# Dynamic Representation: The Case of European Integration

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Editorial Note:


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Abstract

This paper asks two questions. First, why are party voters less favourable towards specific EU policies than party elites? Second, how does political representation of EU preferences actually work, is it an elite- or a mass-driven process? The data-sets of the *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994 are analysed which involve both an elite and a mass survey component. In contrast to earlier research, it appears that political representation of EU preferences works rather well regarding the grand directions of policy making, and that party elites behave responsively in view of changing EU preferences among their voters.

Contents

# 1. Political Representation in the European Union: What We Know About It

Empirical investigations into the effectiveness of political representation in the European Union are scarce.[1] The relevant literature includes part of the work of the *European Election Studies* research group (mostly van der Eijk and Franklin, 1991 and 1996; and the contributions to Marsh and Norris, 1997) and a few other studies based on Eurobarometer (Niedermayer and Sinnott, 1995; Blondel et al., 1998) and party manifestos data (Carrubba, n.d.). Recent additions to these empirical investigations of EU democracy are the results of the *European Representation Study* 1994–1997, published in two companion volumes (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999 and Katz and Wessels, 1999).

It is a complex undertaking to assess the effectiveness of political representation in the multi-tiered polity of the European Union. Depending on the policy area concerned, EU governance oscillates between an inter-governmental and a supra-national mode. Due to this the *European Representation Study* was designed to investigate the preconditions and effectiveness of electoral representation both regarding European elections and first-order national elections. (Non-electoral mechanisms of political representation such as lobbying, while arguably of particular importance at the EU level, could not be considered). The criteria being tested for these two channels of electoral representation are derived from the *Responsible Party Model*. This model assumes that competitive and cohesive parties exist; that voters have policy preferences and perceive the policy options on offer correctly; and that voters in the end base their electoral choice on these preferences. If these conditions are met, the process of political representation should result in a close match between the preferences of party voters and the policies of party elites.

Large-scale representative surveys among the mass publics and among members of the European Parliament and of national parliaments were conducted to assess the validity of these assumptions. The results can be summarised as follows: EU party elites are no less cohesive than national party elites. Voters hold policy preferences. They also recognise where the parties stand with regard to the grand lines of policy making, while the more detailed EU policy positions of political parties escape many voters. It is hardly surprising, then, that those EU policies are largely irrelevant for the vote while general policy views (as expressed, e.g. in terms of left and right) are significantly related to it.[2]

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2 Issue effects on the vote are more pronounced for issue competence attributions than for parties' policy positions. This is consequential also for the measurement of political representation. Following the

As a consequence, political representation in the European Union works pretty well as far as general policy views are concerned; if it comes to the specifics of European Union policy making, the congruence between voters and their representatives is remarkably poor. Political elites are much more European-minded than their voters regarding questions such as the abolition of border controls or the elimination of national currencies in favour of a new common European currency. It is striking that this representative deficiency is *not* specific to the EU channel of electoral representation. National representatives are no less European-minded than their colleagues in the European Parliament, and are thus equally distant from their voters on these specific EU policies.

Compared to the results of earlier work these findings evoke a number of further questions. One is whether the apparent ineffectiveness of political representation with regard to EU policies is caused by the *'Europeanness'* of these issues or by their *specificity*. Phrased in somewhat less obscure terms, the question is whether voters are less integrationist than their representatives, or whether they are simply less expert—less informed and hence more afraid of changes in the *status quo*. Relying on indicators of general EU approval van der Eijk and Franklin (1991) found a rather close match between voters' orientations and their perceptions of where the parties stand. While this seems to suggest that voters are no less European-minded than their representatives, it could well be a result of wishful thinking of party voters (van der Brug and van der Eijk, 1999) rather than an adequate account of reality. A more definitive answer to this question obviously needs to compare original measures taken from party voters and party elites.

Another question goes beyond the *whether* and asks *how* political representation works in the European Union. There are two competing views about this, one elite- and the other mass-driven. According to the elite-driven view, attitudes and preferences of voters tend to follow the lead of political elites and political events more generally (e.g. Page and Shapiro, 1992). In the mass-driven perspective, political elites behave responsively vis-à-vis changes they perceive in the attitudes and preferences of their voters (e.g. Stimson, 1991).

