).

The idea underlying the “Schumann plan” had been to neutralize the geopolitical source of conflict: control and access to coal and steel in Europe, on the one hand, and to prevent the resurrection of Germany as a military power, on the other hand, was only achieved for the economic resources. The military dimension was thwarted by the integration of German military resources into NATO (in 1955; see further: Fursdon, 1980). Hence, from the beginning the process of European integration took another direction than had originally been intended.

The first enlargement took place only in 1973 (Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain). Two of these countries had hardly suffered from the world war and although Great Britain had, it was: 1. the only ‘real’ European victor; 2. still strongly attached to the ‘Cross-Atlantic’ idea (through history, and the war itself); 3. In a relatively strong position in terms of access to resources through its “Commonwealth”. However, the global economic crisis of the early seventies due to the breakdown of the Bretton Wood system (destabilizing the international currency exchange) and the quadrupling of the oil prices which showed how vulnerable these countries (and others!) were in terms of international economy (see: Scharpf, 1999). An important difference was that – apart from Ireland – the new members were not enthusiastic about joining the EU (then still known as the European Community).

It is noteworthy that this lack of public support was in large part a consequence of nationally divided political elites in the existing member nations as well as within the applying nations. This division had its origins:

- Geopolitics: Great Britain had still strong affiliations with is (former) colonies and dominions, and conversely France, in particular, but also Germany had reservations regarding the Anglo-Saxon influence (especially the French president and national war hero: General de Gaulle).
- The division among the Scandinavian political elites was also geopolitical in nature, but was more driven by regional preferences: first of all, the Scandinavian nations had a common political identity: second, they had already formed a Union among themselves (customs and passport) in 1946; third, these countries had not suffered badly from the war6. This division within the elites became manifest in Norway, one of the applicants before 1973. A referendum on joining the EC was lost by the government in 1972.

In summary: the 1973 enlargement was – at least in part - contested by the political elites within the nations that were part of the EC, on the one hand, and within the applying nations, on the other hand. The issues that divided the elites were less ‘rational’ in nature and seemingly more ‘symbolic’ (McCormick, 2002: 69-72).

The third enlargements (1981-1986) concerned Greece, Spain and Portugal, and went relatively smoothly in comparison. The reasons were that it was considered by the EC as a necessary step forward to consolidate democracy in Southern Europe.

---

6 Finland is not considered part of Scandinavia and it had a special status due to its ‘winter war’ with the USSR in 1939/40 (and fighting with the Germans after 1941). The Peace Treaty in 1944 demanded that Finland should remain neutral in international politics. This prevented this country to join international forms of collaboration until the end of the Cold War.
The new political elites in these countries were united in their attitude towards European integration as was the population. This internal political consensus, it should be noticed, was of course in large part shaped by their ‘dictatorial’ past (see Box 2) and being comparatively economic laggards. Both factors were important.

The last enlargement before 2000 took place in 1995 (Austria, Finland, and Sweden) and can be considered as a logical extension: these nations obviously belong historically to “Europe” and have had fully fledged democratic systems since the First World War (Lee, 2000). Additionally, their access could take place because the Cold War was declared to be over (at the end of the eighties), and this gave all three nations the leverage to enter alliances as they saw fit. Recall. Finland was not free to do so being tied to the USSR (see Footnote 7). Austria had been occupied until 1955 was considered as sensitive part of ‘Mittel Europe’ close to the ‘Iron Curtain’ and had to remain neutral as was laid down in the peace settlement of 1955 (Stirk, 2002). Finally, Sweden had always been neutral (like Switzerland) but decided to join Europe for geopolitical reasons (no more Cold War) and the fact that – apart from Norway – the other Nordic states were or had applied for membership. In particular the Swedish party elites did not like the idea of international isolation (Therborn, 1996).

In summary: in this section we have cursory told the history of the growth of the European Union until 2000. The diverse stages of enlargement show that the idea of a war-ridden past may well have to do with seeking European collaboration. Just consider the following:

- All 6 founding nation-states suffered badly from this Second World War and could not allow for another military conflict to happen for the sake of survival.
- In all these 6 countries the population in particular had suffered large amount of casualties, had been economically badly hurt and lost much of their overseas possessions during the post war era.
- It seems likely to assume that both elite and mass had a congruent opinion on these matters and therefore a permissive consensus could be developed.
- In Ireland, Denmark and Great Britain this was different. The sense of having lost the war, or having been destroyed by the war was less, absent, or different.
- Both the collective memory and the identities were, so I argue, differently shaped from continental Europe. Exactly this difference may well have contributed to the domestic divisiveness of parties in these countries on the issue of joining EUrope.

