
Media Coverage on European Governance

Exploring the European Public Sphere in National Quality Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

■ The conditions for the emergence of a European mediated public sphere are tested in this article by analysing news coverage of European governance and policy-making during the year 2000. The sample includes 11 daily newspapers from six EU member states. On the basis of a systematic content analysis, three types of news can be distinguished: first, European news characterized by the shared meaning of European events and issues; second, Europeanized news characterized by the secondary impact of European events and issues on national news coverage; and third, national news on domestic events and issues characterized by evolving forms of European monitoring and rhetorics. By unfolding and comparing these three cases, the article argues that a European public sphere has come into existence and that it has evolved through the mutual observation of institutional actors and their audiences with reference to issues and events of common relevance and through the parallel development of communicative styles and discourses. ■

Key Words European governance, European integration, European media, European public communication, European public sphere

Mapping the news geography of European politics

Investigations into the social and normative foundations of European integration tend to be based on the widespread assumption of a deficit of

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European Journal of Communication Copyright © 2004 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi) www.sagepublications.com, Vol 19(3): 291–319. [10.1177/0267323104045257]

communication and understanding among Europeans (Cederman and Kraus, forthcoming; Weiler, 1999: 349–52). The public sphere deficit, translated into a public communication deficit, has basically two implications. First, in quantitative terms, there is too little public communication in Europe. Second, in qualitative terms, public communication in Europe lacks the basic understanding and agreement that distinguishes a political community and marks its competence for democracy.

The primary purpose of this article is to test the quantitative assumptions that there is a deficit in public communication in Europe. In doing so, the European public sphere is analysed as an empirical artefact and not as a normative projection. The question of what a European public sphere *should* look like in order to work in a proper democratic way is not discussed. Instead, data are provided on how much, and what kind of, communication actually takes place in the public sphere. The empirical question is simple: who communicates, when and about what in Europe?

There are two analytical elements in this type of public sphere: the visibility of communication and the connectivity of communication within a given (but changeable) communicative context (which can be institutionally circumscribed, as is the case in the EU).¹ The visibility of communication is the necessary precondition of the public sphere: it denotes that European media and the public observe communication with reference to European politics. The connectivity of communication is the minimal requirement of the European public sphere: it denotes that European media and the public observe communication with reference to the same political issues. These observations take place reciprocally, that is with a specific possibility to be continued by the relevant others (those who are addressed by the communication).²

To make our analytical approach more explicit, the European public sphere can be conceived as a map, illustrating the geography of the political Europe. For most of us, the landscape to which this map refers is still a largely unknown territory. Our research is planned as an explorative journey over one year (2000) through this landscape of political communication about Europe. ‘Quality newspapers’ are the particular vehicle we have chosen for this journey.³ It is important to keep in mind that this choice entails two major biases. First, the view of the political landscape of Europe looks different through the windscreen of the quality press than, let’s say, the view through the windscreen of the tabloid press or television.⁴ Different media do not always travel along the same roads (as the assumption of a unitary national public sphere

seems to suggest). Instead, there are different ways to explore the political landscape, which also open the way to different panoramas of Europe.

The second bias entails the selection of political communication as the general point of reference in the European landscape. We are aware of the fact that there are many other ways of mapping the European landscape, e.g. by choosing cultural or economic communication. We have chosen political communication for two reasons: First, because it refers to *institutions* that bind actors to rules and procedures of decision-making. Second, because it refers to the *collectivity* of those *collective* actors who prepare *collective* decisions and those who are affected by it. The political public sphere is precisely this space of visible communication between collective decision-making actors and their publics. Accordingly, European political communication is loosely defined as any form of communication which refers to European governance in the wide sense, expressing consensus or dissent with regard to particular issues and debates in a European decision-making context.

The issues and debates that are selected for communication by the media constitute the road network that is needed for this mapping exercise of the European political landscape. We do not participate actively in these debates but only follow the tracks that have been left behind by the newspapers. These tracks can run across different paths, or they can stick to one path: Individual European newspapers can pursue their own way alone, or they can decide to go on a joint trip with others for a certain period.

The research clarifies that the European public sphere is simultaneously a form and a process of mapping the political landscape of Europe. The focal points of communication that structure the political landscape are already well established. These agglomerations are known as national public spheres. The map indicates also the roads of communication connecting these single agglomerations. This intermediate road network has different constructors. Most important, the channelling of the flows of communication is achieved by the emergence of a shared infrastructure of issues, which are partly predetermined by European treaties and partly follow the decision-making paths of European political institutions. In addition, private streets can be constructed by other (non-institutional) actors who set the agenda for their own issues of relevance. Our analysis is focused on three main questions. First, who is using these interconnections between the different agglomerations on the map, and to what extent are they using them? Second, how heavy is the flow of traffic? And third, what is the time schedule for the journey? It will become clear that the European road network is not only used by one vehicle with a

given destination but by different vehicles with changing and often unknown destinations. This does not exclude the possibility of regulating the traffic on these roads and of using the cartography to plan joint trips to common destinations (in the sense of facilitating a kind of stable discursive interaction, see Risse, 2002; van de Steeg, 2003).

To avoid misunderstandings, the map that is drawn should not be taken to include the whole territory of political Europe. Furthermore, this article does not provide a quality test of newspaper performance in covering European governance; nor should it be read as a lamentation about the malfunctions of national media or as a manifesto to tell them how to do things better. Instead, the simple purpose of the article is to investigate the patterns of national newspaper coverage regarding the EU (and a broader Europe). The most basic hypothesis is that newspaper communication about Europe is structured. The more sophisticated hypothesis is that there is a specific constellation of divergent and convergent patterns of European newspaper communication which indicate the properties of a European media public sphere. The empirical task ahead of us is thus to describe such patterns and their diverging or converging effects.

Measuring the relationship between governance, the media and the public sphere in the EU

A public sphere is not visible at first sight. The effects of communication that takes place within the public sphere are empirically measurable. We talk of a European public sphere whenever and wherever we can identify an institutional setting where public communication between particular communicators, the media and the public is mediated (Trenz, 2002).