The standard view on European integration is that it is largely an elite-driven process (Deutsch, 1968; Wessels, 1995) which rests upon the permissive consensus of the general public (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970). This coincides with findings of national representation studies which cover a broader range of issues (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996; Holmberg, 1997). More recent irritations among the mass publics following the Maastricht process have cast doubts on this view (Niedermayer 1995). And a forthcoming diachronic analysis of voter attitudes about EU membership and party elite positions towards the EU suggests that party elites are responsive to changing voter orientations

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competence logic, measures of issue congruence should be based on issue salience rather than issue positions. A close match between voters' and elites' views is then indicated by similar salience evaluations rather than distances in their policy positions (Schmitt, 1999). The data sets analysed in this article do not contain measures of salience attributions towards European integration, but measures of voters' and elites' positions in this question. These positional indicators, however, belong to the class of 'easy issues' which are closer to the vote and thus a better indicator of political representation than 'hard issues' (Carmines and Stimson, 1980).

rather than the other way around (Carrubba, n.d.). However, a conclusive answer to this question needs to be based on a dynamic model build on comparable indicators for both mass and elite levels and for at least two points in time. This is what we try to do in this paper. The results will have important implications not only for our views on the process of European integration; they will be relevant also for our understanding of how democracy works in more general terms.

## 2. Research Strategy, Data, and Indicators

Answering our first research question involves comparing measures of mass–elite congruence for issues of different specificity. Units of analysis are not individual candidates and the electorate of their constituency as the individualistic model of the *American Representation Study* would have it (Miller and Stokes, 1963) but national aggregations of party elites and party voters—so-called party dyads according to the *Responsible Party Model* (Holmberg, 1974; Thomassen, 1976; Dalton, 1985; Schmitt, 1999). The older individualistic conception of political representation does not capture the reality of modern European party democracies which is shaped by political parties much more than by individual candidates. The standard—but not undisputed[3]— measure of congruence between aggregate positions of party voters and party elites is the correlation coefficient.[4]
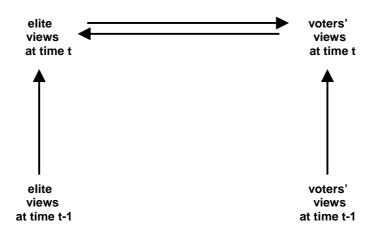
An answer to our second research question requires a 'dynamic' analysis. Any dynamic analysis of processes of political representation necessitates at least two observations in time measured at two levels. *Observations* refer to positions on one or more relevant dimensions of political competition and controversy. For the European Union, these are the left–right dimension which structures party competition in its constituent national polities, and the integration–independence dimension which might be more salient for the EU polity (e.g. Hix, 1999; Marks and Wilson, 1999). *Level* refers to the two groups of actors involved—the represented (i.e. voters) and the representatives (i.e. party elites).

Given a research design which allows us to control variation in voters' and elites' positions for two points in time, one could, on each level, utilise the earlier observation as a predictor of the present and model the relationship between voters' and elites' present positions in a non-recursive way. This can be graphically displayed as follows (Figure 1).

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3 Achen (1977, 1978) issued strong warnings against correlational measures of issue congruence which under certain distributional conditions could produce systematically distorted results. We agree with Converse and Pierce (1986, pp. 603 and 964-965) and many others that these conditions are hardly ever met.

4 In a strict sense, the simple fact of a general agreement between voters and party elites does not yet prove that the system of political representation is working. The congruence that we find in the issue positions of voters and party elites could be the result of systematic misperceptions. A full investigation of the effectiveness of the representational system would require determining the extent to which voters have a good understanding of where the party elites stand and vice versa. While we were able to study this in detail in our larger enquiry (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999), data limitations prevent us from addressing those questions in the present diachronic analysis. However, we found in our larger study that issue congruence and perceptional accuracy go hand in hand. Thus we maintain that our results point in the right direction, however incomplete our present research design may be.

**Figure 1: The Basic Research Design**



We will test this model with data from the *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994. Large-scale election studies were fielded in both election years.[5] A comparable core is formed by two basic questions put in identical wording in both studies to party voters and party candidates.[6] One is the well-known left–right self-placement question; the other is a basic measure of integration (vs. independence) preferences.[7] This latter instrument is also a perfect tool with which to investigate our first research question, to which we now turn.