Hence, the second enlargement can be seen in part as a rational act on behalf of the governments involved and the EC. However, the founding members remained reluctant in terms of ‘symbolic politics’: the lacklustre enthusiasm for joining did not go down well with the European elites.

- The entry of the Southern European countries was hardly contested by the EC itself, given the re-democratization of Southern Europe (apart from some fear for the uneven levels of economic development in Europe; see also Table 1).
- In particular both the political elites and the populations in this region were in favour, if not enthusiastic to join EUrope. Precisely because of their internal conflict-ridden past.

The third enlargement was considered by most member-states as the logical consequence of integrating all democracies in Western Europe (McCormick, 2002).

The enlargement of 1995 has perhaps been the least contested one. With the end of the Cold War and the growing international economic interdependence of Europe as a whole, it seemed almost an inevitable course of events (Stirk, 2001). All in all it seems plausible to suggest that (violent) conflicts in and between
European countries has been among the factors of when and why other nation-states have joined and shaped Europe by means of the enlargement or ‘broadening’. It appears that the national histories of the nations involved and the experiences of the Second World War in particular has been an important factor shaping the political willingness of both elite and population in this respect and the surprising high levels of permissive consensus that can be observed. The question is to what extent this consensus and acceptance of de-nationalizing politics has been produced and maintained by the domestic political elites (Zürn, 2000). To this we turn now.


In Table 2 a number of indicators with respect to the popular and elite acceptance of belonging to the EU have been listed. The figures show first of all that the later a nation has become a member the higher tends to be the popular appreciation of the EU at present. The average score for the ‘founding fathers’ shows a decrease of – 15.3% as compared to 1993, whereas this average for those countries joining the EU after 1981 (N = 6) is much lower and is between – 8.5% and 4.5%. Apparently the duration of membership weakens the ‘permissive consensus’ of the general public. This is also visible in voters’ turnout (or participation rate). On average there is quite a gap between the national elections and the degree of participation for the European Parliament. Yet, the relationship with the length of membership is weak: for example, in the UK and the Netherlands the gap is large, whereas in France and Ireland it is below the EU average. In addition, the opinion of the EU of the elites is rather variable across the member states. The difference of opinion between the elite and mass on average is big, especially so in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany (i.e. 55%) and in Sweden.

These observations imply that there has been popular ‘trust’ in the EU initially but tends to disappear over time and in some member states more dramatically than in others. To some extent this may have to do with the gains or losses from being a member of the EU: members that gain are amongst those that show a higher level of permissive consensus, but the patterned variation across the ‘losers’ is much less straightforward. Hence, the acceptance of being a member is certainly not growing but this pattern is quite diverse across the member states. This may be related to how these political elites have positioned themselves nationally on the European issue and whether or not political divisions or cleavages are affecting these differences within national party systems (we will discuss this below). In table 2 the degree of permissive consensus is indicated for the last decade (PCI: 1993-2004) and the longer term (PC2: 1981-2003).

Two observations stand out:

1. In recent times the consensus had deteriorated (-11.2 on average). This seems to be associated with the duration of the being EU member.
2. The range of consensus change has at the same time increased (from 25 to 42). In other words, the cross-national differences have become larger.

These observations would not only signify a lower degree of ‘permissive consensus’ regarding European integration and collaboration, but also that apparently the influence of the elites may have been reduced. This is supported by the other indicators: the more negative the net gains/losses are, the higher the discrepancy
between voters turn out is, on the one hand, and the bigger the gap between the popular appreciation of the EU and those held by the elites, on the other hand.\footnote{The bi-variate relationship between Elite/Mass and Turnout $r = -.37$ and between Elite/Mass and the long term level of consensus $r = +.42$}
Table 2: Attitudes within Member-States towards the European Union [2002]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member States</th>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Turn Out Difference</th>
<th>Permissive Consensus1</th>
<th>Permissive Consensus2</th>
<th>Elite-Mass Opinion</th>
<th>Net Gain/Loss EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>-46 euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0**</td>
<td>-14.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>-173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>-6.0</td>
<td>-11.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>-17.0</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>-106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.0**</td>
<td>-12.0</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>-122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>-18.5</td>
<td>-14.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>-183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un. Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>-16.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EU (N = 15) | Average: 23.0 | Average: -7.7 | Average: -2.0 | Average: 40.0 | Average: 19.9 |