The minimal requirement of such a public sphere is that communication is structured. These structuring effects of public communication are measured in terms of the public resonance it creates. The public resonance has three distinct characteristics. First, it mirrors the regularity of actors, events and issues in a transnational environment; second, it can be heard by an external and undetermined audience; and third, it constitutes a situation of mutual observation between the institutionalized actors and their audiences. As is expected, the public resonance of communication creates specific reactions (or expectations) on each side thus determining the form and content of the continuing communication (Eder and Trenz, 2003).

More specifically, we distinguish between the absolute degree of resonance and the degree of reciprocal resonance of European political

communication in the media (Tobler, 2002). The former is a purely quantitative indicator which measures the percentage of European political communication in relation to other forms of political communication in the newspaper, whereas the latter is a qualitative indicator which measures the degree of convergence and synchronicity of communication between the different media.⁵

Both indicators correlate with the theoretical model of the public sphere developed earlier in the article. Absolute resonance is an indication of the visibility of European political communication. Reciprocal resonance is an indication of the connectivity of European political communication. The former can be regarded as the necessary precondition, the latter as the qualifying condition for the existence of a European public sphere. The structuration of political communication about Europe across different newspapers could thus be reduced to single key variables that measure the basic features of political news articles (length of article, section, author, agenda-setter, kind of action that led to agenda-setting, level of action, primary and secondary issues, scope of issue, frames of reference). The distinguishing marks for each single variable were defined in a code book and assigned nominal values that could be entered into a computerized data sheet (using SPSS statistical data processing).

This quantitative content analysis design helped avoid the problems of reliability that are typical of cross-country media studies. All coding was done within one single research team of trained junior researchers with respective language capacities.⁶ Reliability tests that were conducted in the initial phase of the coding process helped to sharpen the operational definitions of the single variables as laid down in the code book.⁷ The reliability was further increased in team codings until a sufficiently high degree of homogeneity of coding practice could be guaranteed.⁸

Empirical findings

Forms of European political communication

The key word strategy of data selection which has been applied for the purpose of this research is as inclusive and encompassing as possible.⁹ In contrast to other media research, the sampling of the articles is not restricted by qualitative criteria. Articles on political news are selected independently of the length and depth in which they discuss European contents.¹⁰ A classificatory scheme which encompasses the whole range of

European political communication to be found in the media will not be developed until afterwards. The classification we propose distinguishes between three types of newspaper articles which take up or promote various forms of European political communication:

European articles European articles discuss European topics as dominant issues. They are the most relevant indicator for the visibility of Europe in the national media and for the particular attention that is paid to European issues. European topical articles amount to between about 40 percent (in Italy, GB and France) and 50 percent (Germany, Austria and Spain) of the total sample.¹¹ In this way, they give clear evidence of the broad interest of all national quality papers in European news coverage. Articles dealing with European issues are the mirror through which the national public can follow the policy and decision-making agenda of the EU. The process of selecting and presenting European news does not necessarily lead to convergence of the national media agendas and debates but, at least, assures a minimum degree of information about the EU policy process and constitutes a background reality framing a political world that is known and shared among Europeans.

Europeanized articles Europeanized articles discuss national topics as dominant issues with reference to one or several European subissues. They amount to about one-fifth of the total sample. Europeanized articles demonstrate that European news coverage is not sufficiently analysed by referring only to European topical articles. Quite often, European issues enter the national media sphere through the backdoor and hide behind national news. In this way, Europeanized articles give evidence of a trend towards the domestication of European issues. This trend is slightly more pronounced in Italian and British newspapers. Particular issues, such as the euro, Eastern enlargement or competition policies are most likely to be taken up and reframed in domestic debates.

Articles with a European referential frame This last category of our sample includes articles which discuss non-European issues but make different rhetorical references to Europe. Such generalized use of the word 'Europe' refers to a shared world of meaning beyond the current events and issue agenda. The visibility of Europe is not only restricted to common issues and debates among the Europeans. In addition, we find a widespread rhetorical use of Europe which penetrates national newspapers through general references, comparative statements, the simple naming of European events, actors and institutions or the reference to European law.

Articles with a European referential frame amount to about one-third of the total sample. Italian, French and Spanish journalists make use of this rhetorical style more often than their colleagues in northern European countries.¹²

How much European political communication have we found?

One of the most striking results of our survey is that there is already a considerable degree of European political communication to be found in the quality press of the selected EU member states. The sample that results from our key word research indicates that European political communication forms a part of approximately 35.2 percent (in the German *FAZ* up to 55 percent) of all the political news articles in the individual newspapers (Table 1). In detail, we find an average of 7.8 European articles, 2.8 Europeanized articles and 7.3 articles with a European referential frame in each edition of a European quality paper. By simply adding these figures we must concede an astonishingly high level of Europeanization of national newspapers, which contradicts all previous findings on the scarce visibility of Europe in the media.¹³

Taking a closer look at the quantitative distribution of European and Europeanized news articles, some newspapers appear to be more specialized in European news coverage than others. In absolute numbers, the German *FAZ* has around five times more European news articles than the Italian *La Repubblica*. Newspapers also put different focuses on European governance. German newspapers are particularly devoted to economic news coverage, whereas Italian and French newspapers are more inclined to present political news.

The amount and the density of European political communication within the geographic area of the EU is also clearly demarcated from the outside. As revealed by our control sample, the *New York Times* makes three times fewer references to European political issues and uses six times less European rhetoric than the European newspapers do on average.

In spite of all country-specific and newspaper-specific differences, our data provide a positive indicator for the absolute degree of resonance of European political communication to be found in the national media. All newspapers examined fulfil the necessary conditions we postulated earlier for the existence of a European public sphere. What we do not know yet is whether and how this public resonance is reciprocally structured.