## 3. Why Are Voters More Sceptical About EU Policies Than Party Elites?

Voters are consistently, and considerably, more sceptical about integrationist policies than their representatives (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999). Is this deficiency in the system of political representation of the European Union a result of a structural conservatism on the part of party voters, or of a deliberately less integrationist stance? We have already pointed out that voters might be more

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5 The EES'79 was essentially a study of political mobilisation. It was made up of a voter survey, a campaign study, a middle level party elite survey, and a candidates survey. The questions of the voter study could be added to the questionnaires of Eurobarometer 11 (pre-electoral survey). The EES'94 was designed as a representation study. It consisted of a voter survey, a candidates survey, a survey among MEPs and another among members of national parliaments. The questions of the voter survey could be added to the questionnaires of Eurobarometer 41.1 (post-electoral survey).

6 Candidates are not representatives, at least not all of them. They are, however, part of the party elite more broadly defined. As we do not rely on an individualistic model of political representation (in which individual representatives do make a difference) but on a collectivist model (in which the party elite in toto counts), the assumption that candidates' political views are a valid indicator of the party elite more generally is probably not too heroic. See similarly Dalton (1985) and Marsh and Norris (1997).

7 The left–right question reads as follows: "In political matters people talk of 'the Left' and 'the Right'. How would you place your views on this scale?" The answering-scale ranges from 1=left to 10=right. The integration vs. nationalism question goes as follows: "In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?" Answering categories are: for–very much, for–to some extent; against–to some extent; against–very much. This question was asked early on in the Eurobarometer surveys as one of the four basic indicators of European attitudes.

conservative than political elites because they are not as well-informed about the likely consequences of a particular policy, thus face higher decisional insecurity and are more likely to prefer what they have rather than to opt for a change—in whatever direction this change would actually lead. Such structural conservatism should be apparent in view of any major policy change and should not be specific to the policies of European integration. It should not, however manifest itself if voters are confronted with 'easy' rather than 'hard issues' (Carmines and Stimson, 1980), which focus on policy ends rather than policy means. For those issues, the relative lack of information should not lead to decisional insecurity, and structural conservatism should not be apparent.[8]

The indicator of integrationist orientations which we will analyse in the following is arguably such an 'easy issue'. It concentrates upon a policy end: a unified Europe. In contrast, the indicators of EU policy preferences analysed in our earlier work are 'hard issues' insofar as they point to policy means—e.g. a common European currency—rather than policy ends. If voters' and elites views should show a closer match for the 'easy issue' as the deficient issue congruence found earlier, we would indeed attribute the identified representational defect to the structural conservatism of the mass public. Should we however find that voters' and elites' views are equally distant on both types of issues, we would attribute the identified representational defect to an elevated Euro-scepticism among the voters.

Mass–elite agreement on specific EU policies is known to be poor (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999: ch. 9). Voters tend to prefer less integrationist policies than their representatives. However, that does not yet imply that voters are far less European-minded than their representatives. They might be merely insecure about the outcomes of particular EU policies and therefore tend to prefer what they perceive the status quo to be. This is exactly what we find. Our analyses reveal that, while their policy preferences diverge, integrationist orientations of voters and party elites match about as closely as their left–right orientations, which is a very close match indeed (Table 1). Political representation in the European Union might be deficient as regards the specifics of EU policy making; it seems to function well as far as the grand directions of public policy are concerned. Integrationist orientations of voters are well represented by their party elites.

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8 The work of Converse (1964) and Zaller (1992) is probably most relevant if it comes to models of attitudes and attitude change. However, both are more interested in the stability and change of mass opinions than in systematic differences in political orientations of elites and the citizenry at large. While they therefore do not identify anything like the structural conservatism we are proposing, their general reasoning seems to support our claim.
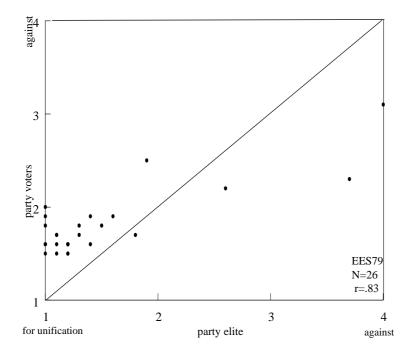
**Table 1: Voters are insecure regarding EU policies rather than opposing European integration**

|  |  | open borders | Employment programme | common currency | European unification | Left-right |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | Pearsons r valid cases | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | .83 26 | .88 26 |
| 1994 | Pearsons r valid cases | .56 46 | .52 46 | .47 46 | .84 46 | .82 46 |

Source: Voters and candidates surveys of the *European Election Studies 1979 and 1994*.  n.a. = not ascertained. Correlated are elite and voter positions. Units of analysis (=cases) are party dyads. A party dyad exists if a reliable positional measure for both voters and party elites (i.e. party candidates) is available. Positional measures are arithmetic means. These measures are considered reliable if they are based on the voters side on at least 20 voter interviews, and on the elite side on at least 5 candidate interviews.

This is not to say that voters are as integrationist, or pro-European, as their representatives. Figures 2 and 3 show that party voters, while not far from the views of the elite of the party they voted for, are systematically somewhat less integrationist. This is a consolidated finding as it holds for both the 1979 and the 1994 studies. Only a small minority of parties figure below the diagonal. These are those whose voters are *more* integrationist than the party elite. For the majority of parties the contrary is true. Party elites are somewhat more 'European' than the mass public, representatives somewhat more integrationist than their voters. This is a relevant piece of information, even if the discrepancies are modest.
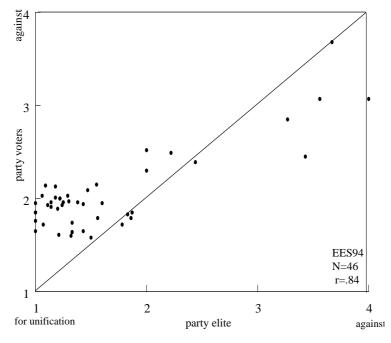
**Figure 2: Attitudes towards European unification: voter-elite congruence 1979**

**Figure 3: Attitudes towards European unification: voter-elite congruence 1994**



Source: *European Election Study 1979* (figure 2), *1994* (figure 3)

A similar phenomenon is known to exist for left–right orientations. Correlation coefficients indicate that voters and party elites place themselves very close to one another on this dimension. However, a more detailed inspection reveals a small but systematic discrepancy: elites are regularly somewhat more to the left than their voters. The opposite is observed only for a few parties on the far right (Figures 4 and 5). There is hardly any empirical representation study that did not report on this phenomenon (see e.g. Converse and Pierce, 1986). The standard explanation refers to the differences in the social status between representatives and represented, and to the different values that originate in different educational and professional careers, and in different social environments more generally.
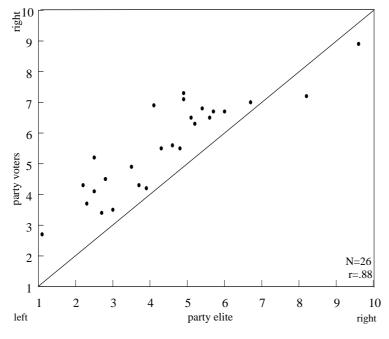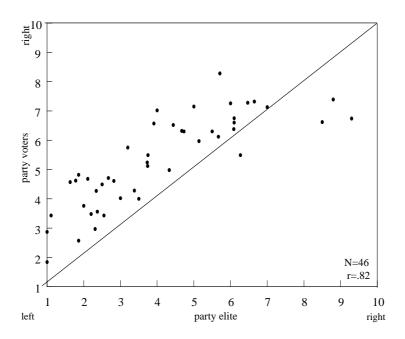
**Figure 4: Left-right orientations: voter-elite congruence 1979**



Source: *European Election Study 1979*

**Figure 5: Left-right orientations: voter-elite congruence 1994**



Source: *European Election Study 1994*

## 4. Movements In Time And Space

Before we can go on to address our second research question, we need to acquire some understanding of the political space of the European Union, and of the movements of political actors within that space during the period we cover. The political space of the European Union is structured by two basic dimensions. Neither is unique to the Union; they exist in the member-states as well. One of them is the left–right continuum,[9] and the other is the integration vs. independence dimension. Both structure political conflicts and give context and meaning to political controversies over specific policies. They are important to political elites and mass publics as they provide a straightforward means of political communication.

These two dimensions might not be equally relevant for the different levels of the multi-tiered political system of the EU. The left–right continuum still seems to be a more important yardstick for the behaviour of political actors in the national political arena, while the integration–independence dimension might be the more important of the two for the behaviour of political actors on the European level. Such an imbalance may fade away as a result of the growing policy reach of 'Europe', i.e. the attribution of an increasing number of common concern issues (as opposed to EU constitutional issues) to the government of the European level of the multi-tiered political system of the EU. But this is not a central argument for the following and it may suffice to say that the weight of these two dimensions is not fixed but variable across levels and over time.

There is one additional complication that we need to address. The left–right and the integration–independence dimensions might be connected. The more they are correlated, however, the less it is justified to consider them both. If, for example, integration–independence preferences could be predicted reasonably well from left–right positions, it would be irrelevant to investigate the former. A more mundane aspect of this is that the conventional orthogonal arrangement of the two dimensions (e.g. Hix and Lord, 1997; Hix, 1999; Marks and Wilson, 1999) would be inadequate.

Comparing findings from the *European Election Studies* of 1979 and 1994, it seems that the integration–independence dimension liberated from the left–right frame during the 1980s and 1990s. Still in 1979, integrationist views were 'right-wing'. While this was least visible among the mass public, it was quite pronounced among political elites (Table 2). Aggregating elite responses at the level of national parties, and particularly at the level of European parties/parliamentary party groups, amplified this phenomenon. In the first directly elected European Parliament of 1979, integrationists sat on the right, and protagonists of national independence on the left of the assembly.

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9 The left–right dimension arguably is not one single ideological dimension, but rather a conglomerate of an economic, interest-based, and a cultural, value-based, sub-dimension (see e.g. Hix, 1999). While we ourselves have identified these sub-dimensions in earlier analysis (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999), we feel justified in the present analysis in concentrating on the one overarching left-right structure.

**Table 2: The Euro-scepticism of the left has been melting away**

         **Correlations between European integration and left-right orientations**

         **at different levels and times**

| | | EP groups [a] | national parties [b] | individual EP candidates | individual voters [c] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | Pearsons r | -.74 [d] | -.48 | -.36 | -.04 |
| | valid cases | 10 | 26 | 611 | 6881 |
| 1994 | Pearsons r | +.27 | +.12 | +.15 | +.05 |
| | valid cases | 9 | 54 | 744 | 10385 |

Source: *European Election Studies 1979 and 1994*. (a) EP candidates are aggregated into EP groups which they (would) have joined after election, and group means are correlated; (b) EP candidates are aggregated according to national party membership/affiliation, and the party means are correlated (parties with less than 5 interviewed candidates are disregarded); (c) individual respondents are weighted to improve representativity according to demographic characteristics within nations, and according to relative national population size at the EU level; (d) read: the more to the left, the less "for" unification.

The Euro-scepticism of the left has been melting away. In 1994, left-wingers were even somewhat more pro-European than right-wingers. This is evident for both voters and political elites. However, while in 1979 national parties and, in particular, EU parties and EP groups amplified individual tendencies through the aggregation of like-minded men, national parties and EP groups seem to have lost this capacity since then. In 1994, left-wingers were somewhat more integrationist everywhere—within the SPD and CDU, PvdA and CDA, PES and PPE.

This is compatible with Marks' and Wilson's vision of a 'social democracy valley' (Marks and Wilson, 1999: 117 ff). According to them, social democrats (and left-wingers more generally) first opposed European integration as it meant a loss of national control and ability to steer the economy and the welfare state. After a while, however, the ongoing processes of market globalisation made them realise, according to these authors, that the only chance to regain control over market forces is to accept the process of supra-nationalisation of government and compete for control over EU government. In a nutshell: social democrats (and left-wingers more generally) made their peace with Europe when they realised that the nation-state is no longer a suitable framework for (post-) Keynesian policies.

But European integration in 1994 was not as left-wing as it was right-wing in 1979. The two basic dimensions of the European political space gained greater independence from one another over these years. We can thus determine the positioning and movements of relevant political actors in the political space defined by these two orthogonally arranged dimensions. Relevant actors are political parties. National parties form national governments which together constitute the European Council; and they align within European parties and the political groups of the European Parliament.

There are different ways to determine party positions in the EU political space. Earlier studies used voter positions (Hix and Lord, 1997), derived elite positions from content-analyses of party documents

(Hix, 1999), or based their measurement on expert judgements (Marks and Wilson, 1999). Published results do not coincide and are therefore not very reliable. We use another measure. As party positions are defined by party elites, we will exploit our two candidate surveys as the most immediate source for estimating party positions and their changes over time. In this descriptive analysis we concentrate on European parties as represented in the group structure of the European Parliament.[10] National parties will be our focus in the causal analysis that follows.

Figure 6 displays the positions of European Union parties and parliamentary groups and how they have changed as represented in the group structure of the European Parliament. Two developments stand out, and both occurred at the poles of the left–right continuum rather than in the political centre. One is the growth of anti-integrationism on the extreme right. Still in 1979, this group was among the most pro-European; fifteen years later, they were the second-most anti-European group in the European Parliament.
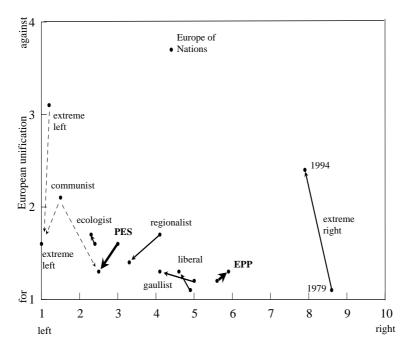
**Figure 6: Movements in time and space: EP groups 1979 – 1994**



Source: Candidate surveys of the *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994. EP candidates are aggregated into EP groups which they (would) have joined after election, and group means are displayed. The arrows for the two predominant groups – the *Party of European Socialists* (PES) and the *European People's Party* (EPP) – are bold while the dotted arrows signify movements of group components (rather than entire groups).

The other major change took place on the left. This one is a bit more complex because of contemporary history: the breakdown of communism led to a major restructuring of the European party

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10 EP group affiliations of national parties are documented for 1979 in Reif and Schmitt (1980) and for 1994 in Hix and Lord (1997).

system after 1989. Former communist parties changed camps and are now aligned with the socialist group (the Italian *Democratici di Sinistra* being an example). Orthodox communist splinters (Italy providing again a good example with the *Rifondatione Communista*) and small communist standpatters (like the *Parti Communiste Français*) today constitute what once was called the communist group. They incorporate some of the former extreme left which disappeared as a group (or rather, merged with orthodox communists). As a result of these developments, both the socialist and the communist/extreme left group moved somewhat to the left. But this not the most spectacular development to mention here. Much more pronounced are the movements of both groups in the pro-European direction. Regionalists also became more integrationist, while ecologists, liberals, Gaullists and the *European People's Party* became somewhat more sceptical about European integration. With regard to the EPP, this might reflect a composition effect more than anything else: in our 1994 survey, this group incorporated conservative parties (the British Conservatives in particular) which in 1979 were still on their own (not shown).
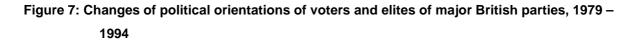
The two dimensions that structure the European political space gained greater independence from one another over the last twenty years. In 1979 anti-integrationism was concentrated on the left, in the groups of the extreme left and the communists, but also in the socialist group. This is no longer the case. The most ardent Euro-critics in 1994—the *Europe of Nations* group—are centrist, followed by the extreme right.
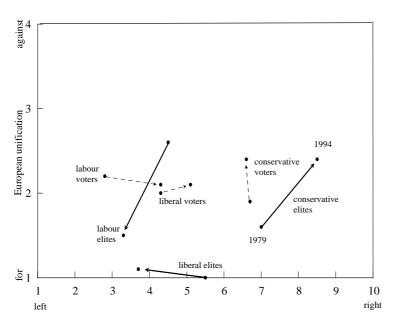
## 5. Elite- or Mass-Driven?

Party elites and their voters broadly agree on the grand direction of European integration, while they are less close with regard to specific EU policies. Hence, political representation of European Union preferences seems to work well as long as the basics are concerned. Having established that, we may now ask *how* political representation works. This is our second research question. We try to answer it in three steps. First we visualise both party (elite) positions and their changes and voter positions and their changes in order to acquire some initial impression of the dynamics involved; for the mundane reason of feasibility this can be done for Britain only. In a second step, we inspect bivariate correlations between the variables involved. And third and finally we report on our efforts to estimate the structural equations model which is defined by the research design described above.

Among all the member-countries the British case stands out. Nowhere else are party movements as pronounced as in Britain. Concentrating on voters' orientations, students of British electoral politics haven taken note of this (e.g. Evans, 1998; 1999). However, party elites are moving faster, or rather farther, than their voters (Figure 7). If we focus on them for a moment, we realise that movements on the integration–independence dimension are more extensive than those on the left–right dimension. In 1979, the Conservatives took a clear integrationist position while Labour elites were still very sceptical

about European integration. The reverse is found for 1994, when Labour took the lead towards further unification, while Conservatives opposed it. It is astounding how far these shifts in party elite positions go. Nowhere else do we find a similar phenomenon. There was also some elite movement on the left–right dimension in that period. The Liberals went to the left, as did Labour, while Conservatives went to the right. We thus observe among British party elites a left–right polarisation, in addition to the change of roles in the European question.

**Figure 7: Changes of political orientations of voters and elites of major British parties, 1979 – 1994**



Source: Voters and candidates surveys of the *European Election Studies 1979 and 1994*

Voters are much less mobile and, probably more important to our research question here, they do not necessarily follow the directions their party elites seem to give. While Labour elites become more integrationist and left-wing, Labour voters move to the right and stay where they are regarding Europe. Conservative voters follow their elites—or lead them—in a more Euro-critical direction, while staying in the centre rather than becoming more right-wing. Liberal voters finally are farthest from their most integrationist elite and move to the right while their party goes left.

It seems impossible on the basis of the visual inspection of these three cases to decide whether voters follow elites or elites are responsive to voters. We need to use other techniques of data analysis and consider additional information in order to come closer to answering our research question. Table 3 displays, for voters' and elites' 1994 positions on both the integration–independence and the left–right dimension, correlations with the three plausible other variables (i.e. voters' 1994 left–right positions are correlated with voters' 1979 left–right positions and with elite left–right positions in both 1979 and 1994).

**Table 3: Determinants of Voters and Elite Views in 1994**
**(correlation and determination coefficients)**

|  |  |  | Elites 1994 | | | voters 1994 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | r | $r^2$ |  | r | $r^2$ |
| European | best predictor | voters 94 | .895 | .801 | elites 94 | .895 | .801 |
| integration | 2nd best | elites 79 | .859 | .738 | voters 79 | .887 | .787 |
|  | Poorest | voters 79 | .842 | .709 | elites 79 | .821 | .674 |
| left-right | best predictor | voters 94 | .807 | .651 | elites 79 | .954 | .910 |
|  | 2nd best | elites 79 | .788 | .621 | voters 79 | .851 | .724 |
|  | Poorest | voters 79 | .735 | .540 | elites 94 | .807 | .651 |

Source: *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994. N of cases (parties) = 18. All coefficients significant better than .01 (2-tailed tests). The parties for which elite and mass data are available for both 1979 and 1994 are: CVP (B), SP (B), PVV (B), SD (DK), V (DK), FbmEF (DK), CDU (D), SPD (D), PS (F), UDF (F), MSI/AN (I), DC/PPI (I), CDA (NL), PVDA (NL), VVD (NL), Conservative Party (GB), Labour Party (GB), and Liberal Party/Liberal Democrats (GB).

All these correlations are impressively high even if we account for the fact that we are analysing aggregate data. In three out of four analyses, concurrent observations at 'the other' level are the best predictor (e.g. elites' integrationist views in 1994 for voters' integrationist views in 1994). The second-best predictor is the previous observation at the 'own level' (e.g. voters' integrationist views in 1979 for voters' integrationist views in 1994), and the poorest predictor is the previous observation at the 'other level' (e.g. elites' integrationist views in 1979 for voters' integrationist views in 1994).
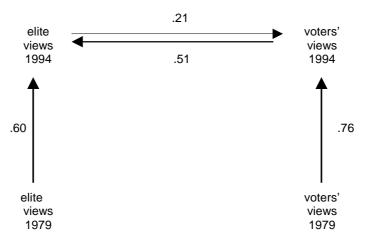
This is the pattern in three of four analyses (integrationist positions of voters and elites, and left–right positions of elites). Left–right positions of voters are different. They are best (and actually very well) predicted not by concurrent, but by previous elite positions. The substantive implication of this finding is that voters are more likely to 'learn' their party's left–right position at some earlier point—in a politically formative phase—than to adapt to the party's current position (or the other way round: that the party would adapt to the voters' current position). We will come back to this issue and its meaning for models of political representation and voting behaviour in greater detail elsewhere. For present purposes it may suffice to say that the mutual determination of voters' and elites' current orientations is stronger for the integration–independence dimension than for the left–right dimension, and that the basic causal structure of our research design is more appropriate for integrationist views than for left–right positions.

We therefore concentrate our final analysis on the integration–independence dimension. Figure 8 displays standardised regression estimates for the non-recursive relationship between integrationist views of party elites and party electorates. The model is not fitted to the data as we are not interested in accounting for every trace of covariance among the variables. What is essential here are stable and

reliable estimates for the two central effects, from current elite views to current voter views and vice versa. These indicate that the voter impact on elite views (bottom-up effect) are more substantial than the elite impact on voters' views (top-down effect).

**Figure 8: Representation From Below**

> **A simple causal model linking elites and voters' views**
> **about European integration in 1994 and 1979**



Source: *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994. N of cases (parties) = 18. The parties for which elite and mass data are available for both 1979 and 1994 are: CVP (B), SP (B), PVV (B), SD (DK), V (DK), FbmEF (DK), CDU (D), SPD (D), PS (F), UDF (F), MSI/AN (I), DC/PPI (I), CDA (NL), PVDA (NL), VVD (NL), Conservative Party (GB), Labour Party (GB), and Liberal Party/Liberal Democrats (GB). The model has been estimated with EQS.

This nicely supports the results of Carrubba's analysis of what he calls 'the electoral connection in EU politics'. Relating average EU-membership evaluations of potential party electorates around election time on the one hand to EU mentions in party manifestos on the other hand, he reports a significant effect of voter positions on party elite behaviour (the content of election manifestos). This is exactly what we find – voters' views have a greater impact on elite orientations than *vice versa*. However, it seems to be at odds with what we know about political representation in national polities. Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996) and Holmberg (1997) find for a majority of issues that Swedish voters adapt their views to elite positions with some time-lag. It may well be that the direction of determination depends on the nature of the issue involved. We know little about these subtleties below the surface of issue congruence. And one of the reason is that suitable data sets for testing somewhat more elaborate hypotheses about cause and effect in representational relationships are very rare.

# 6. Summary

This paper took one of the main results of the *European Representation Study* as its starting point. According to this, the system of political representation in the European Union seems to work well as long as other than European policies are concerned (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999, in particular chs. 9 and 12). Representation was found to be ineffective with regard to specific EU policies such as open borders and the common European currency. Representatives of both the European Parliament and national parliaments took a much more integrationist stance on those questions than their electorate did.

Building on these findings we asked two further questions. The first had to do with the reasons for voters' reluctance to endorse distinctly integrationist policies: are they deliberately less 'European-minded' than their representatives, or just less secure about the likely policy outcome and hence more conservative? Based on an 'easy issue' administered among voters and elites in both the *European Election Studies* 1979 and 1994, we found that representation actually works pretty well with regard to the grand direction of EU politics: party voters and party elites share similar views on the question of more or less integration. A representational defect manifests itself only with regard to the policy details, but not in view of the basic question of where to go.

Having established *whether* (and to what extent) representation works in the European Union, we then asked *how* it works. The two dimensions structuring the European political space—left–right and integration–independence—have become more independent from 1979 to 1994; the Euro-scepticism of the left has been melting away, and the most ardent anti-integrationists today are located in the centre (and on the right) of the political spectrum. Analysing integrationist and left–right orientations measured with identical instruments at mass and elite level at different points in time, we were able to show that current integrationist views of voters and elites greatly determine one another, while left–right orientations of voters are most strongly shaped not by current but former elite positions. This suggests an explanation of acquisition and change in mass left–right orientations which is focuses on socialisation rather representation processes. We will explore this further in future work.

With regard to integrationist views, then, we found that voters seem to have a somewhat stronger impact on party elites than vice versa. *Representation from Above* (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996) is obviously not the only mechanism at work in the complicated process of socio-political linkage and democratic decision making. While it seems to concur with what we find for left–right orientations, it does not fit our results with regard to integration vs. independence preferences. For the time being, we do not understand very well why this is so. Further research will be needed to shed more light in these dark corners of socio-political linkage.

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