In sum: from our analysis it appears that two factors appears to be related to the loss of the permissive consensus over time: one, the amount of benefits emanating from the EU (net gains/loss in table 2), and two, the duration of membership of the EU. This makes sense: the length of EU membership coincides with the broadening or enlargement of the EU (see the previous section). This implies amongst other things that the spoils or benefits have to be shared among more beneficiaries. In particular after the 1980ies this effect becomes visible: there is a clear division between those members that are on the receiving end, and those that are not. This effect is also clear for the gap between the elite and population with respect to the appreciation of the EU (r = -.39). This becomes particularly visible in the relationship between the difference between voters’ turnout at national elections and those for the European Parliament:

Obviously support for and acceptance of the integration into the EU seems to be of a temporary nature. Enlargement appears to lead to a different pattern of permissive consensus across the member states over time: late comers do not only benefit more comparatively, but the population within early member states are less inclined to follow the elites’ appreciation of the EU as a system of governance. This may well account for the higher levels of ‘Euroscepticism’ that have emerged of late (after 1992, in particular – see Table 2). Below in Table 3.1 we have listed the positions of the (party) political elites vis-à-vis their attitude towards the EU over time.
Figure 1: Bi-variate relation between Elite Gap and Voter Turnout [1981-2003]

Table 3.1 shows the various party families that exist throughout Europe. Each family represents party differences and cleavages. What Table 3.1 shows is the radical Right and Left are opposed to European integration albeit that this becomes less outspoken after 1987. The parties that are close to the centre of gravity in most West European party systems: Social Democracy, Christian Democracy as well as the Liberals and Conservative parties are all in favour. Hence the political elites that are more often than not in government in the member states support throughout the post war history the idea of an integrated EUrope. Apart from the impact of the wars this signifies that the larger part of the main political parties is in favour. As these parties are more often than not represented in the Commission and Council of Ministers this supports our idea that the process of integration is strongly made by these party families. It should further be noted that “regional” parties are also quite enthusiastic for supporting the EU that is after its instalment in 1958. We think that this can in part be explained by the fact that the so-called ‘Cohesion Policy’ and the ‘Agricultural Policy’ appeared to be beneficial for the more rural parts in Europe, on the one hand, and for the lesser developed areas in the periphery of the national states. Exactly these parties try to further this type of interests (see: Hooghe and Marks, 2001: Part II).
Table 3.1: Party Positions on EU-acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>. Radical leftwing</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-2.66</td>
<td>-1.71</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Greens</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+1.40</td>
<td>+0.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Social Democracy</td>
<td>+1.53</td>
<td>+1.68</td>
<td>+1.53</td>
<td>+2.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Liberals</td>
<td>+2.42</td>
<td>+1.58</td>
<td>+2.00</td>
<td>+2.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Christen Democracy</td>
<td>+2.02</td>
<td>+3.00</td>
<td>+2.56</td>
<td>+3.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Conservatives</td>
<td>+1.49</td>
<td>+1.82</td>
<td>+1.29</td>
<td>+2.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Nationalists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Regional parties</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>+3.87</td>
<td>+1.94</td>
<td>+2.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Radical Rightwing</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-1.79</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. All parties</td>
<td>+1.57</td>
<td>+1.69</td>
<td>+1.10</td>
<td>+1.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: based on data MRG; see: Budge 2001

In Table 2 we presented figures on the permissive consensus as well as at the comparative gains and losses of each member state. This type of expenditure is related to the above mentioned EU policies. Actually there are four member states that gain a lot from the EU: Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece. The differences with most other members are quite large (only Austria, Finland, France and the UK are in between). This could mean that there is – next to other types of ‘symbolic politics’ like nationalism etc. (see Section 3) – that the ‘utility’ argument is an important feature to understand the cross-national variation in permissive consensus. Figure 2 shows the patterned relationship and it is immediately clear that this variable (net gains & losses) produces a division within the EU: Apart from Denmark, an obvious outlier, the four countries mentioned are clearly different from the others. However, surprisingly, this is not directly related to respectively much higher levels of permissive consensus for the net gaining countries. Conversely, all other countries show a similar and relatively low level of support for the EU.