Table 1 European news coverage: quantitative distribution ($N = 2525$)

	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>SZ</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Presse</i>	<i>Le Monde</i>	<i>Libération</i>	<i>El País</i>	<i>Repubblica</i>	<i>La Stampa</i>	<i>NY Times^a</i>
Average political articles/day	59.8	52.2	36.4	41.2	56.3	34.8	56	50.2	62.2	52	40.6	48.8
a) Articles on European news (total coded Jan.–Dec. 2000)												
Total coded	438	279	122	143	352	232	289	131	235	121	160	27
Average/day	15.1	9.6	4.2	4.9	12.1	8	10	4.6	8.1	4.2	5.5	2.8
% of average/day political news articles	25.6	18.4	11.6	12	21.6	23.1	17.8	9	13	8	13.6	5.7
b) Articles on Europeanized news (total coded Jan.–Dec. 2000)												
Total coded	177	66	109	37	86	43	101	76	112	46	52	9
Average/day	6.1	2.2	3.8	1.3	3	1.5	3.5	2.6	3.9	1.6	1.8	0.9
% of average/day political news articles	10.2	4.2	10.3	3.1	5.3	4.3	6.2	5.2	6.2	3	4.5	1.9
c) Articles with European rhetoric (total coded Sept.–Dec. 2000)												
Total coded	114	90	35	58	106	32	104	47	69	75	46	10
Average/day	11.8	9.3	3.6	6	11	3.3	10.7	4.9	7.1	7.8	4.8	1
% of average/day political news articles	19.9	17.8	9.9	9.8	19.5	9.5	19.1	9.7	11.4	15	11.8	2
Total news articles/day (a + b + c)	33	21.1	11.6	14.6	26.1	12.8	24.2	12.1	19.1	13.6	12.1	3.7
% of average/day political news articles	55.2	40.4	31.9	29.6	46.4	33.8	43.2	24.1	30.7	26.1	29.8	9.6

^a Total coded Sept.–Dec. 2000.

The constellation of actors

Authors of the articles European quality newspapers have a high editorial autonomy in selecting and shaping articles on European news. Most of the articles are written by the leading political journalists of the relevant newspapers themselves. External authorship, e.g. in the form of guest comments, or the reliance on news agencies as the source of information are rather exceptional. Among the authors of European articles, the role of the EU correspondents is salient. The newspapers examined employ between one (*La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*) and 11 (*FAZ*) permanent correspondents in Brussels. EU correspondents write around one-third of the European news articles that appear in the national newspapers. This proportion is even higher with regard to particular issues and debates, which often fall under the competence of one single correspondent. This unbalanced author relationship should be a warning for media analysts who expect a national bias or a left/right bias with regard to particular debates on European issues. Instead of the expected outcome, they often measure involuntarily an author bias which cannot be representative for the whole country or newspaper under examination.

The competence of the editorial board, and in particular of the EU correspondents, of the quality newspapers lies not only in transmitting European news and information from the political arena of the EU to the audience but also in doing their own investigations and promoting European debates. Journalists should be viewed as participants rather than passive mediators of European debates. This expectation can be further corroborated by existing qualitative case studies on the role and self-understanding of EU correspondents, who are not nationalistic chauvinists but are in most cases committed to the European movement and quite often even proponents for the European cause (Meyer, 2000; Trenz and Münzing, 2003).

Agenda-setters The coding for agenda-setters only includes those kind of actors who are explicitly mentioned and highlighted as the initiator of the news story, i.e. those who have been successful in placing the issue in the media. Notably, the principal initiator is not equivalent to the principal agent of the news story. This quantitative survey of European political communication also does not analyse interdiscursive processes between actors who appear as speakers and addressees in the different newspapers. We can only make comparative statements about the kinds of actors who are successful in media agenda-setting and about the forms of action that lead to media agenda-setting regarding European issues.¹⁴

In approximately 25 percent of all articles, no agenda-setter can be identified precisely.

Again, we have good news for those who doubt the communicative capacities of European supranational institutions. In European news agenda-setting, European actors account for over 50 percent of all articles (Figure 1). Governments remain the principal agenda-setters only if one considers their dual role as national and European actor. Among the supranational institutions, the European Commission is a stronger agenda-setter than the Council of Ministers. The European Central Bank has also established itself firmly as a new actor in the European arena in the year 2000.¹⁵ Other EU agenda-setters appear, above all, in their role as foreign policy actors (for example, the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, the Special Representatives in former Yugoslavia and Kosovo and the Committee of Wise Men which deliberated the sanctions against Austria).

Apart from indicating who the successful actors were, the data also allow us to draw conclusions about unsuccessful strategies of agenda-setting. The European Parliament is certainly the most prominent actor among those highly underrepresented in agenda-setting. Also national parliaments are not first among agenda-setters of European issues. There

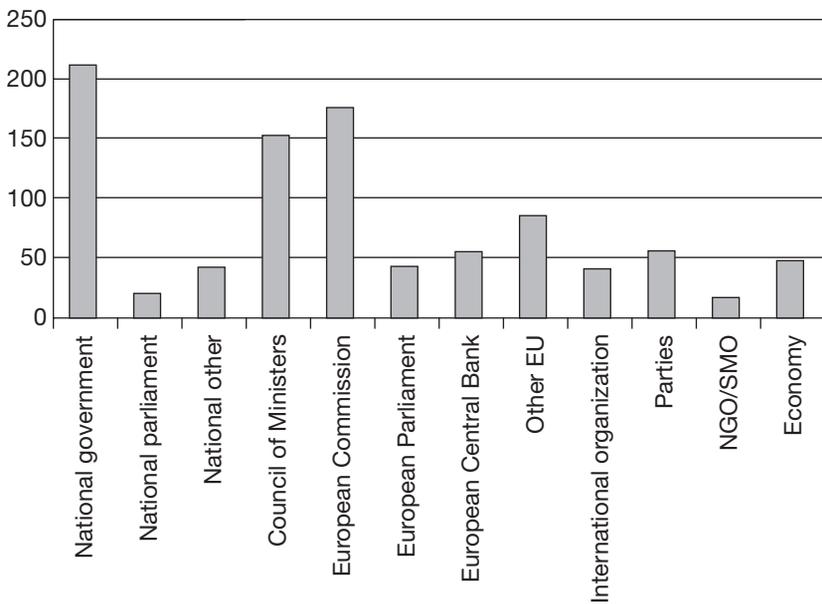


Figure 1 Agenda-setting of articles on European news

are a number of reasons for this low salience of parliamentary actors: the lack of competencies in promoting and monitoring European policies, the absence of centralized media policies, the low impact and visibility of European parliamentary debates, no collective representation or voice, and the very few VIPs among the parliamentarians.

Finally, the remarkable absence of non-institutional, non-statal actors – be it on the transnational, national or local level – is striking. Economic actors are more likely to set the media agenda for European issues than representatives of political parties or trade unions. There is a clear media bias towards institutional and governmental actors and away from civil society. Although NGOs and civic associations have become progressively included in European governance and quite often play a decisive role in EU policy deliberation and decision-making, this activity is not documented in news coverage.

There are only slight differences in the modes of agenda-setting among the countries and newspapers under examination. Italian and British newspapers mostly rely on their own governments as informants of European articles. The French presidency of the second half of the year 2000 led to intensified EU news coverage in the French media (a high percentage of intergovernmental agenda-setting by the EU Council).

The agenda-setting reflects the multi-level dynamics of European politics as well. About half of the total media agenda-setters are European players, one-third are national players and only 5 percent are regional and local players. The actions that lead to agenda-setting are rather conventional. The media reflect institutional action that accompanies the decision-making process and rely on verbal statements and official declarations by professional European actors and experts. According to our research, campaigning events or outside protest events that lead to media agenda-setting are all but absent.

Analysing the conditions for agenda-setting of European articles helps specify the degree of absolute resonance that has been introduced – and thus gives us indicators for the emergence of a European public sphere. A European resonance structure with regard to agenda-setting emerges as soon as the same actors resonate within different media arenas. This is clearly the case with regard to communitarian actors, who regularly produce European-wide resonance and make up about 55 percent of all agenda-setters of European news articles. Single governmental actors not only play a role in the agenda-setting in their own countries, but sometimes also jump into foreign media arenas: 22 percent of all European news articles are triggered by ‘national’ governments, and 12 percent of all European news articles are triggered by ‘foreign’

Table 2 Distribution of news according to policy fields (percentage)

	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>SZ</i>	<i>Gu</i>	<i>Ti</i>	<i>Sta</i>	<i>Pr</i>	<i>EP</i>	<i>LM</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Stp</i>	<i>Re</i>
Constitutional affairs	6.8	4.5	18.0	15.4	11.7	4.7	8.5	9.7	8.4	10.0	6.6
Institutional affairs	16.6	19.7	20.5	16.1	30.8	45.7	16.2	14.5	22.1	25.0	17.4
Monetary policy	13.5	10.0	1.6	9.8	6.3	2.6	8.1	13.1	7.6	13.1	8.3
Market/competition	30.3	31.2	26.2	35.7	8.8	14.7	17.0	20.1	18.3	19.4	28.1
Employment/social policy	2.7	0.7	0	3.5	1.4	1.3	3.8	7.3	3.0	1.9	2.5
Family/women, etc.	0.2	1.1	0.8	0	0.8	0	1.3	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.6
Health and consumer	2.3	4.7	4.9	2.8	3.7	2.6	4.2	3.5	5.3	4.4	7.4
Agrarian policy	1.1	1.4	1.6	0.7	1.4	0.9	2.1	1.4	0.8	1.2	1.6
Science and technology	2.3	2.9	0	0	0.3	0.4	3.4	2.4	4.6	2.5	1.6
Education/culture/sport	0.4	0.4	1.6	0.7	0.3	0.4	2.6	1.4	2.3	0	0.8
Traffic/infrastructure	2.3	3.2	2.5	0	7.7	4.3	5.1	7.9	6.1	6.3	9.1
Environment	2.7	2.1	2.5	1.4	2.8	1.3	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.9	0
Regional policy	0.2	0.7	0	0	1.1	0	1.3	0.3	0.8	0	0.8
Justice and home affairs	2.5	2.5	4.9	4.2	3.4	3.9	8.9	4.5	8.4	3.7	3.3
Foreign/security policy	15.1	15.5	13.9	9.8	19.1	16.8	14.5	11	8.4	7.5	9.9

(European) governments, e.g. Chirac in German newspapers. What we still have not shown, however, is whether this absolute resonance produced by particular actors is also converted into reciprocal resonance, i.e. into a convergence of issues and debates.

Issues of European communication

The thematic ordering of the geography of European news has been the principal concern of this quantitative survey of European news coverage. Our coding allows a qualification of newspaper communication based on two aspects: first, the general policy fields in which debates are located and second, the particular issues which are debated in each single article.

Policy fields Our classification of policy fields uses the organigram of the EU Commission and its division of competencies in different directorate generals to allocate issues and debates to different policy sectors (Table 2). In addition, 'constitutional affairs' and 'institutional affairs' are distinguished from each other: the former including all issues and debates which discuss the constitution of Europe as a whole, its past and future, its identity, values or interests; the latter including all issues related to problems of European governance, distribution of power and competencies and projects of institutional reform.

From a comparative perspective, the distribution of issues among the various policy fields in the individual newspapers points towards convergence. Economic news coverage has the highest convergence, but also other fields are relevant. In addition we find highly concentrated news coverage about questions of institutional reform, about general aspects of European governance and about common foreign policy. However, the high degree of attention to Europe in general is hampered by the low degree of specialization in order to address the particularity of the single policy sectors. Notably, none of the newspapers guarantees full coverage of administrative activities within the principal communitarian policy fields (Common Agricultural Policy [CAP], regional funds, social policy, environmental policy, justice and home affairs [JHA]). Nevertheless, newspapers prefer news coverage about big events and debates that mark the future of European integration, and not about the fastidious details of every single directorate general or the long drawn-out and boring decision-making processes.

Mean variation of issues The quality press has developed a common practice of making use of multiple points of reference and information

Table 3 Most frequent issues appearing in newspapers in 2000 (European and Europeanized news articles) ($N = 3439$)

	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>SZ</i>	<i>Ti</i>	<i>Gu</i>	<i>LM</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>EP</i>	<i>Pr</i>	<i>Sta</i>	<i>Re</i>	<i>Stp</i>
Euro	31	66	45	37	47	12	33	14	16	28	29
Haider	28	47	7	9	23	18	13	91	146	15	18
Institutional reform	22	32	11	19	23	9	27	24	24	9	14
Eastern enlargement	26	58	6	7	13	1	10	37	58	5	9
ECB interest policy	19	45	5	10	9	5	10	3	10	3	12
Anti-trust regulations	20	20	5	13	6	12	9	9	5	2	4
Former Yugoslavia	14	20	2	8	12	4	12	12	12	1	4
BSE	12	10	5	2	8	10	6	7	11	7	4
Partisan conflicts	8	12	4	1	4	2	8	6	23	9	4
Privatisation of Post, Telecom	9	16	4	6	4	6	12	5	5	3	–
Common defense policy	9	18	9	15	12	2	11	7	14	2	–

about the political landscape of Europe. The advantage of this practice is that newspapers explore a plurality of European issues and debates. The total of European news articles coded in all newspapers refers to 184 different issues. The mean variation of each single newspaper amounts to 76.6 different issues over the whole period examined. This means that in every third article a new issue is introduced. The major disadvantage of this selection practice is that the probability of issue convergence even between individual newspapers in one country decreases dramatically. The traffic on the European road network is not only heavy but frequently also highly unregulated, changing direction and making its way via different locations.

Converging issues While all newspapers have a high take-up rate of new issues and thematic areas, the journey also allows some longer breaks at particular spots where newspapers from different locations have the chance to meet and to coordinate their journey. Table 3 indicates a limited number of common topics which media concentrate on at a particular moment of time. The selection of these predominant themes is highly congruent with the major events of the EU policy agenda. This issue spectrum structures the visibility of political Europe in the form of reciprocal resonance in European political communication. It constitutes the common ground for the public perception of European integration and its relevance for the public. For the year 2000, major topics of reciprocal resonance discussed by all media were problems linked to the single currency, the debate on institutional reform and on the future of Europe, Eastern enlargement and the Haider debate.¹⁶

Converging issues help us to specify the conditions for reciprocal resonance of political communication in Europe. There is extensive coverage of a plethora of European issues in the national media. However, the media's attention to individual issues is unequally distributed. Reciprocal resonance expands on the basis of converging attention cycles in the media. In all newspapers examined, media coverage cyclically peaks around focusing events such as the Nizza summit, the formation of the new Austrian government or the euro referendum in Denmark. Throughout routine periods and with regard to routine issues the media's attention is considerably flattened. Media coverage further focuses on the 'big issues' of Europe, its common future and destiny. In-depth coverage of specific issues which reflect the daily deliberations, negotiations and administrative procedures of EU decision-making bodies remains ephemeral.

Diverging issues Within this all-European spectrum of issues, there are also significant differences among the individual newspapers concerning which particular issues and debates they highlight. For obvious reasons, national newspapers pick those issues that seem most relevant for them from the national perspective. Most often, these nationally specific issues depend on particular decisions that affect only one country (e.g. regional subsidies, competition policy). Sometimes, they also reflect a singular pattern of national politics that must be explained from the particular sociopolitical background of the relevant country. Such patterns of diverging relevance include the prominence of issues of terrorism and fishery in Spain, of relations to NATO in Britain or of atomic energy regulation in Eastern Europe in the press in Austria. However, the national agenda does not intervene in an unambiguous and unilateral way in the selection of European news. After all, the particularity of European debates in one country is as exceptional as the convergence of European debates among different countries. Besides, it is not clear whether these differences of emphasis are nationally specific or if they express ideological or editorial preferences of the particular newspaper.

Multi-level issues The multi-level structuring of issues is analysed by combining the level of initiative action (subjecthood) with the level of reaction and affectedness (objecthood) of an issue. Forty-four percent of all European articles in the sample are based on multi-level issues combining European subjecthood and national objecthood (or vice versa).¹⁷ Forty-two percent of all articles deal with one-dimensional European issues which combine subjecthood and objecthood on the supranational level (e.g. the Commission addresses the EP). The remaining 14 percent link the European with the international level of politics.

Multi-level issues can be taken as an indicator of the degree of domestication of European politics in the media. The domestic impact of Europe is an integral part of the way the issue is constructed and presented in the media. Typical domesticated European issues are competition policy, common currency policy, subsidies and privatization.

Non-issues In spite of the high speed, the frequent change of direction and the different destinations through which national media explore the political landscape of Europe, newspapers cannot be omnipresent. There are still many spots that remain untouched and, consequently, many issues which are not discussed at all by European newspapers. What then is the relation between such 'non-issues' and the European public sphere? Assuming that spotlighting one debate inevitably casts shadows on

others, 'non-issues' can be regarded as a structuring side effect of European political communication.¹⁸ 'Shared non-issues', i.e. the fact that some issues are systematically left out by all newspapers, refer to a particular kind of reciprocal resonance, which demarcates the non-visible terrain of Europe. They cannot tell us what kind of communication actually takes place within the European public sphere, but they are able to tell us what kind of selection procedures are applied by the single newspapers and what kind of news values underlie European news coverage. The invisible terrain of Europe is also highly relevant for institutional and non-institutional actors, who will adjust their communicative strategies according to what is debated and what is not debated in the media.

From a normative point of view, the existence of 'non-issues' certainly remains deplorable, since they include not only milk quotas and regulations concerning tractor drivers but also debates on a European constitution or the European democratic deficit. We must therefore recognize that even the quality press is still far from accomplishing the normative requirements that are needed to keep European politics transparent and accountable. Moreover, the simple fact that the European policy agenda and the media agenda differ should not be taken too seriously. Deviating media agendas, which from a normative point of view distort the reality of Europe, are also an indicator for the autonomy and self-organization of European media. Mediatizing European politics always implies selecting one's own content and thus constructing a different reality of the political Europe. However, if someone decides to criticize the existence of 'non-issues' in the media debates on Europe, they are always free to do so and thus have already taken the first step towards making them visible.

To conclude, our rather sketchy overview of the quantitative distribution of European issues suggests that there is a considerable degree of resonance of European affairs both in absolute and reciprocal terms to be found in national quality papers. We are well aware that this convergence of national news agendas does not automatically lead to the convergence of debates on Europe. 'Similarities in the choice of topics of the news stories do not necessarily mean that the event is reported similarly' (Semetko et al., 2000: 135). At this point we can only assume that converging issue agendas correlate with ongoing debates between EU actors, national actors, the media and their publics. In the following section, we examine more closely how such issues are turned into debates.

Interpreting European news

So far, this article has applied a rather minimalistic model with only two indicators (absolute resonance and reciprocal resonance) for the emergence of a European public sphere. For most authors, the mere quantity and the structuredness of public communication would not be sufficient. In addition, the European public sphere must undergo a quality test, facilitating not simply the visibility of actors and their contributions but, above all, their engagement in common discourse and understanding (Risse, 2002; van de Steeg, 2003). We agree that the simultaneity of communication about the same issues does not by itself define the criteria of a European public sphere (it is still possible that communication takes place in different arenas which ignore each other). We do not agree, however, that the necessary qualitative refinement must be narrowed to the rather exceptional and highly selective case of discursive interchange and/or understanding among the Europeans.¹⁹

For the specific purpose of this article, we tried to avoid normative statements about the necessary degree of synchronicity and simultaneity of debates and the depth of understanding needed in order to be able to speak of a European public sphere. Instead, we propose a redefinition of the qualitative criteria for the existence of a European public sphere as a specific case of reciprocal resonance. Reciprocal resonance is not limited to issues and debates but also extends to the 'thematic field', i.e. to the specific meanings, expectations and world views which are channelled through/conveyed by these debates.²⁰ In this sense, a European public sphere does not only observe *what* is communicated, but also *how* and *why* it is communicated. This 'reflexive view' can be taken by applying the dual code self/other which determines whether and why an issue is relevant for us (or for the other).²¹ When discussed from the perspectives of a participant and an observer at once, European issues are included in their own context of relevance and treated as 'home news'. From a perspective that does not consider their own role as a participant, but rather only that of an observer, European issues are not included in their own context of relevance and are transformed into 'foreign news'.

In the following, we analyse the question of whether newspapers apply a participant view on issues of European governance. First, we categorize the interpretative context in which European topics are discussed by the media. Second, we examine the general use of rhetoric that indicates the existence of a shared world of meaning beyond single debates.

Interpretative bias

European issues are coded along three patterns of interpretation.²² The first, interests, refers to the instrumental dimension; the second, values, refers to the normative dimension; and the third, identity, to the ethical-identitarian dimension of the shared world.²³ The distinction indicates a further three dimensions of reflexivity, which tell why an issue is relevant for us: because it touches our particular sphere of interests, because it touches a universal sphere of values or because it touches our collective identity.

As expected, the great bulk of European issues are coded in instrumental terms (85 percent, as compared to 38 percent in normative terms and 27 percent in identitarian terms with only minor differences between the newspapers and countries examined). Typical issues which are linked to interest negotiations among the Europeans are institutional reform, competition policy and the debate on the euro. There are only a few articles which refer to purely normative or identitarian framings (e.g. the 'Charter of Fundamental Rights' or the 'struggle for a European identity'). Instead, 45 percent of the articles make use of multiple framings, raising issues in the context of interests and/or values and/or identities. The 'Haider case', 'institutional reform' and 'Eastern enlargement' are issues which are predominantly framed in instrumental terms but regularly linked to normative questions or questions of collective identity. Normative framings are mainly used in news about European monitoring activities and about EU foreign relations with regard to European interventions in former Yugoslavia.²⁴ Typical identitarian issues either refer to the constitution of the self (Charter of Fundamental Rights, treaty reform, Eastern enlargement) or to the delimitation towards the outside (relationship between EU and Turkey, common security policy). Even purely economic issues such as 'monetary union' are regularly linked to debates on collective identity in all member states.

At this point it is not yet clear whether framings and, particularly, multiple framings with regard to European issues indicate a further dimension of conflict (e.g. the euro is purely economic but violates our identity) or a dimension of amplified consensus (e.g. the euro corresponds to our interests and expresses our identity). The evaluation of the newspapers' pro- or anti-European attitudes must be further pursued in qualitative case studies of single, trans-European debates. Here, we can draw on a number of recent comparative media surveys on the 'Haider debate' (Risse et al., 2003), on 'Eastern enlargement' (van de Steeg, 2003) and on the 'constitutional debate' (Trenz and Münzing, 2003) which tell

us that most articles are critical towards European governments and institutions, yet they have a positive slant towards European integration in general.²⁵ This pro-integrative attitude of the European quality press can be regarded as a key effect of reciprocal resonance of the European media.

European rhetoric

The following category refers to the form of Europeanization of political communication which penetrates national media aside from European or Europeanized news articles. Quite often, speakers and journalists in the media use references to Europe as a stylistic device for pushing their arguments. For the most part, these rhetorical devices go unnoticed, or, at best, help to increase the visibility of Europe.²⁶ In some specific cases, however, these rhetorical devices can take the form of reciprocal resonance which allows for the reflexivity and connectivity of political communication without going into the details of European issues and debates.

Such 'reflexive rhetoric' takes the form either of generalizing statements or comparative statements about Europe. A generalizing use is made by pointing to the 'unity' and commonness of a problem beyond the particularity and diversity of its elements: 'unemployment as a European problem', 'a tragedy with European dimensions'. In some specific cases, 'Europe' becomes also a telos for collective action: 'Entrare in Europa' has become a slogan to call for collective efforts in Italy. The opposite fear of 'staying out of Europe' has become a synonym of backwardness and a warning against possible deviants (e.g. Bossi). Comparative statements refer to the effects of standardization which are linked to Europe: 'Our national achievements in education are far behind European standards.' What these different cases represent is the impact of 'European models of appropriateness' which direct national and sub-national actors on how to measure and contextualize particular policy outcomes and to redefine political goals and interests.

According to Cram (2001) these spreading rhetorics about Europe in different political contexts can be identified as a form of 'banal Europeanism'. Europe becomes a taken-for-granted reality. To make rhetorical references to Europe is no longer exceptional but enters the routine way of making sense of the world in everyday political talk. Unfortunately, we lack a comparative time series of data to decide whether this kind of 'rhetoric reflexivity' is increasing as an effect of European integration or not. Nevertheless, we can observe that this kind of European rhetoric already constitutes an important part of the total of

political communication in all member states. There is no political issue that cannot be linked to European rhetoric. This gives evidence of the latency of Europe, which, again, becomes the precondition for making it manifest in the form of issues and debates whenever considered necessary.

The European media sphere reviewed

On the basis of these quantitative data on extensive newspaper coverage about Europe, it is difficult to uphold the thesis of a persistent communication deficit of the EU. Instead, what we describe is the differentiation of a highly Europeanized media subsystem constituted by quality newspapers which are penetrated by the effects of European resonance. Resonance has been measured, first, in quantitative terms as the total share of European political communication in the national media: one out of three political articles in a European quality paper makes political reference to Europe, one out of five reports directly about at least one European issue. Second, the structuring of resonance has been measured with regard to the convergence of issues and the reciprocity of communication: there is a common universe of issues and debates which determines the visibility of the political Europe. The connectivity of issues does not translate into issue cycles which guarantee permanent debate but rather into 'communicative accumulations' (Tobler, 2002) which focus around particular events at a particular moment in time. Third, the structuring of resonance has been measured in terms of interpretative frames and the spread of rhetorical patterns. There is a common universe of meaning that is not only applied to issues but also used rhetorically. The multiple framing of issues gives further evidence for potential conflicts and debates to be carried out between the national media.

There is good news to end with: there is a distinct media public sphere in Europe within the quality press's specific organizational sector. Both the absolute resonance of political communication about Europe as well as the reciprocity of meaning and interpretations describe the structuring effects of a European public sphere. Europe is hidden and overt, it is real and imagined, it is banal and significant; it can express overall consensus or raise debates and conflict. We thus get a comprehensive picture of the unifying strengths of the Europeanization of national quality papers. Europeanization is promoted by several intervening factors that explain a certain degree of convergence of national news agendas: the socializing effects of European journalists (Meyer,

2000), the standardization of the modes of operation of the quality press, the cultural alignment of the underlying news values, the impact of European actors and institutions and the structuring effects of the public resonance of common events as well as of the processes of policy change at the European level.

Our empirical findings have contributed to capturing quantitatively the extent to which these Europeanizing effects can be expected to unfold. It should be further mentioned that these high degrees of absolute and reciprocal resonance of European political communications in the quality press do not necessarily imply that newspapers guarantee the full coverage and transparency of European politics. We agree with Norris (2000) and Gerhards (2000) that most European issues still receive minimal coverage in the news media. It is not clear, however, why this selection process should differ substantially from the selection of domestic news as long as single issues are filtered out and debated in the media.

Are quality newspapers an exceptional case? The question to be posed is rather: why should they not be exceptional? One of the lessons learned is that we should dismiss the idea of a unitary national media sphere. There is a high and growing degree of differentiation and specialization of the national media landscape. The assumption that national quality papers, regional newspapers and the tabloid press represent one unified national media system cannot be upheld as easily today as say 30 years ago at the peak of public service media systems. For sure, we can still find many national peculiarities just as we can find convergence between different media segments. The tabloid press in Germany, for instance, might be more inclined towards observing British tabloids (and copying their news) than German quality papers. In the same way, we claim to describe the emergence of a unified European media system with regard to the specific organizational sector of the quality press. It is a self-regulating and largely autonomous system that is specialized in observing and selecting European political communication and that applies similar standards and selection procedures to build political news from it. Taking into account the sectional differentiation and self-organization of mass media communication (Luhmann, 1996) helps avoid falling foul of a triple fallacy when conceptualizing the relationship between the media and the public sphere in Europe:

1. The media are neither a rational actor nor the sphere for rational discourse. They do not select news according to the hierarchy of preferences which leads to stable results in the form of political news standardization. Our findings reveal the existence of

reciprocal resonance with regard to the quality standards of news selection and framing. However, it cannot be turned into a prediction about the specific selection of news of one single newspaper at one specific moment of time. Reciprocal resonance is defined here as a vision of what is significant and what is insignificant with regard to the universe of political communication about Europe. At best, this can guarantee a certain degree of uniformity in the political news agenda. One could say that European newspapers are guided by underlying maps of a similar scale to travel through the political landscape of Europe. But this does not turn them automatically into travelling companions who share the same suitcase on their trip towards a common destination.

2. The media are not the mirror of the political system. Newspapers design their own maps of the political landscape and use different scales from political actors. By comparing the policy agenda of the EU and the media agenda, we can only expect partial convergence. EU agricultural policy, for instance, has practically no chance of reaching the threshold of media attention. The constitutional debate of the EU is only a political and intellectual debate, with only limited access to the media.
3. The media are not the mirror of the nation. The political landscape that is mapped by the newspapers can be opened towards different horizons. They may have a predominantly national readership, but this readership does not exist as a collectivity to be called a national public or even a demos. Normally, quality newspapers do not bother about national publics. Instead, they address their own readers and are well aware of the fine distinctions that separate *FAZ* readers from *SZ* readers. Likewise, publics often exist only with regard to specific issues and might change with regard to others.

What this article has ultimately demonstrated is the existence of a transnational resonance of political communication in Europe that is organized around particular actors and institutions, a specialized media sector and an unknown number of attentive publics. The effects of this kind of European resonance on the restructuring of political spaces and the allocation of actors and different publics within it are not yet entirely understood. Certainly, it has still to be discussed whether the degree of visibility and connectivity of political communication in Europe is sufficient proof for proclaiming the existence of a European public sphere

sui generis. However thorny this debate might be, it should not repeat the triple fallacy of the national public sphere which has just been deconstructed.

Notes

A first draft of this article was presented at the eighth international conference of the European Union Studies Association on 28 March 2003 in Nashville. I would like to thank Klaus Eder, Cornelia Dereje, Cathleen Kantner, Thomas Risse, Vivien A. Schmidt, Marianne van de Steeg, Melisa Salazar and two anonymous reviewers for their comments.

1. The basic reference for this minimalistic model is Niklas Luhmann (1996) although he has never fully developed his theory of the public sphere. For a synthesis and elaboration of the system-theoretical approach towards *politische Öffentlichkeit* see instead Marcinkowski (2002).
2. Note that this conception does not imply any form of discursive interchange according to the scheme of answer/reply which is attributed to particular actors. It is not discourse that counts here but flows of communication, which are transmitted or absorbed from one arena to the other. Public communication is always contingent communication, which goes beyond the rationale of consensus and mutual understanding. In similar terms, even Jürgen Habermas seems to dismiss the idea of discursivity as a condition for the European public sphere when he speaks of the 'osmotic absorption of the different contributions between the different national arenas in a network-like arrangement' (Habermas, 2001: 120).
3. This empirical research is based on a double selective sampling and coding procedure of the following newspapers: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) (Germany), *Le Monde* (LM), *Libération* (Li) (France), *The Guardian* (Gu), *The Times* (Ti) (UK), *La Repubblica* (Re), *La Stampa* (Stp) (Italy), *Die Presse* (Pr), *Der Standard* (Sta) (Austria) and *El País* (Spain). In addition, a control sample of the *New York Times* (USA) is included that allows us to delimit the EU as a geographical space from the outside. Our sampling includes the full European or Europeanized political news coverage of every third day (assuming a five-day week from Tuesday to Saturday). Our coding selects every third article of the relevant days.
4. According to recent Eurobarometer data, television has become the primary source of political information about Europe, closely followed by newspapers (Commission of the European Communities, 2002). It can be safely assumed, however, that television news agendas and newspaper news agendas develop in close interchange and not separately.
5. Tobler (2002: 72) restricts the structuring effects of reciprocal resonance to the case of a communicative exchange between actors. The measuring of reciprocal resonance would then imply a similar procedure to the one proposed by van de Steeg (2003), who develops several indicators for direct

- or virtual contact between actors of different origins (spreading public opinion through the appearances, statements and quotations of outside actors in the national arena, or inclusion of the 'other' under a collective identity). This is an appropriate but narrow view of the structuring effects of reciprocal resonance. From our view, it is not actors who resonate but communication and the particular meanings and expectations linked to it.
6. The choice of the countries corresponds to the multilingual capacities of the coding team. The author was able to supervise coding in all languages. Variances of meaning and interpretation across languages could be avoided by referring to purely quantitative measurements of the single variables.
 7. The code book is available on request from the author.
 8. A two-stage reliability test applies: first, with regard to the decision on the applicability of the coding scheme (the decision whether an article was identified as containing political communication about Europe or not). Here, the choices of the coders match by approximately 90 percent. In a second stage, the reliability test refers to the application of the coding scheme to each single variable. Here, the intercoder reliability varies between 60 percent and almost 100 percent. The largest variance of coding practice occurred with regard to the exact determination of topics according to an extensive issue list that encompassed 183 different items. Here, variation was accepted for strategic reasons with the aim of developing a classificatory scheme that encompasses the whole range of political communication about Europe. The control of inconsistent coding practice could be reinstalled afterwards by aggregating single issues to larger policy fields (e.g. 'monetary policy' encompasses the three issues 'interest policies', 'devaluation of the Euro' and 'central bank policy').
 9. The key words that are used for the sampling of electronic media resources are: 'Europe', 'European', 'EU', 'Brussels' and all kinds of possible combinations in the single languages.
 10. The major disadvantage of this unwieldy procedure of data selection is its pure quantity. The total of about 45,000 news articles can only be handled by applying further selection procedures which restrict the prognostic value of the single variables. Its major advantage is that it helps avoid any biased view on selected aspects of public communication in Europe.
 11. The total sample results from the double selection procedure and comprises 4225 coded articles for the whole year 2000.
 12. This might reflect two distinct 'Mediterranean' and 'Germanic' journalistic cultures in Europe (Kriesi, 2001: 45).
 13. Gerhards (2000: 294), who refers to data provided by Kepplinger (1998), concedes only 6.9 percent Europeanization of German quality papers with regard to European primary news. He further assumes that Europeanization might take place instead with regard to secondary issues in the newspaper article. Our own results prove, however, that the average proportion of Europeanized articles is considerably lower.

14. In accurate theoretical terms, this research does not analyse processes of 'agenda-building' (i.e. actors' contributions for building news stories) or processes of 'agenda-setting' (i.e. the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda). This research only considers potential 'agenda-setters', those who are presumably successful in setting the public agenda of an issue (for a systematic differentiation, see Strydom, 1993).
15. This is particularly true if one considers that the European Central Bank is rather hesitant in calling too much media attention to itself.
16. Missing values in Table 3 do not necessarily mean that issues are not discussed at all in the respective newspaper. The high mean variation of issues corresponds with a very low accumulation rate which is even more restricted by our selection procedures which de facto select only every ninth European article.
17. In Europeanized articles, by contrast, we find an even higher rate: 55 percent deal with multi-level issues. All newspapers examined make frequent use of this common practice of subordinating European to domestic debates.
18. To speak of 'non-issues' only makes sense in relation to the political agenda of the EU, i.e. by assuming that these issues exist somewhere and for someone and that the roads towards them could feasibly be constructed.
19. Both criteria may possibly define the performance of a democratic public sphere. But this should not narrow our empirical view, because other forms of public communication may still have important structuring effects on promoting EU integration and governance. For a systematic elaboration of this argument see Eder and Kantner (2002).
20. This is what neoinstitutionalists mean when they talk of the impact of world models in framing national and subnational politics (Meyer et al., 1997). We can safely assume that European integration strongly supports such processes of cultural isomorphism (for empirical examples see Kohler-Koch, 2000; Mazey and Richardson, 1997).
21. News articles in different European media will tell us at the same time what kind of relevance the referendum on the euro in Denmark has for Danish politics (relevance to the other). News articles in different European media can also stress at the same time the impact of the Danish referendum on European and domestic affairs (relevance for us).
22. Here, we only consider the explicit interpretative references made by single actors or the author of the article with regard to a particular issue, independent of the positive or negative connotations implied. (For example, the two sentences 'the euro is a threat to the general welfare of Europe' or 'the euro is a benefit to the general welfare of Europe' are both coded as corresponding to the interest dimension. They open a shared discursive universe in which the possible benefits and interests with regard to the common currency can be debated.) The code book further lists single key words that help the coder to assign the different interpretative dimensions.

23. For the distinction between instrumental, normative (universalistic) and ethical (particularistic-identitarian) argumentation, see Habermas (1992: 139).
24. This could become a clear distinctive mark of the EU, which, in contrast to nation-state power politics, provides a new framework of international relations.
25. This contrasts with the findings of Norris (2000: 206), who concluded that European news coverage was usually given a negative slant. From Kepplinger (1998) we know of the general preference of the media for 'negative news' that is used systematically for the disparagement of political actors and their performance. It should be kept in mind, however, that negative news is not automatically European-critical news. Our own case study on the 'constitutional debate' in the quality press indicates rather to the contrary that journalists tend to have a positive and affirmative attitude towards European integration in general (Trenz and Münzing, 2003). The critique of the present Eurosclerosis is used as a strategy of media claims-making to promote reform and deeper integration.
26. In particular, we distinguish three cases: the naming (and sometimes stigmatization) of political actors as European, the naming of European events which mark the political space in which national and subnational actors move (meetings, campaigns, elections to the European Parliament, introduction of the euro, etc.), and the naming of European law (treaty, conventions, regulations, etc.) which might have a possible impact on national (or international) politics (without specifying that impact).

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