The reason for this may be the fact that the ‘gap’ between the elite and the electorate (see Figure 1) is widening. This signifies that the distance between the political leadership is growing and manifests itself in growing difference in views held on European integration. Table 3.2 – measuring the EU positions like in Table 3.1 but now for each member state separately – is illustrative: the cross-national variation is huge (see Germany and Austria!) and to some extent showing counter intuitive results. For example, Denmark is renowned for its reluctant attitude regarding integration but apparently the parties think differently. The same applies to the U.K. and the Netherlands (where a referendum on the EU constitution was voted down in June 2005). Yet, most striking is the fact that the change in party attitudes is positive whereas all other indicators measured at the level of citizens point in a different direction (more or less). The answer to this is to be found in the changing attitude of the electorates and the apparent incapacity of parties to respond to it. All variables listed in Table 2 produce negative relationships with the change in permissive consensus, the growing difference between national and European elections and the distribution of net gains and losses across the member states.

The bi-variate relations between party positions as regards the EU [see Table 3.2] and the indicators listed in Table 2 are all between $r = .40/.60$. This means a relative robust statistical result.
Table 3.2: Party Positions by Party Family towards the European Union by Period [1958-2003]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7,76</td>
<td>-1,14</td>
<td>-1,49</td>
<td>-9,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3,67</td>
<td>-0,73</td>
<td>-0,18</td>
<td>-3,85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>-0,64</td>
<td>-1,14</td>
<td>1,95</td>
<td>2,59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>-1,41</td>
<td>-1,55</td>
<td>1,11</td>
<td>2,52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3,82</td>
<td>-2,41</td>
<td>-1,54</td>
<td>-5,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8,59</td>
<td>11,09</td>
<td>10,46</td>
<td>1,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>-7,15</td>
<td>-4,09</td>
<td>-0,64</td>
<td>6,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>-6,88</td>
<td>-2,70</td>
<td>3,45</td>
<td>10,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>-3,11</td>
<td>-3,96</td>
<td>-2,30</td>
<td>0,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2,82</td>
<td>9,37</td>
<td>8,01</td>
<td>5,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>4,28</td>
<td>6,16</td>
<td>5,92</td>
<td>1,64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1,00</td>
<td>3,50</td>
<td>4,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,25</td>
<td>8,77</td>
<td>5,52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>-0,91</td>
<td>0,35</td>
<td>6,20</td>
<td>7,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un. Kingdom</td>
<td>4,59</td>
<td>2,25</td>
<td>4,79</td>
<td>2,02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU (N = 15)</td>
<td>1,19</td>
<td>0,92</td>
<td>3,20</td>
<td>2,02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Explanation:* Scores are derived from the MRG data set of party programmes of all parties in Western Europe. This variable represent the net score of Pro- versus Anti-EU issues emphasized. Positive = pro and Negative = anti-EU. *Source:* Budge et al., 2001.

8. **Concluding Remarks**

In this paper I have presented two story lines that shed more light on the context within which European integration has taken place: one, the impact of war experiences [World War One and Two as well as the so-called ‘Cold War’] and the eventual decline of the European ‘powers’ in the global theatre [geopolitics]; two, the reception and adoption of Europe within the member states by the party elites notwithstanding their internal political cleavages. Both developments are – so I argue – interconnected and shape the role of ‘symbolic politics’: the shared memories of internal and external conflict that influence the attitudes of political elites and at the same time is shaping the attitudes of European citizens as regards accepting the EU as a legitimate form of (transnational) political authority.

The descriptive analysis allows for the conclusion that ‘symbolic politics’ did play a role. Interestingly enough, these effects are primarily visible in the first stage of a country’s membership and tend to disappear over time. Hence in the sixties and seventies the ‘permissive consensus’ of European public has been positive within the 6 ‘founding’ nations and then decreases. However, the same pattern re-emerges after the later enlargements. At the same time we can also observe that the ‘shared’ memories of war are less pronounced (in part due to ageing of the electorates).

The second part of the story highlighted the discrepancy between the political elites and the involvement of the populations across Europe regarding the EU. The voters’ turnout fades as well as the appreciation for the EU (what we label ‘permissive consensus’). National politics remain the focus for most people and in particular the net loss in terms for EU revenues appears to be related to this. However parties and their elites (the leading echelons) are – at least in their programmes – quite positive on European integration and the EU. We think that this points to growing gap between the political elites and the people they represent. This ‘gap’ may well grow in the near future in view of the further enlargements that have taken place since 2007: from 15
members the EU has grown to 27 members. This fact should also be considered in the light of this analysis. More likely than not the extended EU will develop larger redistributive policies in favour of the new members states in central and Eastern Europe. If this is the case then the net loss for the 15 ‘older’ members will increase and with it the political tensions in domestic politics. In particular where the ‘Eurosceptic’ parties are electorally gaining weight of late.

References: