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Selling the institutional misfit

The framing of European integration by Belgian political parties

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Master thesis

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“It is important to distinguish between rhetoric and reality when examining where national governments stand on Europe” (Hooghe & Marks, 2009: 22).

Abstract

This research studies the framing of European integration by the Belgian political parties. In other words, the argumentations these parties use to justify their positions on the EU are scrutinized. To do so, a categorization model for argumentative processes, originally created by Jürgen Habermas was made use of. Furthermore, an exhaustive analysis based on a hybrid set of sources on two of the most debated 'European' issues in the current federal government period (2014-2019) - the discussion on free-trade agreement between Canada and the EU (CETA) and the Brexit - served as empirical data. Building on this conceptualization, this research empirically evidences that ideology has a limited impact on framing strategies by the Belgian political parties. Rather than ideological arguments, the parties primarily frame European integration by using a pragmatic type of reasoning, i.e. by focussing on the political efficiency and efficacy. Thus, regardless of the ideological positions of the parties, 'Europe' is primarily argued on in an 'institutional' manner by the Belgian political parties.

Preface

I was born and grew up in Brussels. So did my father. My mother, on her turn, is a product of most western part of the country, but spent most of her life in Brussels as well, after having followed her then future husband to the capital. In spite of their different backgrounds, they are both clear members of the Flemish community within Belgium. Put differently, they both speak Flemish, the Belgian variant of Dutch as their mother tongue (even though the local dialects are very distinct). A logical consequence of this is the fact that I was raised in this language.

Therefore, it should not be a surprise that I went to school in Dutch. However, this is more peculiar than one might think at first sight. After all, native speakers of Dutch in Brussels are a very small minority. Most of the people I went to school with spoke French at home and when talking to each other. Accordingly, they watched different television programmes and listened to different music than I did at home. This context should explain how, from a young age onwards, I was confronted with the Belgian reality and what this complexity and linguistic diversity implied on a day-to-day-level. The school I talk about is located in the *Marolles*, a popular and culturally very diverse area in the centre of Brussels. More importantly, however, is the fact that it is also one of the poorest areas of the entire country. This provided an extreme contrast with the socio-economic climate *within* the school, that is known to be consciously upper class and rather elitist. The fact that the children of the Belgian royal family all enrolled in this educational institution probably provides the best example to prove this point. In other words, if the school would have been a less redistributive and more openly hierarchical society, it would have been a private boarding school with marine blue uniforms and a its own hockey and rowing association.

Less than three kilometres from the school gate lays another body that, in a completely different way and especially at a completely different level, tries to find a way as a mediator between cultural, linguistic and economic diversity: the European Union. Although the European district in the city was largely outside of my world at that point, its close presence undeniably triggered my interest in this political phenomenon from a young age. With a large sense of exaggeration and especially with a large portion of imagination, it can therefore be stated that I am a product 'par excellence' of the Belgian and by extension European reality. From this context, I developed a great fascination for social and cultural diversity and how these are shaped socially and translated into societal structures, which formed the basis for my previous studies in history and public administration and for the writing of this thesis. Of course, I would have never succeeded in achieving this result alone. Therefore, I wish to thank my supervisor Asya Zhelyazkova for her many comments and guidance. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents for their support in my plan to enrol in a second master in "something with European politics and management."

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1. Introduction

“There is not a European identity. But there may be one exception, and that could be Belgium. Because nobody ever dares tell the truth about Belgium. Belgium is not a nation. It is an artificial creation (EP, 3 May 2018).”

This statement was made by Nigel Farage, the former leader of the British UK Independence (UKIP) party and current Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the openly Eurosceptic Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)-fraction. Occasion for this statement was a debate in the European Parliament (EP) on 3 May 2018, in which the Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel presented his vision for the future of the European Union (EU). However, this speech unleashed a debate in which, first and foremost, the Belgian MEPs entered into discussion with each other by referring to the existing differences on the way Europe and its future is perceived by the Belgian political parties. The debate, in other words - as emphasized by Farage - reflected the complexity and specificity of the Belgian position in the European Union.

Farage’s so-called artificial creation covers only 32,500 square kilometres and about 11 million inhabitants, hardly more than the population of Metropolitan Paris or the greater London area. Within the European Parliament (EP), the country only holds 22 of the 736 seats (Deschouwer, 2012). Yet, Belgium provides a highly interesting case for political research. First, it holds a crucial position within the European Union (EU), as it can hardly be denied that the Belgian capital Brussels *is* the EU, since all headquarters are located here. Second, throughout the decades of European integration, important Belgian politicians have missed few opportunities to “play big” in Europe. Christian democrat and former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy, who, after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty became the first permanent head of the European Council, perhaps provides the best example of this. Third, it seems to be no exaggeration to state that Belgian politics are known all over the world. In 2011, the coalition formation period took no less than 541 days, a new world record in the era of modern democracies that is likely to remain unbroken for a while. This generated a context in which commentators questioned the viability of the state and eventually resulted in a new reform of the Belgian internal state structure (Deschouwer, 2012).

This research aims at combining these elements and will therefore analyse the role of ‘Europe’ in the national political discourse of Belgium, i.e. the way in which the Belgian political actors problematise European integration and what arguments they use to justify their positions on the EU. In other words, the framing or the way the parties aim to steer the perception of the reality on issues in relation to European integration will be studied. After all, this practice is of a crucial importance for political actors, as it defines how topics are understood and thus directly connects

with their constant pursuit of persuading the electorate. For instance, an international free-trade agreement negotiated by the EU can be understood as an crucial input for the respective economic markets, but can equally well be regarded as a form of unfair and undesirable competition for the national economy. Subsequently, it will be analysed whether and to what extent these framing strategies are in alignment of or influenced by their respective ideological orientation of these actors, thus leading to the following central research question:

How do the ideological positions of Belgian political parties influence their framing strategies in relation to European integration?

1.1. Theoretical and social relevance

According to Lehnert et al. (2007: 21), theoretical relevance refers to “the analytical value a research question adds to the scientific discourse of the subdiscipline”. As this in-depth case study aims at combining the theoretical understanding of framing with the intrinsic characteristics of Belgian politics, it will therefore contribute to a better discourse and academic understanding of the perception of European integration and its implications on the national level. Moreover, it will increase the existing scholarly knowledge on framing and argumentations by political actors. Therefore, the presented research can be considered theoretically relevant.

Socially, relevant research “furthers the understanding of social and political phenomena which affect people and make a difference with regards with explicitly specified evaluative standards” (Lehnert et al., 2007:22). By researching the reasoning of political actors, a better understanding of why and how European integration is criticised can be obtained. Perhaps even more importantly, more clarity can be obtained on what these actors expect from the EU, as knowing more on the way political parties and actors perceive and represent the EU allows to gain a better understanding of their positions towards it. In other words, this research can help understanding what factors give rise or temper feelings of Euroscepticism and Europeanism (Diez Medrano, 2003; Daviter, 2007). Furthermore, it will contribute to the a better notion of the internal Belgian political debate.

1.1. Research structure

This research will be structured as follows. After this introduction, a short part will be devoted to the explanation of the Belgian political context in terms of institutions, actors and the current coalition(s) in government. This will serve as necessary background information upon which the rest of the analysis will further develop. The third part will give an overview of the relevant literature that has been published on this broader topic. The fourth part will present the theoretical base for this research and subsequently present the hypotheses that were derived and have been tested in this empirical part of the research. The fifth part will scrutinize the research

design and accordingly explain the research method, the selection of cases and the data collection process. The sixth part will be the analytical section of this research, in which the derived hypotheses will be tested against the collected data. Finally, the concluding remarks for this study will be presented, aiming at providing an answer to the central research question and give recommendations for future research within this topic.

2. Background - Politics in Belgium: an everlasting quest for compromise

In order to be able to understand an in-depth case study analysis of framing strategies by Belgian political parties, a solid knowledge on the background of these parties and the institutions they act in is needed. Therefore, this chapter aims at briefly explaining the main institutions, actors and current division of power in Belgian politics.

2.1. Institutions

In older studies on Belgium, the country was labelled as a *segmented society* (Huysse, 1971; 1986; Lijphart, 1977; 1981). This referred to the fact that the general society was built upon different segments or 'pillars'. Each of these pillars consisted of a network of organizations belonging to a specific subculture and aiming at nearly fully encapsulating its members. Therefore, segmental autonomy, allowing each pillar to install its world according to its own principles, traditionally formed the basis for the governing of Belgian society. Politically, this societal organization implied the establishment of a purely majoritarian strategy in which two of the three existing pillars would search for a coalition to outnumber the third and 'win' the battle at stake. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, however, the highly problematic effects of this system became increasingly apparent, creating a momentum for the political elites to change the rule of the game and shift towards a consociational model, aiming at the creation of a context in which these cultural communities could coexist peacefully and democratically.

Based on this consociational idea of government, the Belgian state has been territorially reorganized to meet the existing societal demands for more autonomy within the different sub-state entities. Fundamentally, the source of the nearly permanent demand for reform within the Belgian federation is the "lack of agreement about boundaries" (Deschouwer, 2012, 47). The Dutch-speaking part mainly emphasizes the existence of two main language communities. This can be explained by the fact that Dutch was historically treated as inferior in the country and this community has only gradually been able to decrease the influence of the French language in their region over time. Therefore, their hard-fought recognition should be protected and fully secured within well-defined boundaries. The Francophones, on their turn, do not share this vision and rather stress the individual's right to speak the language of his or her choice in the region of his or

her choice. A limitation of this freedom is very hard to be accepted. These two interpretations clash mostly on the status of Brussels, the capital of the federation (Witte et al, 1997; Deschouwer, 2012).

On the nation-wide level, these interpretations result in distinctly different views on the way the use of language should be regulated and therefore different views on the future of the country. Flemish, on the one hand, proposed a state based on language communities, to which considerable autonomy can be given. The Francophones, on the other hand, advocated for the creation of a separate region in Brussels, allowing it to be disconnected from the language communities. Based on these ideas, the Belgian institutional debate was launched in the early 1960s. This eventually resulted in a total of six rounds of state reform between 1970 and 2011. Since 1993, the Belgian constitution defines the country as a federal state. Hence, the federal solution has not been a deliberate choice, but an attempt to meet the diverging demands within the state and leading to inventive compromises.

Each state reform, to this day, has been built on the previous one and generally meant an expansion or refining of the prior agreement, i.e. an expansion of the competences for the sub-national entities. Throughout these reforms, the current system was created. This consists of a somewhat double federation of regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking) and is based on a complex set of interlocking institutions. The difference between these two divisions is based on the principle that communities have powers that are related to people, whereas the regions relate to the territory. This split was mainly created to find a common solution for Brussels, that is, for community matters, constitutionally linked to both communities. Thus, the regions within the Belgian federation are competent in policy areas such as environment, housing, economic affairs, agriculture, public work and transport, area development planning, energy policy and employment. The Communities, on their turn, hold the competences in cultural matters, education, use of language and other 'personalized' matters. The federal state level contains all so-called 'residual' powers or those which have not been devolved, i.e. justice, security and defence, social security, monetary policy, civil law and foreign affairs (Deschouwer, 2012, 60-61).

in order to avoid internal conflicts, this institutional framework is based upon the principle of strictly exclusive competences (De Becker, 2011). Furthermore, and highly important within the scope of this research, both the regions and the communities also have a high degree of autonomy on the international level. Here, the division of competences is based on the *in foro interno, in foro externo*-principle, which means that whenever a sub-state body is competent internally, it also holds this power externally and thus internationally. Put differently, a direct connection has been created between the constitutional provisions that allow powers to be transferred to

supranational bodies on the one hand and the sub-national entities on the other (De Becker, 2011).

This formally non-hierarchical institutional organization, however, has proven to be highly complex when it has to be combined with European level of policy-making. Not only because these constitutionalised entitled rights are constrained by the provisions of the European treaties, but even more so because the European rules oblige the federal and regional entities to develop a single national position, irrespective of this principle and the created system of sub-national representation on the EU level (De Becker, 2011). To some extent, this erodes the centrifugal logic of the Belgian federalism, that has been created to give each sub-state level the capacity to conduct its own policy line without interference from the federal level. Therefore, scholars have generally described this structure as an “institutional misfit” (Beyers & Bursens, 2011; 2013).



Map 1: Institutional framework of Belgium

2.2. Actors

Considering this institutional context, political actors in Belgium are nearly constantly asked to adapt to a newly reformed multi-layered political environment. At the same time, more than in other countries, the political parties play a crucial role in political scenery, which is why the country is often referred to as a typical ‘partitocracy’ (De Winter, 2000; Varone et al., 2005, Deschouwer, 2012). These bodies not only function as membership organizations, but also fully

control the government, since ministers usually need the approval of the party's leadership for crucial action. Moreover, they still hold a strong grip on public administration. An example that illustrates the dominant character of parties is the fact that the highly regarded office of party chairman can, different than in most other European countries, not be combined with a task as head of government (Deschouwer, 2012).

The first group of parties are the so-called 'traditional' ones, i.e. the Christian democratic, liberal and socialist party. The origin of these bodies date back to the period of pillarization, as they were all formed at the end of the 19th century. As a consequence of the federalization, these parties were, however, split into two different lingual parties. Therefore, there are in fact six traditional parties, forming the backbone of the party system (Pilet & Van Haute, 2011). These are: MR and Open VLD (liberals), CdH and CD&V (Christian democrats) and PS and Sp.a (social democrats). Due to the mentioned internal divisions, regionalist parties also form a crucial part of the party system. These are: NV-A, Vlaams Belang and DéFI. In addition, Belgium also has two green parties (Groen and Ecolo; being two separate parties but forming one fraction in the federal parliament) and a radical left party (PTB/PVDA). The following table lists up all parties and their ideological profile, ranked according to number of seats they currently hold in the federal Chamber of representatives (Dandoy et al., 2015).

Political Party	Ideological orientation
Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie (NV-A)	Flemish regionalists/conservatists
Parti Socialiste (PS)	Social-democrats
Mouvement Réformateur (MR)	Liberals/center-right
Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (CD&V)	Christian-democrats
Open Vlaamse Liberalen en democraten (Open VLD)	Liberals
Socialistische partij anders (Sp.a)	Social-democrats
Ecolo/Groen	Greens
Centre démocrate humaniste (CdH)	Christian-democrats
Vlaams Belang	Far-right conservatists/Flemish independents
Démocrate Fédéraliste Indépendant (DéFI)	Regionalist party defending the rights of the French-speaking population in the area of Brussels
Parti du Travail de Belgique/Partij van de Arbeid (PTB/PVDA)	Socialists/Marxists
PP (Parti Populaire)	Liberal-conservatist

Table 1: Belgian political parties

2.3. Coalition(s) in government

In May 2014, the federal, regional and European elections were held simultaneously in Belgium. This tri-level elections had one clear winner: the NV-A, that scored 20,2 % on the national level and won six additional seats in the federal Chamber of representatives. The CD&V and PS both reached scores around 11 percent, whereas the Sp.a, Open VLD and MR ended around 9% of the votes. Overall, this result was largely similar to the one of 2010. Therefore, a lot of commentators feared a new political stalemate. After the previous elections, the NV-A and the PS, who have very distinct profiles, failed to reach a coalition agreement. A new impasse was avoided, however, by the formation of a new federal government with the NV-A, but without the PS (Dandoy et al., 2015). The French-speaking Liberals of MR, the only French speaking party who had shown willingness to join forces with the Flemish regionalists, thus became the only French-speaking party in the federal government (Dandoy et al., 2015). On Flemish side, Open VLD and the CD&V also joined the coalition, leading to an overall majority in the Chamber.¹

On the regional levels, the electoral results were largely comparable. the NV-A, Open VLD and CD&V, who had joined the coalition on federal level, decided to stick to the same coalition on the Flemish level, where they had a comfortable majority in the parliament over around 65%. In the Walloon and Brussels regional level, however, an ideologically very different coalition of PS and CdH was formed. The European level election results, on their turn, were fairly comparable to the federal level. In the European Parliament (EP), the Belgian parties joined the political groups that fit best with their ideology. Within this context, a special mention should be made to NV-A, as they agreed to join the euro-critical European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), whereas they had previously been members of the Greens-EFA-group (Dandoy et al., 2015).

¹ A federal coalition government constitutionally needs a parliamentary majority. If it envisions a constitutional adjustment, a 2/3 majority is required. Furthermore, the ministerial posts within the government must be divided equally between Dutch and French speakers (not including the prime minister) (Deschouwer, 2012).

	Federal Elections	
	Vote %	Seats
Dutch-speaking parties		
NV-A	20.26	33
CD&V	11.61	18
Open VLD	9.78	14
Sp.a	8.83	13
Groen	5.32	6
Vlaams Belang	3.67	3
French-speaking parties		
PS	11.67	23
MR	9.64	20
CdH	4.98	9
Ecolo	3.30	6
PTB/PVDA	1.97	2
DéFi	1.80	2
PP	1.52	1

Table 2: Federal election results (Dandoy et al., 2015: 166).

	European Elections	
	Vote %	Seats
Dutch-speaking parties		
NV-A	16.79	4
CD&V	12.84	3
Open VLD	12.57	2
Sp.a	8.30	1
Groen	6.69	1
Vlaams Belang	4.26	1
French-speaking parties		
PS	10.68	3
MR	9.88	3
CdH	4.26	1
Ecolo	4.14	1

Table 3: European election results (Dandoy et al., 2015: 167).

3. Literature review

This chapter analyses the relevant scholarly work that has been devoted to the broader topic of this research. It consists of three separate sections. First, the general literature on framing in political science is scrutinized. Second, the research on the framing of Europe and European integration is overviewed. Third, the relevant studies on the relationship between Belgium and Europe are evaluated.

3.1. Framing: what, how, why?

First and foremost, it is crucial to have a solid understanding on the concept of framing and its terminology and how this has evolved over time. The term frame has generally been used in two different ways by political scientists. The first type, that is the one applicable to this research, is the so-called *frame in communication* or *media frame*. It refers to the words, images, phrases and presentation styles that a speaker of any sort possible utilizes when showing information about an issue or event to his or her audience (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This frame of choice reveals what the speaker considers as relevant or salient within the discussed topic. The second type is the *frame of thought* or *individual frame* and refers to the cognitive understanding of a given situation by an individual (Goffman, 1974). This therefore refers to what an audience member considers or believes to be the most salient of an issue.

Thus, the concept of frames is built upon the basic premise that any issue can be viewed from several angles or perspectives. Therefore, it can be presented or argued on in different ways. In other words, 'framing' does not aim at providing guidance on what to think about, but how to think about an issue. Goffman was among the first to describe this practice, describing frames as 'schemata of interpretation' (1974: 21). Similarly, Gamson and Modigliani named it as 'packages with a central organizing idea' (1989: 3). Building upon these scholars, Entman (1993: 52) then developed a conceptual definition which then spread largely within academia. He famously described framing as "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient [...] in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation." Matthes (2007:9) then combined these definitions and by defining framing as "the more or less consciously managed process by which these schemata are manufactured, selected, distributed and adopted in successive steps."

Hence, framing can be considered the practice of using specific 'frames', i.e. "mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (Lakoff, 2004:xv) in order to influence the perception of a certain reality. In the context of modern democratic systems based on mutual competition between political parties, this practice therefore is extremely important. By providing meaning to an abstract political issue and explaining what this is actually about, elite frames are able to

mobilize the public (Höglinger, 2015). Moreover, frames shape the context and institutions that are formed to carry out policies (Lakoff, 2004). Subsequently, a lot of the research in this context investigates how this practice possibly influences individuals' attitudes. This is mostly referred to as 'framing effects'. An experimental study by Brewer and Gross (2005) showed that frames involving a core value or 'value framing' have clear implications on the way people think about certain policy issue. Another valuable contribution of this type can be found in the study of Chong and Druckman (2007), who identified the key individual and contextual parameters that determine which frame will have an effect on public opinion in the context of a 'competitive elite environment', i.e. a context in which individuals receive multiple frames representing alternative and significantly distinct positions on an issue.

Druckman (2010) then further developed this conceptual understanding for framing in the broader field of political science by studying how the role of citizens' preferences in this matter. His most fundamental insight was that politicians' frames in mass media are altering the relative weight on different considerations in the evaluation process and therefore have the potential to ultimately change an individual's opinion on a political issue. Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008) revealed comparable conclusions, but emphasized the limits of this practice, by stating that in many cases, the individuals at stake are simply unable to frame an issue in the preferred way as they are constrained by the context of it, making it – as they called it – unripe for a 'new spin' (441-42). To exemplify this difference, they compared the practice of EU lobbyists in the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) on several policy issues.

3.2. Framing 'Europe'

Because of its highly abstract nature, European integration is a comparatively easy and effective issue in terms of framing. In other words, its meaning is still "flux and malleable" (Höglinger, 2016). When it comes to the framing of European integration, earlier studies generally analysed the role of media and their framing practices. One of the first extensive contributions was made by De Vreese and Semetko (2001), who conducted a comparative study on the news frames used at the launch of the Euro. At the most fundamental level, they analysed whether the media actors stressed disagreement and conflict between entities when it comes to European integration or whether they primarily framed based on its economic implications. Later, they further developed this knowledge and created a typology on news framing in general (2005). Trenz (2005) followed this typology-based approach and researched whether the frames on European integration used in media are more interest-, value- or identity-related. He argued that the European themes are widely spread in the national press and subsequently a process of solidarization between the European journalists and other parts of society could be traced.

Diez Medrano studied how European integration is presented by journalists and how these opinions possibly correspond to the general attitudes of the populations in these countries, using Spain, Germany and the UK as units of analysis (2003). A largely comparable study can be found in the work of Menendez-Alcaron (2004). Here, the author studied both the popular perceptions on the European unification process through an analysis of the opinion of the political elites, being the key players 'steering' this largely top-down evolution. Diez Medrano and Gray (2010) also included state actors, political parties and civil society in their analysis. This then more or less led to a reaffirmation of the initial findings and stated that the cultural diversity, i.e. the co-existence of different cultures within Europe, did not have a significant influence on the way these countries reflect on European integration and the European Union. Moreover, they found out that there are only small differences among the different actors types.

Building further upon the explained insights on 'framing effects' in political contexts, scholarly focus on the framing of European integration followed this trend and increasingly shifted its focus to the framing practices and strategies by political actors. Helbling, Höglinger and Wuest (2010) were among the first to research these practices among political parties. In this research, they restricted their conceptualization of framing to one central aspect of Entman's original definition: *the promotion of a particular problem* (1993:52). In other words, they aimed at studying which arguments are chosen by political actors to justify their positions. They compared this matter in six west-European countries and concluded that the parties' framing of issues related to European integration depends on the interests they defend nationally, their more general position regarding the EU and their relationship towards the 'political establishment' in their respective country. Later (2014), they extended this research further and studied, based on the same conceptualization, not only the framing on European integration, but also on the two other so-called 'black-box'-issues in relation to globalization, i.e. economic liberalization and immigration. This largely led to a reaffirmation of the previously stated insights.

This shift can be felt even more clearly in a later phase of this research and explains why in the most recent studies on the perception of European integration, framing research is considered as a fundamental aspect of the broader scholarly work on the so-called politicization of Europe. This concept is generally defined as the "process through which certain issues become objects of public contention and debate, and are thereby legitimated as concerns of the state or political realm" (Calhoun, 2002). After all, framing in any way possible will inevitably lead to political actors emphasizing (or de-emphasizing) Europe and thus deliberately politicizing in a national context (Höglinger, 2015). When considering the scholarly work on the politicization of Europe, two main camps can be found. On the one hand, the group that advocates for considering Europe and European integration as a "sleeping giant", a topic which does not have the necessary strength to

disrupt the existing patterns of the national political constellation and political conflict lines (Mair, 2001; Green-Pedersen, 2010). On the other hand, there is the clearly dominant opinion of researchers who state that this “sleeping giant” has undeniably been awakened in the most recent decades and thus has a clear impact on the national political level (Kriesi 2006; 2007; De Vries, 2007; De Wilde & Zürn; 2012; Stratham & Trenz, 2013).

Especially because of its abovementioned abstract and highly complex nature, framing seems to be the highly effective way to generate an increased politicization of Europe as a political topic. The growing field on politicization of European integration thus implies increasing insights on the framing on Europe in national political contexts. The general consensus among scholars on this matter is that primarily right-wing populist parties, nationalist and radical left parties have seized the opportunity to play this issue politically and try to get an electoral advantage from it, mainly by emphasizing or rather ‘problematizing’ the supranational and non-democratic nature of this integration project. This then generally evokes a reaction of the pro-integrationist parties pointing out to the numerous benefits of the European project (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Höglinger, 2015). In other words, in order to make ‘Europe’ politically salient and therefore potentially rewarding in electoral terms, political entrepreneurs attempt to align it with the existing lines of political conflict in modern times. Therefore, these actors will attempt to align their argumentations with their general ideological orientation. These can be categorised on the traditional left/right dimension, representing the economic factors and mainly built upon on the labour vs. capital-distinction and the non-economic ‘new politics’ dimension, ranging from green/alternative/libertarian (or GAL) to traditionalism/authority/nationalism (or TAN). (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Kriesi et al., 2012).

These understandings on politicization thus explain how, in the context of a political discussion by national or European political actors, any statement on European integration can be motivated in different ways (Höglinger, 2015), thereby disproving the view of scholars who had previously argued that the politicization of Europe was always based on strategic reasons (Taggart, 1998; Sitter, 2002) and that the general reluctance by political actors to “play the European card” is the result of more than just ‘old-fashioned power games’ (Risse, 2010). Höglinger (2016) further substantiated this understanding by conducting a media content analysis, aiming at analysing the extent to which Europe has played a role in the national electoral campaigns and how the share of this role has changed over the past two decades. Here, he restated the conclusion that ideological determinants are crucial to understand the politicization of European integration. To some extent, this opinion was already apparent in the work of Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002), who were among the first to explicitly state the strong relationship between party positioning, both on the conventional left/right or GAL/TAN-dimension, Hooghe and Marks (2009) then

largely followed the same lines of thought in their more recent contribution, in which they further emphasized the role of identity and the constraining effect of ideology when it comes to politicization of Europe.

These studies with a clear focus on the framing by political actors and a high extent of interconnectedness with politicization thus differ from the majority of the previous scholarly work on the framing of European integration in the sense that they are looking for differences in politicization and framing within countries, rather than trying to seek national contrasts between different European member states. Put differently, they aim at adding another layer to the analysis. Not only do they study what frames are used, but also which frames are used by which political actor. This approach allows scholars to go deeper than a purely descriptive answer of framing or politicization, but relates to the question what actually drives this. So far, these studies have primarily focussed on member states in which a strong sense of Euroscepticism is traditionally apparent since, as already mentioned, this dynamic functions as the main driver for politicization of Europe (Hooghe & Marks, 2009).

3.3. Belgium in Europe and Europe in Belgium

When focussing on Belgium as unit of analysis, no specific framing study has been conducted. When it comes to politicization, there is a long-standing consensus on a general pro-integrationist position of the country (Coolsaet, 1998), as basically all Belgian political parties share a positive attitude towards the EU. Consequently, the topic remains largely undiscussed and its impact on the national politics therefore remains marginal (Ladrech, 2010; Van Hecke et al., 2012). Scholars generally linked this feature to the lack of space for new broad tensions in Belgian politics, which, besides the usual economic and cultural conflicts, is above all dominated by the debate about the internal state structure (Deschouwer & Van Assche, 2002; 2005; Bursens & Mudde, 2005).

Within this context, however, it is important to point out to the research of Dardanelli (2012; 2017), who, using a historical qualitative comparative analysis, tried to generate a nuanced answer to the question how regionalist political parties rhetorically use 'Europe' in their quest for decentralization and federalisation. He concluded that this mechanism should be understood via the "realist bargain" -theory, stating that the European dimension is exploited only if the dynamic of state restructuring is bottom up, i.e. one or more regions demanding for self-government, as this creates a context in which the regionalist parties can use the EU strategically in their framing strategies. In an earlier phase of his research, he also published a short and largely comparable study that focused only on the Belgian context (Dardanelli, 2012). Dardanelli's work can thus to some extent be understood as a framing analysis of European integration by regionalist parties in European member states in which the state structure is a subject of debate. Consequently, he

provided extra empirical evidence for the interconnectedness between regionalization and internal state reform on the one hand and the politicization of Europe on the other hand.

This connection represents the lion's share of the scholarly literature on the actual and perceived relationship between Belgium and the EU. Generally speaking, scholars focussing on the Belgian-EU relationship have mainly studied the influence on Europe on the internal working of the Belgium state and aimed at analysing the extent to which Europeanization has influenced the nature and structure of the Belgian state (Beyers & Bursens, 2006; 2008; 2013). In an earlier stage, scholars focussing on this matter mainly stressed the coordinative role of the EU. It primarily created new specialized mechanisms of cooperation between the different sub-entities to tackle the existing shortcomings of co-ordination at political level, such as the Directorate-general Coordination and European Affairs (DGE), responsible for preparing, defining, representing, managing and following the European policy in Belgium (Kerremans & Beyers, 1996; 1997; Kerremans 2000; Beyers & Bursens, 2006).

However, as the academic interest for regional adaptation within the EU grew (Tatham, 2008), this interpretation lost its dominant character. Scholars focusing on Belgium increasingly incorporated the growing understanding of Europeanization as a multifaceted dynamic (Graziano & Vink, 2007) and therefore claimed that its impact does not constrain itself to the institutional level (Deforche, 2007; Deforche & Bursens, 2008). Therefore, more recent studies increasingly stress the complexity of the impact of the EU on the Belgian federal state. In their most recent contribution, Beyers and Bursens (2013) stressed this differentiated impact of the EU on Belgium and explain that the administrative-bureaucratic consequences cannot be understood without taking the indirect impact of market integration into account. For instance, For example, the divergence in preferences on fiscal and redistributive policies in Flanders and Wallonia is further aggravated by the macro-economic and budgetary policies by the European Commission. Hence, they claimed to interpret the EU as a "trigger of both cooperation and decentralization" (Beyers & Bursens, 2013: 271). A similar interpretation can be found in De Becker (2011), who studied this complexity from a legal perspective.

3.4. Conclusions and implications

After having explained how the concept of framing was defined by scholars over the years, this literature review has primarily evidenced that the studies of the framing of European integration consist of different lines. Throughout the last years, the growing insights on politicization of Europe has led to a shift of focus towards the framing by political actors. When it comes to the influence and perception of Europe in Belgium, the focus has chiefly been on the complex institutional relationship between the federal state and the EU on the one hand and on the role of regionalist political parties in this interaction. This research aims at combining those elements

and following the recent trends by conducting a framing analysis on all Belgian political parties acting within this institutional system. Therefore, it will create a surplus for the scholarly work on framing of European integration and further explicate the complex relationship between Belgium and the EU.

4. Theoretical framework

In order to be able to conduct meaningful research on the described research topic, an extensive theoretical foundation is needed. This part should therefore be seen as the lens through which the research problem and questions are evaluated in the actual analysis, a means to conceptualize its purpose and a way to embed it within the existing studies. Therefore, this part will start with a detailed explanation of the selected theory. Accordingly, the relevance of this theory for this research is explained. Building on these elements, the hypotheses, that will be tested in the analysis part, will be laid out.

4.1. From Habermas to Brussels: Categorization of EU framing strategies

When conducting a study on the framing of European integration, it is crucial to have a typology that is able to categorize the possible framing strategies that political parties can utilize. Therefore, European integration should, within the scope of this research, be understood as a argumentative process. In the past, scholars studying these processes could largely be divided into two subgroups: constructivists and rationalists. The difference between those can be found in the logic upon which their reasoning was primarily based. The latter group aimed at identifying the role and conditions of arguing processes in international politics based on an understanding that the actors' preferences are mostly fixed (Risse, 2000). Against this view, constructivists have posited the concept of rhetorical action arguing that actors involved are not necessarily genuine or do not internalize norms of a debate (Lerch & Schweltnus, 2006). Hence, this type of understanding follows a logic that the debate can be considered entirely distinct from the underlying motives (Risse, 2000). Despite the antagonistic positions of both types of understanding, however, more recent scholars have succeeded in showing the shared commitments of both approaches. To do so, they have used the "Theory of Communicative Action" by the German political philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1993). This approach can be understood as the development of a third perspective that concentrates more on the structure, content and types of arguments at a more intersubjective level, i.e. for a variety of human interactions between conscious minds, rather than on the underlying motive or theoretical foundations of the arguments on the purely subjective level of the individual actors (Risse, 2000).

In his initial theoretical model, Habermas (1993) made an analytical distinction between three different types or categories of arguments used by actors in their general argumentative behaviour: pragmatic, ethical-political and moral arguments. In the first category, the position would be justified by referring to the output that is expected to be produced, i.e. a means-ends type of rationality. The second type is based on a conception of the collective feeling of 'us' within a specific community, whereas the third finds justification that rely on universal standards of justice, regardless of the particular actors involved. Hence, distinctive explanatory criteria can be

matched with these arguments. Following the same order, these are: (1) utility, referring to efforts to find efficient and suitable solutions to concrete problems, (2) values, referring to particular concepts of creating a 'good life' grounded in a specific identity or community and (3) rights, referring to sets of principles that are mutually recognized (Fossum, 2000).

In the context of research on political processes, this approach has the advantage to leave it open to empirical research to determine whether certain processes contain something more than consideration of utility and strategic bargaining. In other words, it allows scholars to use a logic of 'explanation through interpretation' (Sjürsen, 2002). This action-theoretical conceptualization has therefore proven to be able to tackle several empirical questions in academic research on international politics, all focussing on argumentative processes. Sjürsen (2002) used this conceptualization as a means to study the argumentations used to legitimize and explain the EU enlargement policy. Lerch and Schweltnus (2006), on their turn, used this theoretical framework to assess the normative power of the EU by scrutinizing its external policy regarding death penalty and minority protection. Helbling, Höglinger and Wuest (2010) applied this framework in a study on framing by political parties, comparing how European integration is perceived in six different Western European countries (the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and France) over a period of three years. Höglinger (2015) later then extended this research by studying a period of over thirty years, still using the same approach and countries as unit of analysis.

In their study on the framing of European integration, Helbling et al. (2010) further developed the categorisation model by focussing on the differences between utilitarian arguments and identity-related frames. Comparable adaptations had already been made by the abovementioned scholars using the framework (Sjürsen, 2002; Lerch & Schweltnus, 2006). Eventually, they developed a framework consisting of six categories of frames that are possibly applicable on the issue of European integration, as can be found in table 4 underneath. This number is the result of several subdivisions of the three main categories, being: economic, pragmatic and cultural.

First, the utilitarian group of Habermas was further divided. A new, important division was made between economic and other utilitarian or pragmatic frames (Helbling et al., 2010). This economic frame was then further subdivided in two separate frames. The first economic sub-category, i.e. labour and social security, deals with the more social context around the economic climate, such as fears of unemployment, wages and the functioning of the welfare state and the social security system. The second economic frame, named economic prosperity, deals with the more traditional economic left-right conflict on economic prosperity. In the context of European integration, this mainly follows the discussion on economic wealth and growth and the contexts of national competitiveness and is therefore clustered around considerations regarding the common market of the EU. Thereafter, the pragmatic category was further subdivided. On the one

hand, a frame on political efficiency and efficacy was created. This contains the arguments on the workings of the political system, in terms of capacity, power and efficiency. Hence, this frame fundamentally focusses on the element of governance, both on the national as on the European level. In other words, this frame includes all arguments that indicate the action or manner of management or governing, the existing structures or decision-making processes and how these possibly affect the potency of the political system. The second subcategory was named ecology and security and is thus dealing with these matters. In this context, security matters can both be external and internal, while the ecology frame is focused on matter of environmental protection (Helbling et al. 2010; Höglinger, 2015).

The third category, also referred to as the cultural frame, contains all the possible identity-related frames, pointing to ideas and values inherent to a particular community. This frame also has two broad subdivisions. The first subcategory is the nationalistic frame, containing the nationalistically-inspired arguments, serving to uphold a specific identity and mobilise around the preservation of certain boundaries. This mostly includes statements expressing fears of mass migration and xenophobic attitudes or, in a more European context, expressions of anxiety towards evolutions as 'islamisation'. This subcategory also contains all frames about the so-called symbolic political value, which includes all frames that state that certain European policies are undermining national independence or eroding national institutions. Crucially within this subcategory is, in other words, that national independence becomes an end in itself, something that must be defended solely for the sake of its existence. The second cultural subcategory is the multicultural-universalist frame, which stands for cultural openness and peaceful and harmless co-existence of various cultural and religious groups within a society. On the other hand, it also includes the moral-universalist claims, which refers to general moral principles and universal rights, acceptable and possibly claimable by everyone, regardless of their interests or identities (Helbling et al., 2010; Höglinger 2015).

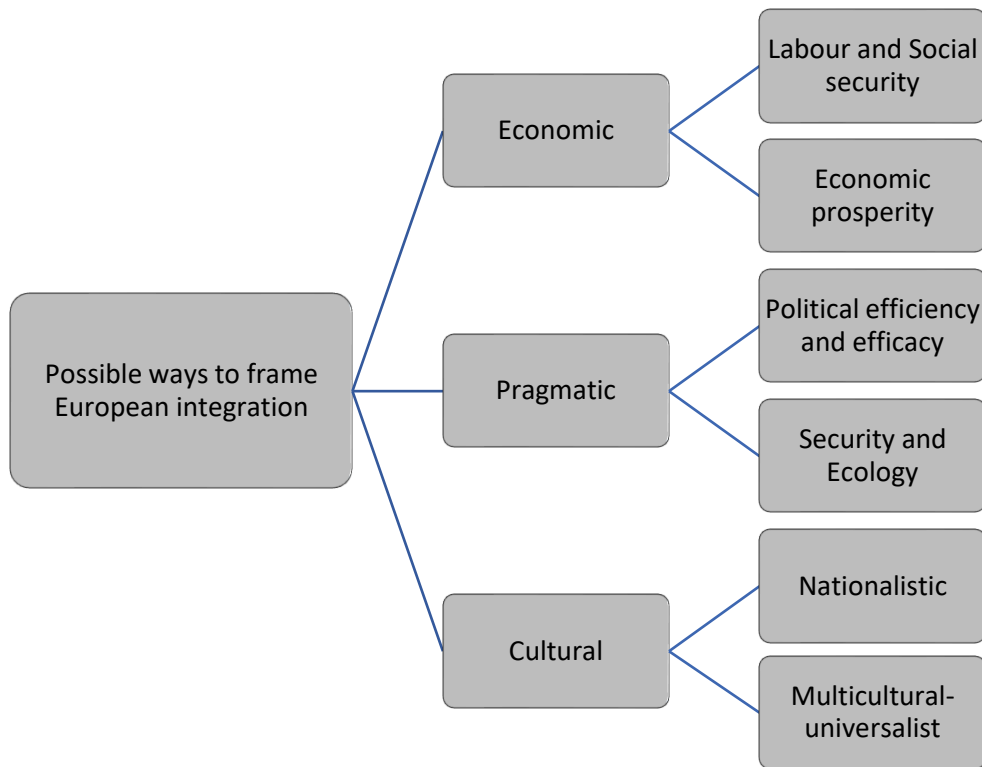


Table 4: Frame categorisation model

4.2. Expected use of frames – hypotheses

Having categorized the possible ways in which political parties can potentially frame European integration, the main expectations that follow from this model in the context of this specific research, i.e. the hypotheses, can be explained. Building upon the basic premise of framing, it is expected that the general preferences of the different political parties influence not only their position on this matter but also how they argue about it (Helbling et al. 2010; Höglinger, 2015). Among the scholars that have been studying the politicization and the political implications of Europe, there is a general consensus that the process of European integration should be understood as an evolution consisting of two major dimensions: a cultural and an economic one (Hooghe et al, 2004; Kriesi, 2007; 2008; 2012). When augmenting on this matter, parties therefore have to make use of these dimensions. This concept has to be combined with the well-known premise of the ‘inverted U-curve’ of party alignments on European integration (Hooghe et al, 2004; Kriesi, 2007), which states that opposition to Europe mostly comes from the extreme ends on both sides of the political spectrum, while the parties in the centre – which de facto are the creators of the modern-day EU - are more pro-integrationist.

By combining these two key conceptualizations, the theoretical positions of parties can be derived. Firstly, the pro-EU parties, those which are located more central of the political spectrum, are scrutinized. Within this category, parties on the left side of the political spectrum, i.e. social-democrats, are more likely to embrace the cultural dimension or the softening of cultural borders,

while being more critical for the economic aspects of integration. Green parties generally have a comparable attitude, even though they emphasize more the ecological dimension, as this is a fundamental part of their existence. The more right-oriented parties, on the other hand, are more likely to support the economic features of integration, while being more critical for the cultural elements (Helbling et al., 2010). For liberals, on their turn, EU integration seems to constitute less of a challenge. They strongly favour the element of market liberalisation and economic integration, while being slightly more critical towards cultural integration (Kriesi, 2007). Christian democratic parties, traditionally being consensus-seeking political entities and an integral part of the founding of 'Europe' as a political project, generally are in favour of both economic and cultural integration (Kriesi, 2007).

These positions on European integration are thus expected to be traceable in the framing strategies by the parties. Accordingly, liberals and social democrats are expected to mostly use the economic frames to substantiate their pro-EU stance, as they are expected to be more in favour of these aspects. Green parties are expected, above all, to be focussing on environmental matters and thus actively use of the pragmatic ecology and security frame. Christian-democrats are expected not to have a clear preference for a specific category of frames.

Secondly, the parties that are generally opposing European integration have to be evaluated. As mentioned, these can be found on the extreme ends of the spectrum. Far-right parties reject this evolution as a whole, conserving it as a major threat to the national traditions, values and the sovereignty. Far-left parties, on the other hand, oppose the neo-liberal nature of the integration project in Europe, that is likely to damage the social achievement on a national level (Kriesi et al., 2008). This pattern is thus expected to be traceable in their framing strategies. Far-right parties therefore expectedly use cultural frames, while far-left parties are expected to strongly focus on economic frames to explain their ant-EU positioning. Within this context, it should be mentioned that the framing strategies by radical parties are generally clearer than those of the moderate parties (Höglinger, 2016).

These derivations thus form the basis of the first hypothesis of this research, that is primarily built upon the idea that frames are endogenous to political competition and parties can therefore only succeed in creating mobilization when framing the issue in line with their ideological profile and the arguments are only credible if they are based on some long-standing commitments (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Höglinger, 2016). Hence, all Belgian political parties are expected to frame their position in relation to European integration in a way that matches their ideological focus.

Hypothesis 1: Belgian political parties frame European integration in ways that match their overall ideological focus.

As explained, this can be further divided in specific expectations per party.

i. Pro-integrationist parties:

H1a: Liberals and social democrats are expected to mostly use economic frames in relation to European integration.

H1b: Green parties are expected to mostly use the pragmatic security and ecology frame in relation to European integration.

H1c: Christian-democrats are expected to have a pro-integrationist discourse build upon multiple frames.

ii. Eurosceptic parties:

H1d: Far-right parties are expected to mostly use cultural frames to substantiate their anti-integrationist discourse.

H1e: Far-left parties are expected to mostly use economic frames to substantiate their anti-integrationist discourse.

In addition to the ideological orientation, however, the abovementioned Belgian political context must importunately be taken into account in this part of the research as well. This theoretically gives rise to two to some extent contrasting hypotheses about the framing strategies of the parties in Belgium. As explained, scholarly research has shown that Euroscepticism forms the key driver for the politicization of Europe on a national level. Hence, the success of this framing strategy has been proven empirically (Kriesi et al., 2008; 2012). Generally speaking, this dominance of anti-European stances as main engines to politicize 'Europe' has led to a clear reinforcement of the cultural conflict dimension of European integration, making the economic counterpart subordinate. Hutter and Grande (2014) have named this as the 'cultural shift', building further upon the insights of Hooghe and Marks (2009), who concluded that that from the early 2000s onwards, the positioning of national political parties across the EU was not based on an association between left and right, but has been built upon the abovementioned 'new-politics' conflict line or GAL/TAN- dimension, thus being an axis that displays a more linear relationship in support for EU integration (Crum, 2005).

Nonetheless, as has been mentioned, this anti-integrationist attitude is largely inexistent in Belgium. Consequently, the politicization is expected to be driven by other political factors. Here, regionalist parties – which hold an important position in the Belgian political context – seem to be

positioned best. After all, an important parallel between regionalist and Eurosceptic parties can be traced, as both groups clearly share the characteristic that they seek to denounce a certain form of external authority within a region and thus favour a more bottom-up structure. Therefore, regionalist parties also have the potential to meet the rising demands sorting from the opposition to globalization and European integration (Jolly, 2007).

However, regionalist parties can be connected to European integration in a very different way as well. Extensive research has demonstrated that regionalization and Europeanization, certainly at a theoretical level, clearly have the potential to reinforce each other (Dardanelli, 2017). The idea behind this interaction is that the EU may be a friendlier environment for subnational groups because it is multicultural. Hence, the regional group will be one of many minorities in Europe rather than a permanent minority in its home country (Marks & Wilson, 2000). Subsequently, European integration somewhat decreases the necessity for traditional larger states and therefore provides the opportunity for regionalist parties to package their regionalist ideology in a milder form by framing it within the European context or strategically 'use' the EU in their strategy. European integration thus increases the credibility of demands for greater autonomy, as it is expressed by regionalist political entrepreneurs (Jolly, 2007; Beyers & Bursens, 2008). As mentioned, Dardanelli (2012; 2017) conducted extensive research on this interaction and concluded that this Europhile attitude has been clearly existent within Belgian regionalist parties over time.

In other words, regionalist parties hold a specific position, as they are able to use the successful ingredients of Euroscepticism to politicise European integration while still possibly holding a clearly Europhile stance. In a generally pro-integrationist country like Belgium, this thus potentially provides a fertile combination. Therefore, regionalist parties are expected to have an important influence on the way European integration is framed within the country. Within this context, it has to be highlighted that the regionalist party NV-A, has been the dominant party in the country since 2010 (Beyens et al., 2017). Hence, there seems to be no reason to think that Belgium would be an exception to the 'cultural shift'. When translating this to the model on framing, this leads to an expected general dominance of the cultural category of frames in relation to European integration.

Hypothesis 2: Due to the highly influential position of the regionalist parties, the cultural frames are, overall, expected to be used dominantly by the Belgian political parties in relation to European integration.

Thereafter, the dominant character of this evolution of state reform and federalisation within Belgium potentially has another consequence when it comes to the framing of 'Europe'.

Regardless of the six reforms that have taken place already, the state is still experiencing pressure for further federalisation, i.e. for the further increasement of the authoritative power of the sub-national entities, to an extent that cannot be encountered in anywhere else in Europe. Moreover, it has been mentioned that all these state reforms should be understood as the result of a quest for compromise between distinct interpretations on how the state should be organised (De Winter & Baudewyns, 2009). Consequently, the functioning and organizational structure of the state indisputably plays a key role in the broad political debate within the country, forcing all parties to take a position on this matter and leaving little room for other major debates (Deschouwer, 2012; Dardanelli 2012; 2017). Research has shown the dominant character of this dynamic on the political climate and within Belgian political parties (Deschouwer, 2012; Van Hecke et al., 2012).

To illustrate this, a major theme that has recently dominated Belgian politics can be pointed out: the so-called 'interfederal energy pact', i.e. the mutual agreement between the four Belgian Ministers of Energy on the so-called energy transition towards more efficient use and a larger share for renewable energy sources by 2030 (Energiepact, 2018). Because of the complex division of competences in this field and the diverse ideological party background of the actors involved, this turned out - despite the great consensus about the importance of this agreement - to be a very difficult undertaking. As a result, a very large part of the debate focused on the existing structures and divisions of competences on the topic of energy and climate and possible reforms of the governance frameworks on these matters, which, in turn, gives rise to new political conflict on the state structure and complicates the development of an ambitious long-term policy plan. Rather, it evolved into a symbol file of the so-called consultation committee, i.e. a body in which representatives of the various Belgian governments meet to prevent or resolve internal conflicts (Meire, 2017; De Standaard, 10 March 2018, 17 May 2018; Le Soir, 31 March 2018).

This example shows that political decision-making in Belgium is highly complex whenever the matter at stake exceeds the existing non-hierarchical division of competences and can therefore not be dealt with within a single decision-making level. In other words, a lot of debates are somewhat clustered to the question what level is responsible for making the eventual decision. Consequently, the discussion on the internal structure of the state has become an inherent part of all important Belgian political debates. When it comes to 'European' matters, it can be assumed that this specificity is by definition present since - as already mentioned - the institutional structure generally requires an internal Belgian consensus when it comes the EU, regardless of internal differences or disagreements. Thus, the explained 'institutional misfit' between both levels of policy-making creates a context in which the institutional structure is expected to be an important part of the debate and the argumentations by the actors involved.

When applying this context on the abovementioned model on framing, the political efficiency and efficacy frame clearly fits best. In other words, the specificity of the Belgian political climate is expected to have led to a widespread use of this frame. Therefore, this pragmatic frame is expected to not only be used by established parties located in the centre of the political spectrum, as is generally posited by political scientists studying politicization and framing (Höglinger, 2016), but by all political parties within the country, as posited in this third hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Because of the specificity of the Belgian political debate, all Belgian political parties are expected to actively use political efficiency and efficacy frames in relation to European integration.

5. Research design

The previous chapter presented the predictions that were derived from the depicted theories and concepts that will be used in this analysis. Building further upon this knowledge, this chapter will now give an overview of the possible research designs and subsequently select the most appropriate and suitable design type. Thereafter, the data collection process and the way of analysis will be explained.

Taking into account that the variables in this research are merely observable and cannot be manipulated, this chapter will only take non-experimental research designs into account (Bryman, 2012). Because this study aims at creating detailed insights within the clearly demarcated case of Belgium, a case study with a small N-research design seems the most suitable instrument. This design allows the researcher to collect a broad and diverse set of observations per case and accordingly conduct an in-depth analysis of a particular event by providing rich and highly detailed information (Van Thiel, 2007; Yin, 2009). This characteristic is also the main difference with the quantitatively oriented research methods. These large-N researches consist of a much larger number of cases, in which fewer observations are gathered (Blatter and Haverland, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Another important feature of case study research is the possibility to study the close relationship between theory and the conducted empirical observations and therefore study if the selected theoretical concepts are relevant in the specific case (Yin, 2009).

When it comes to case study research, three main different design types are available: the co-variational approach, the congruence analysis and the causal-process tracing method (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The co-variational analysis (COV) is the most dominant one within the field of political science and looks at the impact of a specific causal factor. These studies if co-variation between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y) is traceable. In other words, it studies whether this interaction 'makes a difference' and thus a causality can be traced (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). Congruence analysis, on its turn, is used to verify the explanatory strength of a certain theory or paradigm and thus analyses the (non-)congruence between the empirical observations and theoretically deducted observations of a social reality. Thirdly, the causal-process tracing (CPT) aims at drawing conclusions on the functioning of certain causal mechanisms and emphasizes the specific interaction between separate causal factors, both through space and time. This approach is Y-centred, assuming that multiple factors can be responsible for causing a certain outcome only when these happen to appear combined within the studied context (Blatter & Haverland, 2014).

5.1. Research method: Co-variation analysis

As this research aims at providing insights on whether the ideological positions of the Belgian political parties have an influence on the way they frame their positions in relation to European integration, i.e. whether ideology ‘makes a difference’. Therefore, the co-variation analysis seems most applicable. This approach thus aims at providing an answer to this question by comparing different cases and by conducting a systematically comparison of the “variation of the features of the independent variable with the variation of relevant potential effects or the dependent variable (Blatter & Haverland, 2012:35). In this research, the ideological position or orientation of the Belgian political parties forms the ‘starting point’ of the research, i.e. the independent variables. This involves all parties that have one or more seats in the federal parliament within the current term of office and therefore have a representative function in the Belgian democratic system. These were already presented in the introductory chapter on Belgian politics and listed up in table 1. The ‘effect’ that is aimed to be studied here, i.e. the dependent variable, is the framing of European integration by these parties. This can be categorized via the model of categorization above, which can be found in table 4.

5.2. Case selection

As this research studies the framing strategies by Belgian political parties, it will be based on statements that were made by the parties in the context of a debate on an issue related to European integration in Belgium. In other words, these debates will provide the cases for this research. As explained by Haverland and Blatter (2012:41), case selection in small N-research is crucial, if not the crucial element of this research approach. Therefore, this selection can only be done based on an in-depth and solid understanding of the context of ‘European’ issues in Belgium. As mentioned, Belgium can be considered a very active defender of the further supranational and federal integration of the Union (Coolsaet, 1998; Abts et al., 2008; Deschouwer, 2012; Beyers & Bursens 2013; Van Hecke et al., 2012). This elitist consensus on Europe is combined with a very high acceptance rate of the EU among the population in the Belgian federation, as can be evidenced by the Eurobarometer surveys. In 1996, the negative perception on Europe, i.e. the number of people that declared to think of European membership as a bad thing, ‘peaked’ at 19 percent (Eurobarometer 1996). In the most recent surveys, this number has remained relatively stable around 10 percent (Eurobarometer, 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b). In other words, Europe is clearly not a crucial matter for discussion in Belgian politics. Hence, the number of issues that are heavily politicized and debated by the parties and therefore qualify for this research is rather limited. Considering that only the current governmental period (2014-2019) was taken into account, the two following issues seems most applicable and were therefore chosen as cases for

this research: the CETA-affair and the discussion regarding the Brexit. Both are explained extensively underneath.

5.2.1. The CETA-affair

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a free-trade agreement between the EU member states and Canada (DG Trade, 2016; Hübner et al., 2017). The agreement can be considered the most far-reaching bilateral deal ever negotiated by the EU with any non-EU nation and is more comprehensive than any of the agreements that are currently in place (CETA, 2016; Allee et al., 2016). In 2009, the European Commission launched the negotiations with Canada on CETA. Four years later, The Commission, which has exclusive competence with regard to foreign trade, reached an agreement on this in 2013 and the deal was eventually signed by all contracting parties on October 30th 2016 (Hübner et al., 2017). During this period, however, protest against this deal surfaced increasingly. CETA can therefore be considered as an archetype of a new reality, in which trade policy has become heavily contentious, reflecting a lot of the concerns by political actors about the direction of economic globalisation and, even more so, the potentially negative political and social outcomes of this agreements (Hübner et al., 2017). Consequently, trade policy has never been more politicised than it has been over the last years (Roederer-Rynning & Kallestrup, 2017). A clear consequence of this evolution is the growing ‘parliamentarisation’ of trade policies, i.e. role that national parliaments play in the policy-making and ratification processes of these agreements, as they try to re-shape the content of the policies at stake (Roederer-Rynning & Kallestrup, 2017). The politicization of CETA in Belgium is, to this date, the clearest example of this evolution.

In the spring of 2016, the local Walloon government approved a parliamentary resolution stating the unwillingness to agree with CETA as it was presented to them (Le Soir, 14 April 2016). Broadly speaking, two major concerns were formulated. Firstly, the Walloon government had declared itself anxious on the fact that the local market would be flooded with cheaper Canadian agricultural products. Secondly, the fear was expressed that the newly established international trade tribunal and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) for disputes or legal problems on the foreign trade between both entities would put the European courts out of the question and subsequently the big companies would be able to attract more power (Hübner et al., 2017). In their view, this would then lead to an undermining of the democratic foundations of the European policy-making level. This protest eventually led to the inclusion of an extra legal provision that further explicated the status and functioning of European commercial courts to the agreement. After the Walloon government had formally agreed to this, Belgium could sign the agreement on October 29th 2016 (Hübner et al., 2017).

Thus, the institutional structure of Belgium and the EU, which demands approval from every sub-national entity on an agreement such as CETA (Meunier & Nicolaïdis, 2006; De Becker, 2011; Beyers & Bursens, 2011; 2013), in combination with the increased contestation on trade policy and the growing role of (sub-)national parliaments, created a context for the Walloon government to formally oppose the agreement. This created a lot of political unrest in the country. It is therefore no exaggeration to state that this theme was the most discussed and politicized issue in Belgian politics around this period (Volkskrant, 24 May 2016; Meyer, 2017). The politicization of CETA has, in other words, forced all Belgian political parties to take a clear position on this issue and hence created an extensive debate on the consequences and effects of European cooperation. After all, foreign trade is a fundamental element on which the European cooperation project is based and has already been an exclusive European competence since the establishment of the European Community (Charlemagne, 2016). Therefore, this debate can be considered a relevant case to analyse the framing strategies of Belgian political parties in relation to European integration.

5.2.2. Brexit

The second debate that is taken into account for this research, is the discussion around the Brexit. This concerns the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. After the British Parliament had organized an advisory referendum on EU membership on 23 June 2016, a narrow majority of the British opted to stop EU membership (European Commission, 2018). As a result, the EU started the negotiation process in order to achieve this wish. Because of the very complex nature of these negotiations and the lack of a procedural precedent, these ongoing negotiations are still very difficult. Meanwhile, it has little to say that this issue is being extensively debated in a lot of European countries and cannot be overlooked in the press. An important consequence of this evolution is the fact 'Europe' has clearly increased its saliency on the national within the EU. Broadly speaking, it can be said that the future and the desirability of the European cooperation project is being questioned for the first time in its history.

This evolution is surely traceable in Belgium as well, which, because of its geographical location and advanced economic interconnectedness, has a lot of interests in keeping a close relationship with the United Kingdom (Het Nieuwsblad, 1 March 2018). Consequently, it cannot be denied that the Brexit has clear implications for the country, that seems to be seeking a balance between loyalty to European cooperation and defending self-interest. Therefore, this discussion is mainly characterized by its all-embracing nature, which includes institutional, pragmatic, economic and cultural aspects. Moreover, it should be noted that the issue does not contain a direct policy influence on the Belgian national level, which allows the parties to substantiate their arguments without having to take the existing coalition relations and policy lines into account. Furthermore,

and this aspect is specifically interesting from a Belgian perspective, this issue has initiated extensive debate on citizenship, the meaning of internal and external borders and the legal and institutional position of sub-entities within the United Kingdom and supranational bodies (Hayward, 2018). For all these reasons, this issue can clearly be considered a second relevant case to study the framing strategies of Belgian political parties in relation to European integration.

5.3. Data selection and collection

As posited by Blatter and Haverland (2012: 63), ideal-typical forms of COV approach rely only on scores of the independent and the dependent variable for its data analysis. Therefore, this research will be conducted based only on the statements made by the Belgian political parties in both of the mentioned cases. Following the basic premise of a relevant case study research, these statements will be retrieved from a combination of sources, which will therefore significantly increase the amount of data (Yin, 2003).

On the one hand, the reports of the parliamentary debates will be taken into account. This provides a meaningful source of information, as they represent a direct channel of communication for the parties to explain their argumentation. Within this group, solely the Belgian federal parliament, being the only political discussion forum within the country where all parties come together, will be taken into account. These data can be retrieved from the existing database on the website of the Belgian federal parliament *Dekamer.be*. The relevant plenary meetings are determined by using the available search engine, with 'CETA' and 'Brexit' acting as search terms.

On the other hand, the statements made by political actors in newspapers will be used. These provide a relevant addition to the data set for this research, as they offer an opportunity to increase the number of political actors included. After all, these potentially also include members of the regional parliaments, MEPs, and party presidents. This latter group is known to be very powerful and influential in the Belgian political system (Deschouwer, 2012). Moreover, the inclusion of these sources can contribute to a better understanding of the cases, as they are - compared to the reports of the plenary sessions - of a less technical character. These data will be collected from two Belgian quality newspapers. In order to avoid any type regionally biased perspective of any kind, one of each linguistic group is taken into account. These are: *De Standaard* (Dutch) and *Le Soir* (French). These sources can be retrieved via the Belgian online newspaper database *GoPress.be*, in which the abovementioned search terms were used as well. Within this group, however, only the publications dating from 2016 were considered. This demarcation ensures that the amount of data remains feasible. At the same, this was the period in which both political issues first appeared on the agenda and as a result were clearly debated the most.

5.4. Operationalization and measurement of dependent variables

After having explained the case and data selection, the further measurement of the dependent variables, ensuring the operationalization of this research, can be clarified. This will be done via the so-called ‘core sentence’-approach. This method was designed as a way to capture the full complexity of the broad political debate (Kriesi, 2006; 2008; Helbling et al., 2010; Höglinger 2015; 2016) and departs from the idea that every political statement can be coded in an identical fashion, the so-called ‘core sentence’, which then allows the researcher to make comparative analyses. Specifically, each statement is divided into three key elements. First, the subject or political actor at stake is taken into account. Because this research focuses on the political parties, this will be used as only categorisation in terms of the subject. Second, the object, or the issue that is discussed in this statement. Obviously, this aspect will in this research be limited to the two abovementioned debates. Third, the frame that is used by the political actor. Within this aspect, it is important to mention that a maximum of four frames could possibly be coded for each statement. By doing so, this research aims at taking the insights of previous research, which clearly demonstrated that political actors regularly side with their position with a certain policy or issue by invoking multiple frames, into account (Lerch & Schweltnus, 2006; Helbling et al., 2010). After all, this feature applies a fortiori for a complex issue such as European integration. Accordingly, this use of frames will be scrutinized by analysing how often they are used by the respective parties. Underneath, four examples of ‘coded’ statements are given.

“CETA and TTIP are agreements that deregulate the market and call into question all social and environmental standards. They ensure competition between employees. (PLEN, 169).” (translation by the author).

Subject (actor)	Object (issue)	Frames	(extra frames)
PS	Ceta	Labour and Social security	Ecology and security

“After all, we are in favour of free trade and the reduction of customs and toll rates. Increasing the markets offers growth opportunities for our companies and leads to more jobs (PLEN, 137).” (translation by the author).

Subject (actor)	Object (issue)	Frames	(extra frames)
Open VLD	Ceta	Economic prosperity	

“More Europe is needed, but, above all, we require an ambitious political, social and ecological Europe. We cannot do that with the Europe of 27. Groen is a pro-European Union without complexity, but we need a core Europe to realize this ambitious program for people: fight against social dumping, fight for fair taxation and a fight for green energy (PLEN, 168).” (translation by the author).

Subject (actor)	Object (issue)	Frames	(extra frames)
Ecolo/Groen	Brexit	Labour and Social security	Security and Ecology, Political efficiency and efficacy

“Today is a historic day for the United Kingdom, for Europe and for the EU. For the first time, a people can vote on the undemocratic policy of the European Union through the referendum on the Brexit. The United Kingdom can regain its sovereignty, its independence. (PLEN, 116).” (translation by the author).

Subject (actor)	Object (issue)	Frames	(extra frames)
Vlaams Belang	Brexit	Nationalistic	Political efficiency and efficacy

Table 5: Coding examples via core sentence approach

5.5. Internal and external validity

This hybrid set of data based the selected cases aims at increasing the validity of this research. This can be divided into an internal and external variant. Kellstedt (2013:89) defined internal validity as “the degree to which a study provides high levels of confidence about whether the independent variable causes the dependent variable”. This case study design thus ensure a high level of internal validity, as it - contrarily to large N-researches - allows the researcher to have a detailed consideration of any possible contextual factors. For this specific research, extensive knowledge on the Belgian political system and actors will therefore provide the opportunity for the researcher to make truthful claims on the framing strategies by the analysed parties.

However, this high degree of internal validity is in some sense at the expense of high external validity, which is defined by Kellstedt as “the degree to which we can be confident that the results of our analysis apply not only to the participants in the study, but also to the population more broadly construed” (Kellstedt, 2013: 89). This latter element is therefore more easily achieved by statistical studies and it can be claimed that this element surpasses the research aim of a case study. In other words, the claims made on the framing by Belgian political parties are unlikely to be applicable to other EU countries. However, the explained case selection, based on a very specific case for the Belgian context and one of a lot more general nature, and data collection process, based on a hybrid pool of sources, do ensure an increase of the validity of this study.

6. Analysis

In this chapter, the expectations formulated in the theoretical framework will be confronted with the empirical data, that were retrieved as explained in the research design. This part can be divided into two sub-chapters, one for each abovementioned case: the debates on CETA and Brexit. The three formulated hypotheses will be tested separately and thus form the basis for the structure of this part. Thereafter, the main findings for each issue are listed up comprehensively.

6.1. CETA

Table 6 underneath sums up all the results of coding, upon which the rest of the analysis is based. In this table, the total amount of frames and statements used by the different parties is given. Most importantly, it illustrates the amount of times the parties used each of the abovementioned frame. As explained, the CETA-agreement between the EU and Canada was heavily politicized in Belgium (217 statements in total). Due to the multifaceted nature of this issue and building on the explained feature that political actors often build a discourse upon several frames, it is generally noticeable that almost all parties used multiple frames in their statements. This explains the higher number of frames (306) compared to the amount of statements, that is given in the last row of the table and should hence be considered independently from the amount of frames, i.e. all other numbers given in the upcoming tables.

	PS	Sp.a	NV-A*	MR**	Open VLD	CdH	CD&V	PTB/PV DA	Ecolo/G roen	Vlaams Belang	PP	DéFi	Total
Labour & Social security	14	4	0 0	8 2	4	7	1	7	8	1	0	0	56
Economic prosperity	1	0	6 0	5 3	15	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	35
Political efficiency & efficacy	45	5	10 6	15 4	8	13	6	8	13	0	0	0	134
Security & Ecology	11	0	0 0	3 0	0	5	0	2	2	1	0	0	24
Nationalistic	4	0	8 0	7 4	2	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	29
Multicultural-universalist	7	1	2 0	7 1	6	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Total amount of frames	82	10	26 6	45 14	35	31	11	17	26	3	0	0	306
Retrieved from # amount of statements	59	5	24 6	26 13	24	19	8	13	18	2	0	0	217

Table 6: Use of frames per party in CETA-affair

* The second number in this row represents the amount of frames used by MP's Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, former NV-A members who now seat independently in the Chamber under the name Vuye&Wouters.

** The second number row (underneath) represents the statements by the prime minister.

Parties in blue are current members of federal government (2014-2019).

6.1.1. Limited impact of ideology

First, the hypothesis stating that all parties frame European integration in a way which match with their ideological position is tested. Overall, the analysis shows that ideological stances are weakly related to the frames that parties employed. This is reflected by the fact that only two parties (Open VLD and CD&V) most dominantly used the frames that, following this hypothesis, were expected to be utilized the most. Underneath, the use of ideological frames is scrutinized per party family.

The social democrats are the first parties to be scrutinized, as they can be considered the main engine behind the resistance against CETA. This is not surprising, since the French-speaking social democrats PS is the largest governmental party of the opposing Walloon government and also supplies the Prime Minister in this regional body. This leading role translates into a very large number of statements about this issue (59 out of 217 or more than 25% of all statements made). The lion's share of these statements is explicitly negative on the trade deal, which, in strict terms, does not align with the pro-integrationist stance that was to be expected. Unlike posited in the hypothesis, the economic frames are not used dominantly. However, it would be wrong to state that the PS's framing strategy was not at all aligning their ideological focus, as the economic frame of labour and social security (14) is used relatively often. The arguments here follow the traditional left criticism on trade liberalisation, i.e. a fear for a gradual loss of the existent social model. It can also be stated that social values and acquisitions are nearly always mentioned in combination with environmental standards. This explains the similar number of frames (14 and 11) used by the party throughout the debate. The Flemish social-democrat party of the Sp.a is, unlike their French-speaking sister party the PS, a very small actor in the entire debate. In total, only 5 statements could be traced from this party. The analysis of these shows that the party clearly follows the PS in its general opinion by being more or less in favour of the protest against the CETA-agreement, which explains the significant use of the labour and social security frame (4). The following PS quote summarizes this position clearly.

“The PS's opposition to the CETA treaty does not testify to Euroscepticism or a certain type of mistrust towards Canada, but of our commitment to safeguarding our socio-economic model, our jobs and our social and environmental standards. (PLEN, 130)”
(translation by the author).

These argumentations clearly contrast with those of the liberal parties. The French speaking liberal party MR presented itself as a clear advocate of the CETA-deal. This element needs to be emphasized above all, because the MR was the only French-speaking party to do so. Hence, the party stood isolated in its region. This can be explained by the abovementioned fact that the party is the only French-speaking party in government. This isolated position largely explains the

framing strategies of the MR, in which no clear line can be found. The party tried, first and foremost, to portray itself as a defender of government policy and the associated choices, which results in a less visible ideological profile. Put differently, the party tries to counterbalance the framing strategy of the PS, that primarily attempted to increase the left/right contradictions in this matter by taking a clearly left-wing position. The following quote illustrates that the MR therefore wants to profile itself a voice of reason in this political hoopla around CETA.

“People are afraid, even those who are close to us. The idea that chlorinated chickens and hormone meat are on our plate has nestled in the heads. Then it is difficult to defend the trade agreement with Canada. One no longer listens to our arguments (De Standaard, 27 October 2016).” (translation by the author).

Nevertheless, the expected use of economic frames can to a certain extent be found in their strategy (both subframes together count for 13 times out of a total of 45 frames). Analysis of these shows that they can be considered as clear liberals, i.e. advocates of a regulated globalisation and a common commercial policy within Europe. Within this context, it is important to mention that the statements made by the Prime Minister Charles Michel are considered as a separate unit of analysis. Although he is a member of MR, he is considered, above all, to act as a government leader and thus to defend the entire policy line followed by his team of ministers (table 6).

This framing strategy focussing on economic growth and prosperity was a lot clearer within their Flemish sister-party Open VLD. the party indisputably attempted to highlight the advantages of the neoliberal free-trade principle extensively (15 times out of 35 frames). Hence, Open VLD can be considered as a clear and unambiguous example of a political grouping that sticks to the traditional understating of free trade agreements as bearers of economic and welfare growth (Hübner et al., 2017; Young, 2017) and thus followed the expectations. Following quotation shows this straightforward profiling.

“After all, we are in favour of free trade and the reduction of customs and toll rates. An expansion of the markets offers growth opportunities for our companies and leads to more jobs (PLEN, 137).” (translation by the author).

The Christian democrat parties, on their turn, are distinctly different in their framing. The Flemish CD&V only played a marginal role in the overall debate, with only 8 statements in total. Within these, as expected, no clear profiling line can be found. The party, a member of the coalition in government, chiefly presented itself as a clear supporter of the policy line of the government and thus a clear advocate of CETA. The French-speaking CdH, on the other hand, very clearly followed the PS in its protest against the deal and, to a large extent, used the same framing strategy to do so, i.e. by having a clear focus on labour, social security and ecology. Moreover, in spite of its

smaller electoral size, it clearly played a more active role than its Flemish sister-party CD&V (19 statements traced). As the political conflict went on, one could even state that the CdH was even more explicit in its framing than the PS. For instance, they unambiguously asked for alternatives to the “ultraliberal streams” (De Standaard, 26 Oktober 2016) within Europe. Hence, whereas the Flemish CD&V acted along the expectations as pro-integrationist party with a spread framing strategy, the CdH opposition to CETA does not follow these.

The Green party in the Chamber, Ecolo/Groen, largely followed the PS and CdH in its protest against the trade deal. Accordingly, the proportionate use of frames was largely comparable. This explains the significant use of the labour and social security frame (8 times on a total of 18 frames in total). However, it is important to mention that this party barely used the security and ecology frame (2 times on 18). Contrarily to what was expected, the party did not point out extensively to the detrimental effects a deal like CETA has on the environment. This is striking, since nearly all studies to the effect of these emphasize this important negative side-effect of this neoliberal international trade policies, as it further increases long-distance transport and economic interaction (Hübner et al., 2017). In other words, by not fully playing this card, Ecolo/Groen clearly missed a window of opportunity to further substantiate its protest against CETA in alignment with the party’s ideological orientation.

When considering the more Eurosceptic parties on the extreme ends of the spectrum, the radical left PTB/PVDA directly jumps out, while the far-right Vlaams Belang barely took part in the discussion. It is important to mention that the political crisis occurred at a moment of significantly increased popularity for PTB/PVDA, with poll results that often exceeded 15 percent (De Tijd, 31 May 2016; Bruzz, 12 October 2016). This striking shift in power between the Walloon political parties was even cited by many commentators as the main reason why the PS wanted to provoke this conflict in the first place. In this reasoning, the PS tried to outplay this electoral trend by profiling itself more to the left (Volkskrant, 21 October 2016; Charlemagne, 2016). The far-left PTB/PVDA presented itself, as expected, as a very ardent protester of the CETA-agreement, as it would create a severe threat for the social model within Belgium (7 out of 18 frames on labour and social security). In other words, this trade deal was considered as a new negative outcome of the neoliberal EU, as becomes clear in the citation underneath.

“These treaties threaten our social achievements, sanitary and health standards and democratic rights (PLEN, 100).” (translation by the author).

6.1.2. The subordinate role of culture

In this part, the use of cultural frames in this debate – that was expected to be dominant – is analysed. Both of these frames were each used 29 times (out of a total of 309), which is the lowest

score of all categories (table 6). Therefore, contrarily to the formulated hypothesis, identity-related arguing did not dominated this debate. This shift in focus was expected to occur as all parties would have indirectly adapted their discourse to that of the regionalist NV-A, electorally the most important Belgian party at the moment of writing this thesis. However, only three parties used these frames significantly in their overall communication. For all other political parties, these frames played an only marginal role.

The NV-A, as expected, did “play the card” of culture and identity throughout this debate, but only to a relatively limited extent (8 frames out of 26). Here, the party mainly stressed the “huge damage” this whole affair had on the country’s reputation (De Standaard, 25 October 2016; 31 October 2016). This focus on the national image can be called somewhat striking, as it goes against the regionalist focus of the party. However, at the same time it clearly fits the *raison d’être* of this party, as the focus on these severely damaging repercussions indisputably created opportunities to stress the need for more Flemish regional autonomy in Flanders.

The second party that used this type of framing was the liberal MR. With 14 cultural frames (7 for each subframe) out of a total of 45, the liberal MR clearly bypassed its most important coalition partner on this matter. The nationalistic variant within this category is used in a comparable way as was done by NV-A. At the same time, this party clearly aimed at profiling itself in a ‘multicultural-universalist’ fashion. Throughout this political discussion, the MR repeatedly mentioned the importance of maintaining a strong alliance with the ‘international francophony’ worldwide. As both Wallonia and Canada are part of this group, this whole affair meant a clear harm for this connection, as becomes in the quotation underneath.

“This agreement reinforces the coherence of the international francophony, to which our political party is attached. Canada is one of the main funders of the international francophony. As such, this agreement is important (PLEN, 137).” (translation by the author).

The Open VLD, too, made use of the cultural frames in a similar way (8 times out of 35 in total). Hence, this party was the third to follow this strategy. Specifically, they played on the European cultural norms and values and aimed generally at connecting this to economic prosperity this has brought.

6.1.3. Political Efficiency: at the core of the issue

This part tests whether the derived hypothesis stating that the complex internal Belgian state structure leads to an active use of the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame by all parties. This expectation clearly matched with the results of this research. Out of a total 309

frames, no less than 134 could be categorized within the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame.

The overly dominant use of this frame can, first and foremost, be explained by the nature of the concerns that were made by the opponents of CETA. As mentioned above, these were largely focussing on the juridical implications the agreement would have when it comes to the division of power. This works on the basis of international legislation and is mainly intended to protect companies from against unfair regulations and generally generates a lot of opposition. Critics argue that these models provide an opportunity to ignore national law and will therefore become the 'slaves of the multinationals'. Accordingly, they undermine democratic legitimacy, explaining why state governments sought actively to constrain this possible implications (Meunier &; Morin, 2017; Young, 2017). This discourse, that stresses the importance of democratic structure, transparency and the way society has to power to act, forms the lion's share of the reasoning of the PS (45 frames out of a total of 85), as can be seen in the following statement.

"The proposed procedure for the appointment of ICS judges and their statute... do not meet international requirements regarding the guaranteed independence of the courts (PLEN, 100)." (translation by the author).

Comparable reasoning and framing can be traced along the other parties that actively opposed the CETA-agreement within Belgium (CdH, Ecolo/Groen, PTB/PVDA, Sp.a), which explains the relatively high use of these frames among this group (13 out of 35 for CdH, 13 out of 26 for Ecolo/Groen, 8 out of 17 for PTB/PVDA and 5 out of 10 for Sp.a). In a lot of these statements, they took this argument to a more fundamental level and denounced the democratic deficit in the European level of policy-making, that is only further increased by closing deals such as CETA. Voters have increasingly less power to have a say in this type of practices and therefore the existing perception that the EU does not take their concerns into account is only getting stronger. Hence, they actively used this issue to claim the need for more transparency in the EU. This argument can be found in the statement underneath by CdH.

"Jean-Claude Juncker must really wake up! Because we will not solve the European problems (security, economy, social dumping ...) by treaties. We need investments, an industrial and energy policy, and show citizens that we are listening to them (Le Soir, 31 October)." (translation by the author).

The parties in government and thus defending CETA, on the other hand, utilized a comparable type of reasoning to substantiate their position in favour of the trade agreement. In other words, they aimed at defending and showing the existing procedures and democratic foundations on which these are built, as can be deduced from the following quotation by Open VLD.

“The reality is that each Member State gives a mandate to the Commission at the beginning of a negotiation by the Commission. If the Commission then reaches an agreement with the other party, it is up to the European Parliament to approve that treaty (PLEN, 169).” (translation by the author).

However, this intrinsic characteristics of the CETA-debate do not fully explain the overly dominant framing in efficiency terms. Rather, it empirically evidences that the Belgian internal state structure became a significant part of this discussion. Considering the explained context, this ‘internal-institutional’ way of framing cannot be surprising. After all, the nature of this political conflict, in which the federal entities manifestly disagree with each other consequently block the process of policy-making indisputably provided fertile ground for a new round of discussions on the Belgian state structure. Thus, this pragmatic frame was used in two different contexts within this discussion. On the one hand, pointing out to the EU level of policy-making and its structures and procedures. On the other hand, pointing out to the Belgian level of policy-making and its complex structures. The following clearly regionalist quote by NV-A exemplified this second type.

“The PS uses its power in Wallonia to block once more. The only conclusion is that the two democracies (referring to Flanders and Wallonia, note by the author) have to follow separate tracks (Le soir, 31 October 2016).” (translation by the author).

Proportionately, the NV-A clearly puts most focus on this part of the debate (table 10 gives an overview on how much the parties used this frame referring to the Belgian internal context; out of the 10 times it used this frame, it focused 8 times on the Belgian policy-making level). As expected and as can be evidence in the quote above, they used this event as an argument to substantiate their strive for a greater regional authority in Flanders. It is important to mention, however, that the NV-A stood isolated with this argumentation. MR, NV-A’s most important coalition partner in the federal government, actively (table 10; in 8 of the 10 times they used the political efficiency and efficacy frame) disagreed with this regionalist interpretation and profiled itself against an evolution towards a further division of competences to the regional level and a more confederal institutional architecture of the state. Instead, they profiled themselves as advocates for a strong federal level of policy-making that can act without interference of the regional levels. Following citation by MR shows this interpretation.

“The PS really plays with fire, giving a boost to confederalism, Wallonia deciding alone to block everything, against all odds, and doing it alone for reasons own with Marnette and the PS. Which is the only European socialist party to refuse CETA. This will lead to some debates, such as this: should all parliaments approve such treaties? (Le Soir, 22 October 2016).” (translation by the author).

Within this context, it should be noted that MR's interpretation was shared by all other parties that were active in this part of the debate. For the NV-A, however, this point of view in favour of what was soon to be known as 're-federalization', was by no means possibly in alignment with the party's point of view on CETA and the Belgian state. After all, this position was diametrically opposed to what an regionalist party strives for, i.e. a strengthening of the regions in the Belgian system (Beyens et al., 2017; Dardanelli, 2017). Hence, any initiative taken to re-federalize would in their view mean a step in the opposite direction. This context of isolation also explains the strikingly tempered and rather implicit tone that is used by the party on these statement, as can be evidenced in the following statement.

"They use their autonomy. But they do not bear the consequences. That a situation like this is possible, points to a system error." (De Standaard, 25 October 2016).

This tempered framing strategy also contrasts importantly with the one of the Vuye&Wouters-fraction. The emergence of this political grouping in the federal parliament was the result of an internal crisis within the NV-A. In September 2016, just before the outbreak of CETA-affair, Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, two openly active Flemish regionalists and members of the Chamber of representatives, were expelled from the NV-A because they had repeatedly been very critical on the fact that party had put its regionalist agenda on hold in return for government participation, as was agreed on during the previous government formation in 2014 (Country report, 2016). Since then, both members of parliament have been acting as independent MPs under the name of Vuye&Wouters. Therefore, they were considered a distinct unit of analysis within this research (as noticeable in tables 6 to 10). Since their expulsion from the party, Vuye&Wouters' focus is solely on proving the, in their eyes, very striking dysfunctionality of the Belgian state structure and therefore striving very actively for Flemish autonomy. This focus is clearly apparent in their framing strategy (table 10; in 100% of all times in which it used this frame, it refer to the Belgian state structure) Thus, strictly speaking, these statements cannot be regarded as part of NV-A, but it is not incorrect to state that the opinion and profiling of Vuye&Wouters de facto translates the party's "fundamental" regionalist standpoint in this matter. Therefore, they could to a certain extent be regarded as that of the NV-A, without the imposed limitations of government participation. This context explains why these two MPs could frame itself more explicit in this matter, as can be seen in the citation below.

"There is a need for a structural solution. The federal states must now join the EU negotiating table and no longer the federal government. Now there is first a mutual locking and blocking and in the end a typical compromise *à la Belge* comes out of the top hat again (PLEN, 137)." (translation by the author).

When scrutinizing the other parties framing practices on this matter, it should be noted that this use of the political efficiency and efficacy frame only represented a small amount of the total amount of time this pragmatic frame was used. Hence, even though they followed the MR in its argumentation for a strong federal level of policy-making, the majority of the parties deliberately tried to stay out of this part of the debate. Specifically, the liberals of Open VLD (2 times out of 8 uses for this frame), the Christian-democrats of CdH (3 out of 13), Ecolo/Groen (3 out of 13) and the far-left PTB/PVDA (0 out of 8) remained more or less or entirely silent on the role of the Belgian state structure in this issue. In other words, as these parties deliberately focused on the intrinsic nature and implications of the CETA-agreement and the European-level procedures that are connected to these, the Belgian context was therefore considered largely irrelevant. The following quote by Open VLD, illustrates this deliberate choice to stay out of the Belgian institutional part of the debate.

"In my opinion, economics, prosperity and European reliability go above complex institutional reality in Belgium (De Standaard, 20 oktober 2016)." (translation by the author).

6.1.4. Main findings on this debate

Because of its multifaceted nature, the CETA-affair provides an interesting case to analyse the framing strategies of Belgian political parties in relation to European integration. Initiated by the PS, the protest against this free-trade deal increased to a level in which most opposition parties in federal Chamber of representatives clearly profiled itself as opponents, whereas the parties in government attempted to defend the deal and the Belgian participation in it. This division of positions more or less followed the economic left/right division, where the more liberal wing (MR, Open VLD, NV-A, CD&V) argued in favour of CETA and stood against the more left-oriented parties in the parliament (PS, CdH, Ecolo/groen, PTB/PVDA). Following the abovementioned hypotheses, three elements can be enlightened.

First, the impact of ideology on the overall framing strategies cannot be denied. The liberal and social democrats clearly used economic arguments in alignment with their ideological focus to frame their position. Within this group, however, the liberals party Open VLD clearly held a more unambiguous framing strategy than its French-speaking sister-party MR. Both Cristian-democrat parties, on their turn, acted clearly different in their framing, mainly as a consequence of their different general position vis-à-vis CETA. Ecolo/Groen, on the other hand, largely followed the lines of expectations in economic terms, but failed to play out the ecological window of opportunity. Lastly, the Marxist PTB/PVDA acted coherently as opponents of neoliberal deals such as CETA. However, it cannot be denied that the impact of ideology was mixed, as, overall, none of the researched parties dominantly used the expected frame dominantly. Moreover, it is important to note that, apart from the PTB/PVDA, all parties who framed themselves as opponents of CETA and thus took an anti-integrationist stance did not follow the expectances in this matter. Hence, the 'ideological match'-hypothesis only holds partially for this part of the research.

Secondly, the expectancy on the cultural shift, i.e. a dominant use of identity-related frames and arguments could not be traced. Even though the liberal-conservative axis NV-A/MR/Open VLD, which forms the backbone of the current coalition in power in the federal government used some cultural arguments to substantiate their arguments, this category of frames played a small role in the overall debate on the trade agreement between the EU and Canada. Thus, this hypothesis is clearly rejected.

Thirdly, the expected dominance of the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame was undeniably existent throughout this debate. The explanation for this feature is twofold. On the one hand, the nature of the protest by the PS and its followers mainly clustered around the procedural and judicial implications of the deal, i.e. the lack of transparency in the European level of policy-making. Consequently, this clearly was the most important part of the argumentation within both camps. On the other hand, the CETA-affair evoked an intense debate on the internal structure and

division of power on the Belgian level of policy-making. This latter element was, as could be expected, mostly brought up by the regionalists of NV-A. However, their complex position in government and its isolation in its strive for more power to the regional level led to the fact that this part did not fully and explicitly played this card. Consequently, they did not succeed in making this the main component of the debate, as most of the parties specifically tried to stay out of the debate on the role and impact of Belgian state in this issue.

6.2. Brexit

This section provides the analysis on the framing of parties in the debate on the Brexit. Generally, it should be noted that - contrarily to the CETA-controversy - no dominant party can be traced in this discussion. In other words, all parties made a similar amount of statements. A general analysis of these shows that Belgian political parties interpreted the occurrence of Brexit as window of opportunity for the EU to debate its existence, legitimacy and, most importantly, its future. As such, the parties aimed at discussing the role and position of Belgium in this evolution. In a comparable fashion, the relationship with the UK was being argued on. The following table (7) summarizes all the findings on this case and functions as basis for the rest of the analysis.

	PS	Sp.a	NV-A*	MR**	Open VLD	CdH	CD&V	PTB/PV DA	Ecolo/Groen	Vlaams Belang	PP	DéFi	Total
Labour & Social security	4	6	2 0	1 3	1	2	5	6	9	0	0	0	39
Economic prosperity	0	1	4 1	4 9	8	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	36
Political efficiency & efficacy	6	5	12 5	9 16	8	4	5	2	11	8	1	1	93
Security & Ecology	2	1	5 1	1 4	5	3	1	0	4	3	0	0	30
Nationalistic	0	0	6 0	0 0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	13
Multicultural-universalist	0	1	2 0	5 5	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	2	22
Total amount of frames used	12	14	31 7	20 37	24	11	21	8	26	18	1	3	233
Retrieved from # amount of statements	8	9	17 5	16 22	12	7	8	6	15	11	1	3	139

Table 7: Use of frames per party in debate on Brexit

* The second number in this row represents the amount of frames used by MP's Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, former NV-A members who now seat independently in the Chamber under the name Vuye&Wouters.

** The second number in this row (underneath) represents the statements by the prime minister, that were counted separately.

Parties in blue are current members of federal government (2014-2019).

6.2.1. Ideologically consistent in the background

To start, the expectations regarding the match between the framing and the ideological profile of the parties is scrutinized. Globally speaking, it can be stated that all parties used the frames that were expected. However, just like has been the case in the previous debate, this was not the prevailing strategy, as only three parties (the far-left PTB/PVDA and both Christian democrat parties) used the expected frame(s) dominantly. Therefore, this analysis shows that ideological stances are weakly related to the frames that parties employed. Underneath, each ideological party family is discussed.

Both social democratic parties did focus more on the economic component and thus made use of these frames (4 out of 12 for PS, 6 out of 14 for Sp.a). The arguments made by this bloc were highly similar to the ones made in the CETA-discussion, i.e. the current way of policy-making is based too much on liberal principles and does not focus enough on the needs of the working people. In their view, this explains why significant parts of the population have a negative opinion towards the EU in general, as became clear in the Brexit referendum. Following quote by Sp.a shows this argumentation:

“How is it possible that we have ended up with a widely supported European project in a situation where broad layers reject this project? To ask the question, I would like to share my answer with you. I summarize this evolution over 30 years in three words: neoliberalism, globalization and ordoliberalism (PLEN, 118).” (translation by the author).

The liberal party family, on the other hand, largely followed the same argumentation as in the CETA-discussion as well. In other words, a clear focus on the importance of having strong and lucrative economic relations with the United Kingdom, explaining the dominant use of the economic prosperity frame (8 out of 24 frames for Open VLD, 4 out 20 for MR). Hence, the Brexit generated two main challenges for the country. On the one hand, these should maintain interconnectedness with the UK in the post-Brexit era. On the other hand, this should by no means have an influence the Belgian position in the EU itself. Moreover, throughout the discussion, both parties also point out several times to the possibilities that the departure of the UK could offer for Belgium, which must try to respond to the possible departure of many large companies from the UK and attempt to persuade them to settle within the Belgian territory. Following citation shows this reasoning.

“The decision is regrettable, but we must respect the ruling of the British people. There are also opportunities, I refer to banks considering a move from London to

Brussels. Open VLD wants a solution that puts our citizens and our economy at the centre." (PLEN, 163). (translation by the author).

The Christian-democrats, on their turn, again showed a significant difference between both sister-parties. The CD&V clearly followed the framing strategies by the liberals and social democrats, i.e. a focus on economic arguments (PLEN, 117; 141). Within this, they consciously use both the classical 'left' labour and social security frame and the more 'liberal' economic prosperity frame. Hence, as expected, no clearly dominant frame could be traced in their framing strategy. The CdH, on the other hand, placed much less emphasis on the economic aspect in its framing. Hence, it held an even more 'spread out' strategy, as it refers repeatedly to defence and the cultural values of the European cooperation project (PLEN, 100; 116; 118).

The greens of Ecolo/Groen were, compared to the other parties, strikingly active in this debate. Again, their focus clearly laid on profiling as an economically left-like political body. More than this was the case in the CETA discussion, they also discussed the ecological aspect, often in connection with their demands for a more social and more people-oriented Europe, as can be seen in the quote underneath. Yet, this frame (4 uses out of a total of 26) was again not used dominantly.

"More Europe is a means or lever to create a Europe with a more humane face, a social Europe, a Europe that invests in the economy, a Europe that fights against climate change and once and for all abandons fossil fuels and is exemplary for the whole world, a Europe that also takes tax havens seriously (PLEN, 118)." (translation by the author).

When scrutinizing the parties the parties on the extreme sides of the spectrum (far-left PTB/PVDA and far-right Vlaams Belang), there is a clear difference with the prior debate, as both parties were active in this discussion. Moreover, both acted coherently in alignment with their respective ideological profile. Even though this was not the most dominantly used frame, Vlaams Belang presented itself as a utterly nationalistic party promoting the role of nations, cultural identity and the importance of sovereignty in Europe (7 nationalistic frames out of 18 in total). In about half of these cases, a connection is made to the importance of security within Europe, explaining the use of the pragmatic ecology and security frame (3). Hence, they profile themselves as proponents of the Brexit, as a country now clearly voted for an approach that prioritizes these issues. As such, they also framed their favourable opinion towards a 'Vlexit', i.e. the exit of an independent region of Flanders out of the EU, if the EU does not react to the Brexit accordingly by making drastic reforms in organizational structure. These elements can be traced in the following quotation.

"If you do not take this opportunity to create a totally different European cooperation, with much more sovereignty for the member states, a nexit, a frexit, and in our

opinion also a vlexit, will become reality sooner than you think is possible (PLEN, 118).” (translation by the author).

The far-left PTB/PVDA, on the other hand, did not profile itself as an explicit advocate of Brexit. The basic reasoning by this party is that the European Union made an event like the Brexit possibly by its disproportionate focus on economic growth, which only increased internal rivalry and thus gave rise to nationalistic stances within the EU. That this is understood as a moment to defend the European ideas and structures is, according to them, a wrong perception. Europe should, in their view, take advantage of this momentum to draw up a more social policy that is not only focused on competition and can unite the workforce across the borders. Therefore, an internal reform of the EU was still preferred over leaving, as the UK on its own would never be able to make this shift. Subsequently, it chiefly substantiated its argumentations by using the expected economic labour and social security frame (6 times out of 8 frames in total). The very ‘slogan-like’ quote below clearly reflects this line of thought.

“The British people are being offered either to stay in a neoliberal European Union or to run into ultra-liberal Britain. Basically, a choice between plague and cholera. (PLEN, 116).” (translation by the author).

6.2.2. Implicit eulogy for European identity

Just like this was the case in the CETA-discussion, it cannot be denied that culture cultural frames only played a subordinate role in the overall debate on the UK leaving the European Union. With a sum of 35 frames for both identity-related subcategories out of a total of 233, these frames only represent about 15 percent of the total discussion and argumentation. It can be stated that four Belgian parties actively framed the Brexit in these way: regionalist NV-A, far-right Vaams Belang on the nationalistic side and liberal MR and regionalist DéFi at the multicultural side. These strategies are explained underneath.

With a score of 8 frames (out of 31 for the party in total), the NV-A, which was expected to be the instigator of this trend, indeed was the most active user of these frames. Following the lines of expectancy of a nationalistic-oriented party, Flanders’ most influential party profiles itself in this debate as a clear defender of the importance of national or regional cultures and thus sees Europe above all as project of cooperation between these states. The most recurrent term party members used to express their attitude towards the EU and European integration is “Euro-realism” (PLEN, 116; De Standaard 29 July 2016). Hence, it aimed at presenting a solid and more realistic alternative for Europe, based on a balance between cooperation and self-determination of the nation-states. The party thus profiled itself along the interpretations of the European Conservatives and Reformers (ECR) fraction, the political group which it is part of in the European

Parliament (EP). This EP group openly advocates for a decentralisation of Europe back to the national levels, without striving for the end of the integration project (ECR, 2018). This vision is translated in their framing strategies on the Brexit as well. To some extent, it followed the arguments made by the Brexiteers and their claim for more national autonomy, that should always remain the key concept upon which the EU is being build. The citation underneath clearly reflects this opinion.

“It is a wake-up call, an invitation, a call to do critical self-reflection. One thing is clear: the traditional europhile or euphoric approach has failed. We now need a euro-realistic approach. We recognize ourselves in some arguments of the brexit camp. Yes, it is a justification to argue for more sovereignty, for more independence (PLEN, 116).” (translation by the author).

The second party that actively used nationalistic type of framing and so acted straightforwardly in line with their ideological orientation, was Vlaams Belang. This framing pattern focusses on national sovereignty and culture, as already been explained above. More interesting, however, is the fact that DéFi, being the small third regionalist party in the Belgian political scenery also followed this identity-based strategy. Yet, their framing can be considered as oppositional to those of both Flemish ‘identity’ parties, as DéFi actively uses the multicultural-universalist frame. As such, it aims at profiling itself as a clear advocate of the European cultures and values and can thus be labelled a ‘Europhile fringe’ (Jolly, 2007), i.e. a regionalist party that is actively trying to strategically profile itself as pro-integrationist on an EU level in order to strengthen support for its regional claims.

DéFi was not the only party that actively framed its position by using the multicultural-universalist frame. The liberals of the MR, too, followed this strategy (5 times out of 20 frames). More than any other, the party wanted to establish itself as a very clear proponent of the European ‘project’ and the values that underlie this. This translates itself in a very pro-integrationist framing strategy, as becomes evident in the following quote.

“Our weakness is not the European Union but the absence of the European Union. The Union strengthens us. Disunity weakens us. Our political movement desires, colleagues, to find, for each European citizen and each Member State, the ethic which founded the adhesion to the European project (PLEN, 95).” (translation by the author).

6.2.3. Pragmatic (way of framing) Brexit

Lastly, the derived expectation on the active and widespread use of the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame is evaluated. As was the case in the discussion on CETA, this frame

was used dominantly in the framing of Brexit by Belgian political parties (used in 93 out of a total of 233 frames). Thus, this hypothesis clearly holds in this debate. The way this was done, differed along the parties, as is explained underneath.

The use of this frame should be linked to the abovementioned general interpretation of the exit by the UK as a window of opportunity to reform the EU. As these reforms must, above all, take place on an institutional level, the discussion focused to a large extent on this aspect, regardless of the parties' general attitude towards European integration and Brexit. A first important element that was often discussed within this context is the way in which the exit of the United Kingdom had to be shaped. Here, a clear shift can be felt within most parties. Shortly after the referendum, all claimed to be supporters of a "hard" Brexit, where the EU must take a firm stance and not accept any compromises. As the debate went on, however, this tone changed to a more moderate interpretation. This can be explained by the fact that the parties have become increasingly aware of the importance of close relations with the United Kingdom and little desirable outcomes of this deprived pragmatic position. This explains why, as the debate progressed, terms such as a "pragmatic Brexit" (PLEN, 163; 168) were increasingly being put forward, pointing to a construction in which the underlying friendship relationship with the UK should not be compromised.

Secondly, the institutional structure of the EU was being brought up repeatedly by nearly all parties. Here, the parties' interpretations on how this should evolve can be connected to their general interpretation on the relevance and meaning of the EU. As such, the traditional parties thus presented organizational structure in line with their argumentation on why Europe 'matters'. For the liberals, the focus was on an efficient way of policy-making and therefore a more extensive type of integration to further increase a climate for economic growth and prosperity. The MR even openly profiled itself as an advocate of European constituency to elect a part of the European parliament and, on the long run, a federal structure for the European Union (De Standaard, 26 July 2016; PLEN, 95). The Prime Minister, on his turn, profiled itself repeatedly throughout the debate as a proponent of a European Union 'at different speeds', i.e. the idea that different parts of the European Union should integrate at different levels and pace depending on the political situation in each individual country (PLEN, 101; 154). The social democrats, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of transparency and a decrease of the democratic deficit in the future constellation of the EU (PLEN, 100; 118; 119; 121). Both Christian Democratic, on their turn, focussed on the importance of embedding its structure within broad layers of society and the need for social and economic convergence (PLEN, 100; 118).

The same parallel can be made within the non-traditional parties. The greens of Ecolo/Groen clearly profiles as left-wing in their focus on a more social decision structure in which a common

goal prevails (PLEN, 118; 138). The NV-A deliberately tried to frame itself as a party acting in favour of the will of people, away from the established powers and the “overly bureaucratic regulation” (De Standaard, 29 June 2016). A thoughtful integration, in which the national always continue to play a crucial role, should therefore form the basis for the forthcoming reforms of the EU. Vlaams Belang takes a clear step further by portraying the EU as a “fake democracy”, a political project that got out of hand and, above all, cost a lot of money to the taxpayer (PLEN, 116).

Most of this “pragmatic” way of framing thus focusses on the structures of the EU. However, it would be incorrect to state that the political efficiency on the Belgian level has remained completely outside of the debate. Just like in the CETA-affair, some parties “played the Belgian card” on Brexit. This was done in two different ways. On the one hand, the issue was framed in a way it was directly connected to the performance of the Belgian federal government. Hence, all parties in the coalition framed the Brexit as a negative external event which complexified the situation for the coalition to reach the economic goals in the coalition agreement. The opposition, on their turn, attempted at downsizing the possible direct implications Brexit had on the direct performance of the government and repeatedly portrayed this as incorrect and nothing more than an ‘excuse’, as illustrated underneath by Ecolo/Groen.

“We are used to it: if the numbers are bad, then, according to the prime minister, the brexit is to blame. But the consequences of the brexit also apply to the other European countries! (PLEN, 132).” (translation by the author).

On the other hand, the Brexit was also framed in ways to connect it to the debate on the Belgian state structure. However, as – contrarily to what had been the case in CETA – the nature of this issue did not lend itself easily to this type of framing, this was only done by the parties for whom this forms a fundamental part of their profile, i.e. the Flemish independists Vlaams Belang and the regionalist NV-A. For the openly Euroscepticists of Vlaams Belang, this was done via their claims for the above explained ‘Vlexit’. The NV-A, on their turn, framed the Brexit in this context as an event that illustrated the deep, existing differences between the Belgian regions Flanders and Wallonia. In this reasoning, they claim that Flanders’ is harmed more by the economic consequences and therefore the Belgian reaction should be accordingly. The following quote proves this framing strategy.

“The logic of the southern countries are not those of the North, of which we are, in Flanders, closer partners. Similarly, we do not have the same look at post-Brexit as other parts of the country (Le Soir, 25 August 2016).” (translation by the author).

It should be noted, however, that this part only formed a very small part of the party’s communication on the Brexit (3 frames on this specific matter). Yet, this can again be explained

by the fact that Vuye&Wouters was not analysed as part of NV-A, but as a separate unit. An analysis of the communication of Vuye&Wouters, on their turn, again shows a very clear focus on this aspect, as they actively aimed at emphasizing on the differences in the understanding and the impact of the Brexit differed in the distinct levels of policy-making within the Belgian federation (table 9 and 10; 5 frames out of 5), as can be illustrated by the following citation.

“I must also point that your view of the EU and the Brexit has rather far-reaching consequences for Flanders. As you know, Belgian exports do not exist. The export is Flemish: 84% of the export is Flemish. When we look at Britain, it even increases to 90% (PLEN, 164).” (translation by the author).

6.2.4. Main findings on the debate

The general nature and the fact that it had no strictly direct consequences on the Belgian political level make the debate on the Brexit an interesting case to analyse the framing strategies in relation to the EU and European integration by the political parties in Belgium. With the exception of openly Eurosceptic party Vlaams Belang - which explicitly applauded this happening - and the dual position of the NV-A, the Brexit was clearly considered a negative event within Belgian political parties. Generally speaking, all the political actors tried to give a positive result to the referendum result by considering it as a 'window of opportunity' to implement reforms that are deemed necessary at European level. This need was substantiated in a very different ways and has, in the scope of this research, been divided into three main lines.

First, the influence of ideological orientation on the framing practices was apparent. In other words, both the pro-integrationist as the Eurosceptic parties framed this event in alignment with their ideological position. However, except for the far-left PVDA/PTB and the Christian-democratic parties, the expected frames were not used dominantly, thus largely rejecting this hypothesis for this case.

Second, in spite of the fact that both far-right Vlaams Belang and, to a smaller extent, regionalist NV-A clearly "played the cultural card", these frames only played a subordinate role overall, being visible in a total of close to 15 percent (as mentioned in table 7, apparent 35 out of 233 frames all frames that were traced throughout the research). Apart from both nationalistic and euro-critical parties, only the liberals of MR and the regionalist DéFi clearly followed a comparable strategy in the substantiation of their unequivocal pro-EU discourse. As such, expected dominance of these framing strategies turned out to be incorrect.

Third, just like this had been the case for the CETA-discussion, the formulated expectation on the dominant character of pragmatic frames focussing on the political efficiency of the political systems at stake turned out to be highly correct. Overall, the frame represented about 40% of all analysed communication, clearly scoring higher than any other (table 7). The use of this frame can mainly be explained by the fact that nearly all parties indisputably focussed on the institutional level of the proposed reforms. These reform proposals for reform were clearly in line with the respective focus of the parties within the European project. However, this provides only a part of the explanation of the use of this pragmatic frame. After all, at the same time, the Brexit was also argued on from the perspective of the strictly Belgian political level of governance. Here, it was generally considered a reason to explain some poor performance results of the federal government in power. At the same time, however, it was noted that the issue was not significantly used as an argument in the nearly permanently existing debate on the internal Belgian political state structure, as this was only done by the independent fraction of Vuye&Wouters, for which

this provides their main reason of existence (in 100% of the times it used this frame, it referred to the internal Belgian context, cf. table 10). To a much smaller extent, this was also done by the independents of Vlaams Belang and the regionalist NV-A.

7. Discussion of findings

In spite of their very distinct nature, both debates that were studied show a large amount of analogy in terms of the framing strategies by the political parties. Therefore, when combining the results of both cases (as has been done in table 8 and 9 underneath), highly comparable findings can be traced.

First, the expectations derived from the ideological profile of the parties resulted in mixed findings. Both liberal parties focused on the economic growth that is entailed via the common market. However, the French-speaking liberal party MR showed itself a lot less straightforward than their Flemish counterpart Open VLD, as can be evidenced from the significantly lower percentage on the overall use of economic prosperity (14% versus 39%). This difference can primarily be explained by the fact that the MR is the only French-speaking party in the government and thus aimed at encompassing a much greater spectrum of arguments to substantiate the followed policy lines. The social democrats focussed more on the need for an economy based on the needs of its members. The difference in score between both in terms of the use of the labour and social security frame (19% versus 42%) can be explained by the fact that the PS has been much more active in the CETA-discussion and as explained a lot of their argumentation in this controversy was clustered primarily based on institutional issues and therefore clustered around pragmatic frames and argumentations (45 out of 82 frames).

The French-speaking Christian-democrats CdH generally followed the social democrats in their reasoning, whereas their Flemish counterpart CD&V attempted to provide a more combined type of argumentation. This difference can be explained by their different positions regarding the governmental coalition. Contrarily to what was expected, the greens on the other hand did not actively use the ecology and security frame (12%). The regionalist NV-A more or less followed the expected strategy by framing an important part of its argumentations in a cultural fashion (32% for both subframes). The small regionalist party of DéFI clearly focussed on the multicultural frame (67%). However, this party was only very limitedly active throughout both debates and therefore the amount of statements is too low to be able to discover real patterns in their communicative behaviour. The far-right Eurosceptic Vlaams Belang actively used the nationalistic frame (33%), while the far-left Eurosceptic PTB/PVDA very clearly framed its critics on Europe in terms of the labour and social security frame (52%).

Therefore, overall, two parties should be listed out in this context, i.e. the liberal Open VLD and the far-left PTB/PVDA, as these turned out to be the only two political bodies to dominantly use the expected frames that were derived from their ideological profile. Hence, it can be stated that these expectations were generally only followed to a rather limited extent and the expected

overall dominance of this framing strategy could not be traced. Therefore, this hypothesis is largely rejected, which can be considered the first finding of this research.

Second, the expected dominance of cultural arguments could in neither debates be traced. In other words, the expected role of the regionalist parties taking over the role of Eurosceptic political forces in the politicization of Europe in a cultural fashion did not occur, which can be considered the second finding of this debate. On the one hand, neither of the regionalist or independentist parties played a significantly dominant role in the discussion. On the other hand, they did not dominantly use the cultural frames to substantiate their arguments. Consequently, both cultural frames generally scored the lowest (8% and 9% of total use; table 9). This can at least partially be explained by the fact that the NV-A, the most powerful influential power in Belgian politics, did not present itself as straightforwardly Europhile. Analysis of their position on the Brexit showed that they profiled themselves as 'Euro-realists', i.e. clear supporters of national cultures and a powerful role for nation-states. This position strongly contrasts with the findings of Dardanelli (2012; 2017), who repeatedly emphasized the pro-EU attitude of the NV-A. However, it should be noted that his research mainly focused on the debate of state reform in Belgium and the strategic use of 'Europe' in this context, rather than scrutinizing the overall position vis-à-vis the EU. Moreover, his research on Belgium does not contain an analysis of the most recent years, in which the party considerably shifted its opinion. As they agreed to put its programme regarding the internal Belgian state structure on hold in exchange for participation in the federal government and thus the 'strategic' value of Europe in their argumentation and profiling decreased, their position on 'Europe' became more critical. This moderate starting point makes it, however, a lot more difficult and electorally less interesting to 'play the European card' and actively politicise European topics in the Belgian national context.

Third, the expected dominance of the pragmatic frame on political efficiency and efficacy was clearly existent in both of the analysed cases. In total, this frame represents no less than 42 percent of all used frames, thereby surpassing the double of any of the other categories (table 9). This striking feature can chiefly be explained by the mentioned somewhat double use of this frame. On the one hand, the institutional features of the European level of policy-making is actively discussed by all parties. This can be considered a consequence of the of the existing tradition and experience that the Belgian parties have built up through the long history of internal state reforms and the extensive debates that are connected with this process. On the other hand, it can be denied that both cases have evidenced that 'Europe' was significantly used as an argument in the broader debate on the institutional architecture of the Belgian federal state (table 10; in 37 percent of all uses of this frame). This can be explained by the complex Belgian institutional architecture in terms of the external or international competences. Just like a lot of important

internal Belgian political issues, 'Europe' is – almost by definition – entrenched in a complicated set of power divisions. In other words, the 'institutional misfit' between both levels of governance causes a context in which the parties will constantly look for a way to support (or oppose) the existent structures. Therefore, the organization of this existing structure is the primary subject of debate, leading to the dominant use of this frame among all nearly all parties. This can be considered the third finding of this research.

	PS	Sp.a	NV-A*	MR**	Open VLD	CdH	CD&V	PTB/PV DA	Ecolo/Groen	Vlaams Belang	PP	DéFi	Total
Labour & Social security	18	10	20	95	5	9	6	13	17	1	0	0	95
Economic prosperity	1	1	101	912	23	0	11	0	2	1	0	0	71
Political efficiency & efficacy	51	10	2211	2420	16	17	11	10	24	8	1	1	226
Security & Ecology	13	1	51	44	5	8	1	2	6	4	0	0	54
Nationalistic	4	0	140	74	2	1	1	0	2	7	0	0	42
Multicultural-universalist	7	2	40	126	8	7	2	0	1	0	0	2	51
Total amount of frames used	94	24	5713	6551	59	42	32	25	52	21	1	3	539
Retrieved from # amount of statements	67	14	4111	4235	36	26	16	19	33	13	1	3	356

Table 8: Total use of frames per party

* The second number in this row represents the amount of frames used by MP's Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, former NV-A members who now seat independently in the Chamber under the name Vuye&Wouters.

** The second number row (underneath) represents the statements by the prime minister.

Parties in blue are current members of federal government (2014-2019).

	PS	Sp.a	NV-A*	MR**	Open VLD	CdH	CD&V	PTB/PV DA	Ecolo/G roen	Vlaams Belang	PP	DéFi	Total
Labour & Social security	19%	42%	4% 0%	14% 10%	8%	21%	19%	52%	32%	5%	0%	0%	18%
Economic prosperity	1%	4%	17% 8%	14% 23%	39%	0%	34%	0%	4%	5%	0%	0%	13%
Political efficiency & efficacy	54%	42 %	38% 85%	37% 39%	28%	40%	34%	40%	46%	38%	100%	33%	42%
Security & Ecology	14%	4%	9% 8%	6% 8%	8%	19%	3%	8%	12%	19%	0%	0%	10%
Nationalistic	4%	0%	25% 0%	11% 8%	3%	3%	3%	0%	4%	33%	0%	0%	8%
Multicultural-universalist	8%	8%	7% 0%	18% 12%	14%	17%	7%	0%	2%	0%	0%	67%	9%

Table 9: Proportionate use of frames per party in total (numbers of both debates are cumulated)

**The second number in this row represents the amount of frames used by MP's Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, former NV-A members who now seat independently in the Chamber under the name Vuye&Wouters.

** The second number row (underneath) represents the statements by the prime minister.

Parties in blue are current members of federal government (2014-2019).

	PS	Sp.a	NV-A*	MR**	Open VLD	CdH	CD&V	PTB/PV DA	Ecolo/G roen	Vlaams Belang	PP	DéFi	Total
CETA	17/45	2/5	8/10 6/6	8/15 4/4	2/8	3/13	2/6	0/8	3/13	0/0	0/0	0/0	55
Brexit	1/6	3/5	4/12 5/5	1/9 2/16	2/8	3/4	2/5	2/2	6/11	4/8	0/1	1/1	36
Total (proportionally)	18/51	5/10	12/22 11/11	9/24 6/20	4/16	6/17	4/11	2/10	9/24	4/8	0/1	1/1	91
Total (percentage)	35%	50%	54% 100%	38% 30%	25%	35%	36%	20%	38%	50%	0%	100%	37%

Table 10: Proportion of political efficiency and efficacy frames referring to Belgian internal state structure or performance in relation to the total number of the political efficiency and efficacy frames

* The second number in this row represents the amount of frames used by MP's Hendrik Vuye and Veerle Wouters, former NV-A members who now seat independently in the Chamber under the name Vuye&Wouters.

** The second number row (underneath) represents the statements by the prime minister.

Parties in blue are current members of federal government (2014-2019).

8. Conclusions and recommendations

In order to be able to understand the attitude towards the European Union, not only the positions by political actors needs to be scrutinized. Simultaneously, one needs to capture how they understand and present European integration to their electorate. In other words, what arguments they use to support or oppose it. The growing scholarly work on this topic has increasingly proven the role of ideology in this matter. This research aimed at providing an answer to the research question *“How do the ideological positions of Belgian political parties influence their framing strategies in relation to European integration?”*. Based on an extensive analysis of Belgian politics and the general framing of European integration by political actors, three somewhat contrasting hypothesis were derived. First, parties were expected to have a framing strategy matching with their overall ideological profile. Second, the general ‘cultural shift’ in the debate on the EU was expected to lead a dominant use of both cultural frames. Third, the nature of the complex Belgian federal state structure was expected to lead to an active use of the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame. Subsequently, a co-variational case-study was designed based on a theoretical model for the categorisation of argumentative processes, that was used in for similar research aims before (Helbling et al., 2010; Höglinger, 2015; 2016). Data for this this analysis were collected by the systematic coding - via the core sentence-approach - of a hybrid pool of sources on two important political debates in Belgium: the CETA-controversy and the Brexit. These were used to test the theoretically derived hypotheses that were based on both general scholarly research on the role of ideology and framing in the context of European integration and an in-depth analysis of the specificity of the Belgian political context.

Based upon these foundations, this research empirically substantiated that the extent to which ideology influence the parties’ framing strategies is limited. On the one hand, parties did follow the generated lines of expectations to a certain extent. On the other hand, and this is the most important conclusion to be made, this research showed that, except for the liberals of Open VLD and the far-left PTB/PVDA, in neither of the studied parties the ideological profile functioned as the most important determinant in explaining its framing strategies. In other words, the frames that were expected to be used dominantly as a derivation of their respective ideological profile were generally speaking not those that were utilized the most. Rather, all Belgian parties mostly made use of the pragmatic political efficiency and efficacy frame to substantiate their arguments on ‘Europe’, leaving not sufficient “space” for the parties to argue based on a mostly ideological basis. Hence, this study proves that the Belgian political parties differ from their counterparts in other EU member states, since previous research has shown that these frames were only crucial for the pro-integrationist centre or established parties (Höglinger 2015; 2016). Put differently, in the case of Belgium, the use of this type of framing is disconnected from the parties’ positioning

towards the political establishment in the national political context. Furthermore, this research has shown that the abundantly existent dynamic of regionalization did not have the expected influence on the politicization and framing of 'Europe' in Belgium. More specifically, the dominant position of the regionalist party NV-A did not lead to a dominant use of cultural frames in the argumentations on these issues.

Hence, in contrast to the mixed results for the other expectations, the hypothesis on the effect of the complex Belgian state structure and internal functioning on the framing of 'Europe' proved to be correct. Therefore, this research has empirically evidenced that the complex institutional architecture of the Belgian federation has clear implications on the way 'Europe' is framed by the Belgian political parties. Because of the long tradition of internal institutional discussions and the existing "institutional misfit" between both levels of policy-making, European integration has – in terms of argumentation – become entrenched in the existing complexity of the Belgian politics. Subsequently, the parties are chiefly trying to define their position in this complex field of institutional levels and "sell" this position to their electorate, rather than using ideological, i.e. economic or cultural argumentations to explain their view on the EU. This interpretation of the empirical findings thus explains the overarching title of this research.

Nevertheless, several limitations for this research need to be taken into account. After all, as Vliegthart (2007:144) remarks, most methods that "analyse a large amount of frame data are limited in their ability to retrieve detailed information from texts, and subsequently establish relationships between actors, issues and frames." Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the opted methodology and model of categorization inherently limited to the possibility for further nuance and diversification of evidence. This limitation became apparent throughout the process of this research, as it sometimes proved to be difficult to distinguish different types of frames in the studied statements. Second, the rather limited amount of cases that were studied and their intrinsic substantive nature may have had an influence on the results of this research.

These limitations can be connected to recommendations for future research on this topic. This should aim at to using the categorizations in such ways to include further nuance. This can then possibly lead to a further adaptation or elaboration of the model of categorization, as has been done by previous research on this topic. At the same time, a larger amount of cases and data should be scrutinized. Moreover, the events should preferably be stretched out over a longer period of time, which would allow the researcher to look for differences in the parties' framing strategies over time and, most importantly, over a time span including several coalitions in government. Furthermore, the research can be broadened to other EU member states. All of this would enlarge academia's knowledge on the reasons and argumentations behind Europeanism and Euroscepticism.

9. Bibliography

9.1. Primary sources

9.1.1. CETA

Parliamentary debates:

Belgian Chamber of Representatives. Plenum meeting: Integral report with translated concise report of the speeches. Sitting numbers² (PLEN): 050, 051, 082, 095, 100, 108, 116, 118, 127, 128, 130, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138, 141, 142, 149, 157, 169, 182, 184, 187, 193, 195, 217.

Newspapers:

1. De Standaard

Date	Title of the article
4 February 2016	'Openbare diensten zijn geen koopwaar'
1 March 2016	Systeem voor arbitrage verbeterd
23 April 2016	Waarom uitgerekend de Duitsers tegen TTIP zijn
29 April 2016	Waalts verzet
4 May 2016	'Vertrouw Europa, ook tegen de schijn in'
4 May 2016	Wallonië heeft vragen bij CETA
13 May 2016	'China is geen markteconomie'
19 May 2016	Vijf EU-landen pleiten voor Europees arbitragemechanisme ISDS
20 July 2016	'Wallonië mag Vlaamse handel met Canada niet blokkeren'
20 July 2016	Vlaamse belangen
17 September 2016	Multinationals belangrijkste schietschijf
20 September 2016	Waalts verzet bedreigt Europees handelsverdrag met Canada
22 September 2016	Walen nemen genoegen met verduidelijking Ceta
24 September 2016	TTIP lijkt ten dode opgeschreven
13 October 2016	'PS gijzelt Europese bedrijven'
14 October 2016	Trots op de Franstaligen
14 October 2016	Anti-TTIP-slogans in tunnels
15 October 2016	'De reputatieschade is ontzettend groot'
15 October 2016	Magnettes middel vinger naar Europa
18 October 2016	Reynders met lege handen naar Europese top over handel
19 October 2016	Fabels en feiten over de 'nachtmerrie' van Magnette
19 October 2016	Gezichtsverlies en uitstel
20 October 2016	Zo snel wordt de grondwet een vodge papier
20 October 2016	Het geduld van Rutten is op
20 October 2016	Wat krijgt EU wél gedaan?
20 October 2016	Europa is een trage leerling
21 October 2016	Magnette blijft bij zijn 'non'
21 October 2016	'De Walen staan niet alleen'
21 October 2016	Arbitrage: conflicten oplossen zonder rechter
21 October 2016	Brussel zwijgt
21 October 2016	'Met ons getweën zetten we de politieke wereld niet zomaar op haar kop'
21 October 2016	Walen blokkeren continent? Naast de kwestie
22 October 2016	Gekneld tussen te veel en te weinig democratie

² Original title: Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers. Plenumvergadering: Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken.

22 October 2016	Hoe Magnette de EU, Michel en de socialisten te kijk zet
22 October 2016	Ontgoocheld en in tranen
22 October 2016	Opstand der protectionisten
22 October 2016	Angst waait weer door Europa
22 October 2016	Ceta en tabakspreventie
24 October 2016	Ultimatum? Niet voor Magnette
24 October 2016	Arbitrage: gevaarlijk of noodzakelijk?
25 October 2016	EU blijft dansen met Magnette
25 October 2016	Magnette zet vergissing recht
25 October 2016	Bakken kritiek maar goed gescoord
25 October 2016	'Ik heb een zekere empathie voor de Waalse bezorgdheid'
25 October 2016	Ceta maakt het verschil niet
26 October 2016	Belgisch Ceta-overleg wordt vandaag hervat
26 October 2016	'Hun gedrag is politiek crimineel'
26 October 2016	'Nu niet zeggen dat Magnette meer tijd nodig heeft. Ceta ligt al jaren op tafel'
26 October 2016	Magnette, de held
27 October 2016	Benoît Lutgen boycot landing
27 October 2016	Hoe de MR zich verslikte in Ceta
27 October 2016	'Alleen dat er een debat was, is een goede zaak'
27 October 2016	Rechtspraak à la carte
28 October 2016	Als de Ceta-rook om onze hoofden is verdwenen
28 October 2016	Taking back control, op Waalse wijze
28 October 2016	'Dit is de doodsteek voor TTIP'
28 October 2016	'PS en CDH hebben het nu ook begrepen'
28 October 2016	Magnette blufte
28 October 2016	Nieuwe Waalse numero uno
29 October 2016	'Het is omdat ik van Europa hou'
29 October 2016	'We helpen ons systeem naar de knoppen'
31 October 2016	'Ik vreesde een nieuwe ronde Belgium-bashing'
31 October 2016	Ceta gered, verdrag tussen EU en Oekraïne in gevaar
31 October 2016	Juncker wast Lutgen de oren
31 October 2016	Magnette boos na schoffering Wallonië door Oettinger
31 October 2016	Premier Magnette
31 October 2016	Democratie kan vervelend zijn
2 November 2016	De stoel van Magnette is te klein geworden
2 November 2016	Hoe gebruik je een kreupele?
5 November 2016	De Grauwe: 'We hebben te veel de flexibiliteit gepredikt. Niemand zegt van zichzelf dat hij rigide is'
5 November 2016	Geen volk te kort voor de export
5 November 2016	Kreupele, sta op!
9 November 2016	Geen belangen, wel principes
17 November 2016	Ongelijkheid en klimaat, daar gaat het om
22 November 2016	Wallonië tackelt weer drie handelsverdragen
26 November 2016	'Ik kreeg veel steun uit Vlaanderen, wees gerust'
29 November 2016	Meer of minder België?
29 November 2016	Naar een TTIP light
3 December 2016	'Wallonix' viseert 'treuzelende' Michel
7 December 2016	De Slimste Raoul
14 December 2016	Het einde van het land kwam geen stap dicht
14 December 2016	'Ik ben weer iets radicaler geworden'
22 December 2016	'Elk parlement moet zegen geven'

29 December 2016	Jij bepaalt welk feit je gelooft
31 December 2016	PVDA in oktober nog op conferentie met Noord-Korea
31 December 2016	'Het verzet is nog lang niet voorbij'

2. Le Soir

Date	Title of the article
14 April 2016	Fronde wallonne contre le Ceta
15 April 2016	Les entreprises inquiètes
30 April 2016	« La Wallonie, nouvelle Madame Non »
4 May 2016	La Wallonie va-t-elle se tirer une balle dans le pied ?
12 May 2016	« Une nouvelle feuille de route pour l'Europe... » Sans le social ?
24 June 2016	« Le libre-échange n'est pas la solution »
24 June 2016	Le MR, seul parti francophone à soutenir l'accord
28 June 2016	Bruxelles hors Ceta
1 July 2016	à la Chambre Un débat assez convenu sur l'avenir de l'Europe
6 July 2016	Marie Arena : « Un artifice tactique »
6 July 2016	Le Ceta discuté à Bruxelles
30 August 2016	Les trois modèles d'association avec l'UE
6 September 2016	« Repenser le modèle européen, ou aller vers la désintégration »
19 September 2016	TTIP et Ceta : contestés, loin d'être signés
19 September 2016	Le TTIP et le Ceta, toujours plus fragiles
20 September 2016	« Cet été, le parlement a été malmené »
20 September 2016	Un « STOP TTIP » très bien organisé
21 September 2016	La Commission ne veut pas régler les problèmes internes belges
21 September 2016	« Un nivellement par le bas des conditions de vie »
23 September 2016	La Belgique toujours dans l'impasse sur le Ceta
4 October 2016	Magnette dénonce
6 October 2016	Magnette intraitable avec le traité Ceta
7 October 2016	Ceta: comment amadouer les Wallons ?
8 October 2016	Ceta: pas de mandat à Bruxelles
10 October 2016	Semaine belge cruciale pour le Ceta
11 October 2016	Les parlementaires francophones inflexibles sur le Ceta
13 October 2016	Veto francophone au Ceta
14 October 2016	Suspense L'Europe se raccroche à l'ultime pow-pow belgo-belge
14 October 2016	Traité Ceta : l'agenda du fédéral dicté par les francophones
14 October 2016	« Un risque de dérégulation dans l'aide aux personnes »
14 October 2016	Traité Ceta : une certaine logique fédérale
14 October 2016	L' « invasion » des fromages européens
15 October 2016	D'ultimes manœuvres pour repêcher le Ceta
15 October 2016	Wallonie Le « non, mais... » laisse la porte ouverte à des négociations
18 October 2016	Paul Magnette, enfin taille patron
18 October 2016	Ceta : « Les délais sont faits pour être dépassés »
19 October 2016	Débat sur une Europe en pleine crise existentielle
19 October 2016	« Du temps pour un accord démocratique de qualité »
19 October 2016	UE Reynders : « La plupart de mes collègues ne comprennent pas »
20 October 2016	De Roover : « La suédoise est courageuse »
20 October 2016	Le MR entarté
20 October 2016	La saga du Ceta au cœur du
20 October 2016	« On ne peut pas trop jouer l'isolement, il faut être prudent »
20 October 2016	« Plus il y a de régulation, plus il faut de légitimité démocratique »

20 October 2016	Et si Bruxelles montrait comment réparer la panne ?
21 October 2016	Fédéral Seul le VLD prêt à la crise institutionnelle
21 October 2016	Ceta : la Wallonie tient tête à l'Europe
21 October 2016	La Wallonie au bout de sa logique : le Ceta ne passe pas
22 October 2016	La majorité flamande se déchaîne, le VLD veut passer en force au Sénat
22 October 2016	Sommet européen Charles Michel face à l'incompréhension de ses pairs
22 October 2016	l'allié Voilà le CDH à la pointe du combat anti-Ceta
22 October 2016	Magnette : « Plus simple de discuter avec le Canada qu'avec l'Europe »
22 October 2016	Ceta brisé ! Ceta martyrisé ! Une politique libérée
22 October 2016	Magnette : « Ce n'est pas une victoire »
24 October 2016	Avec la Wallonie, la Belgique devra dire « non » au Canada
24 October 2016	Dupriez à Magnette : « Ne cédon pas ! »
24 October 2016	PS-CDH Di Rupo, Lutgen, Magnette et Prévot resserrent les boulons
24 October 2016	Ceta : le « problème wallon » risque de durer
25 October 2016	Le Ceta devient un problème belgo-belge
25 October 2016	« Il y a des comportements de délinquant politique, des pressions inacceptables »
25 October 2016	Ceta : Lutgen charge la Commission
25 October 2016	Soutien anti-Ceta pour le Parlement wallon
26 October 2016	La Wallonie a-t-elle raison de refuser les tribunaux d'arbitrage ?
26 October 2016	Le MR, plus isolé que jamais sur la scène francophone
26 October 2016	Les accords commerciaux peuvent nuire à la santé
26 October 2016	Le MR indigné de l'attitude du bourgmestre...
27 October 2016	Magnette, quand il parle du Ceta, tout le monde l'encense mais personne ne l'écoute
27 October 2016	Suédoise et Commission, la mauvaise pièce
27 October 2016	Ceta : trois points pour une sortie de la crise belgo-belge
27 October 2016	Négociations Michel, Reynders, Magnette, Antoine : quatre acteurs en quête d'épilogue
28 October 2016	Le Ceta est intact, mais le combat wallon n'a pas été vain
28 October 2016	Ceta : « Il n'y a pas d'alternative »
29 October 2016	com Le PS et le CDH à l'offensive sur la Toile, le MR prêt à riposter
29 October 2016	Pourquoi la Flandre ne vote pas
29 October 2016	Comment le chef de la diplomatie a couru derrière les Régions
29 October 2016	Les fleurs pour Paul Magnette, les pots pour le CDH
29 October 2016	Reynders s'en prend aux « pompiers pyromanes »
29 October 2016	Didier Reynders fait l'éloge de Paul Magnette et accable le CDH
31 October 2016	« Pitoyable Wallonie »
31 October 2016	Charles Michel « J'ai vraiment craint une nouvelle vague de Belgian bashing »
31 October 2016	Le Ceta signé, Juncker fait la leçon à Lutgen et à la Belgique
31 October 2016	Lutgen : « Juncker doit se réveiller ! »
31 October 2016	« La Wallonie, une micro-Région gérée par des communistes »
31 October 2016	« On a parfois menti aux gens sur le Ceta »
3 November 2016	« Notre système fédéral est une exception mondiale »
4 November 2016	Hulot : « Le temps de la cohérence »
4 November 2016	Les actions anti-Ceta continuent
5 November 2016	Wallonie « Un comportement légitime »
9 November 2016	Le commerce international est-il compatible avec la démocratie ?

19 November 2016	Van Cau s'est « radicalisé » : « Il ne faut plus de Communauté »
25 November 2016	La Wallonie, un peu, beaucoup, désespérément...
30 November 2016	Quand Philippe rejoint Paul
2 December 2016	Magnette menace de suspendre le Ceta
3 December 2016	Le risque d'une deuxième crise du Ceta
6 December 2016	Après le Ceta, Magnette mobilise les intellectuels
13 December 2016	Saga Ceta et conflits contre Etats : l'Europe ouvre le débat
28 December 2016	Magnette : « Avec le Ceta, j'ai vu la politique dans toute sa splendeur »
28 December 2016	Paul Magnette l'Européen

1.1.1. Brexit

Parliamentary debates:

Belgian Chamber of Representatives. Plenum meeting: Integral report with translated concise report of the speeches. Sitting numbers (PLEN): 080, 095, 098, 100, 101, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137, 138, 141, 142, 145, 146, 154, 155, 161, 163, 164, 168, 169, 171, 175, 177, 185, 187, 188, 202, 208.

Newspapers:

1. De Standaard

Date	Title of the article
20 February 2016	Charles Michel, de nieuwe Mister Europe
27 February 2016	Als Oost-Europa geen vluchtelingen wil opvangen, krijgt het ook minder geld
5 March 2016	'Johnson, Wilders, Trump: symptomen van dezelfde ziekte'
23 March 2016	Koren op de molen van aanhangers Brexit en extreemrechts.
14 May 2016	Zou Winston Churchill ja of neen stemmen?
17 May 2016	'Brexit'ers zijn moreel kompas kwijt'
21 May 2016	Belang boort ook economisch ongenoegen aan
31 May 2016	Waarom Europa ertoe doet
6 June 2016	'EU verwoest haar arbeidersklasse'
13 June 2016	De paradox van het referendum
22 June 2016	'Vlaams Belang is betere hervormer dan N-VA'
25 June 2016	'Als Europa de schulden niet wegwerkt, zal extreemrechts dat doen'
27 June 2016	Premier Michel rijdt op het middenvak
28 June 2016	Populisten leggen bom onder Europese banken
28 June 2016	En plots vinden we de Schotten toffe jongens
29 June 2016	N-VA laat conservatieven niet los
5 July 2016	Drie Brexiteers zijn uitgeteld
9 July 2016	'Populisten willen zelf de plek van de corrupte elite innemen'
12 July 2016	Europa kan niet op dezelfde weg verder
13 July 2016	Luistert Schäuble naar Van Overtveldt?
13 July 2016	België bij grootste slachtoffers Brexit
19 July 2016	Trump en de broosheid van democratie
22 July 2016	Britten willen Belg worden
26 July 2016	België pleit voor Europese kieskring
6 August 2016	'Ik denk dat we ons serieus zorgen moeten maken'
20 August 2016	'Een derde wereldoorlog? Ik ben pessimistisch, ja'
15 September 2016	'Europa is niet het Wilde Westen'

24 September 2016	'Deze regering is er een van woorden, niet van daden'
6 Oktober 2016	Democratie zit tussen ja en nee
13 Oktober 2016	'Beschuldig ons vooral niet van een anti-Belgische houding'
21 Oktober 2016	'Harde Brexit? Harde onderhandelingen!'
19 November 2016	Democratie is meer dan een bolletje kleuren
21 November 2016	'Tony Blair duikt in politiek vacuüm'
25 November 2016	'U onderschat het vermogen van CD&V om haar beloftes te realiseren'
26 November 2016	CD&V neemt gas terug over tobintaks
3 December 2016	Wat als... de N-VA de regering zou opblazen?
7 December 2016	'Brexit-onderhandelingen moeten al in oktober 2018 afgerond zijn'
7 December 2016	De Slimste Raoul
15 December 2016	Het gebroken spiegelbeeld van Winston Churchill
24 December 2016	'Je kan voor én tegen de Brexit zijn. Dat bewees Theresa May'

2. Le Soir

Date	Title of the article
8 March 2016	N-VA Formation sous pression, et combative
9 May 2016	Le « Brexit » n'inspire pas (trop) les Belges
1 June 2016	Les illusions britanniques
2 June 2016	Immigration et Brexit, un seul débat
16 June 2016	L'immigration vampirise tous les débats du Brexit
22 June 2016	Un eurosceptique mou devenu pro-européen modéré
23 June 2016	Charles Michel : « Un momentum pour l'Europe »
23 June 2016	Paul De Grauwe « A-t-on besoin d'un pays qui veut déconstruire l'Union européenne ? »
25 June 2016	Van Rompuy « Je ne crois pas à l'implosion »
25 June 2016	Berlin « Un signal clair que l'Europe doit plus se préoccuper des gens »
25 June 2016	Je t'aime... moi non plus
25 June 2016	« Je ne pouvais pas aller plus loin »
25 June 2016	diplomatie belge Garder des relations de « haut niveau »
27 June 2016	Reynders « Du concret, sinon le désenchantement guette »
27 June 2016	N-VA : des contradictions sur le référendum
27 June 2016	« L'Europe va devoir se redéfinir » : l'appel pour sauver l'Union européenne
27 June 2016	« Pour les Islandais, cet Euro, c'est comme des vacances nationales ! »
28 June 2016	Et les Belges, pour quelle Europe sont-ils?
28 June 2016	Après le Brexit, il va falloir choisir
29 June 2016	Le plan de la suédoise : report du budget, réformes à la rentrée
29 June 2016	Le Brexit doit être appliqué
2 July 2016	« L'esprit européen survivra, à condition de se garder des monstres »
6 July 2016	Marie Arena : « Un artifice tactique »
11 July 2016	La N-VA enfonce le clou : elle veut une révision de la Constitution en 2019
12 July 2016	Réforme de l'Etat : la N-VA en force et (presque) isolée
22 July 2016	Comment le Benelux peut-il être un exemple pour l'Europe ?
25 July 2016	De Croo : « Le train des réformes ne doit pas s'arrêter »
26 July 2016	« La culture européenne ? Elle n'existe pas »
4 August 2016	Les Belges, plutôt pessimistes au lendemain du « Brexit »
25 August 2016	La N-VA se muscle sur la scène internationale
26 August 2016	Le Brexit a provoqué « une incertitude »
1 September 2016	Michel plaide pour une Europe de projets concrets

8 September 2016	Brexit: l'occasion manquée
14 September 2016	« L'UE est aussi forte que les Etats membres l'autorisent »
27 September 2016	« Les francophones ont la culture du débat »
5 October 2016	Quel divorce avec la Grande-Bretagne?
7 October 2016	« Les populistes contribuent désormais à la décision publique »
19 October 2016	Débat sur une Europe en pleine crise existentielle
22 October 2016	La majorité flamande se déchaîne, le VLD veut passer en force au Sénat
15 November 2016	Vote obligatoire ou facultatif : les libéraux tranchent à Ciney
16 November 2016	Louis Michel sauve le vote obligatoire
22 November 2016	Michel chez May
28 November 2016	Démocratie contre populisme
30 November 2016	Le MR, seul parti au fédéral à défendre la taxe Tobin
12 December 2016	Communication « La N-VA garde une logique anti-establishment »

9.2. Secondary sources

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9.3. Tables

Map 1: 'Belgium: Maps of the federal state' https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/government/federale_staat/map. Consulted on 16 May 2018.

Table 2: Dandoy, R., Reuchamps, M. and Baudewyns, P. (2015). The 2014 federal and European elections in Belgium. *Electoral Studies*, 39(1), 166.

Table 3: Dandoy, R., Reuchamps, M. and Baudewyns, P. (2015). The 2014 federal and European elections in Belgium. *Electoral Studies*, 39(1), 167.

10. Appendix

10.1. Used quotations in original language

Party	Original quote
PS	“L'opposition du PS à cet accord n'est ni un signe d'eurosepticisme, ni la manifestation d'une certaine méfiance à l'égard du Canada. En revanche, notre volonté est de préserver notre modèle socioéconomique, nos emplois (PLEN, 130).”
MR	“De mensen zijn bang, zelfs zij die dicht bij ons staan. Het idee dat er chloorkippen en hormonenvlees op ons bord komen, heeft zich genesteld in de hoofden. Dan is het moeilijk om het handelsverdrag met Canada nog te verdedigen. Er wordt niet meer geluisterd naar onze argumenten (De Standaard, 27 October 2016).”
Open VLD	“We zijn immers voorstander van vrije handel en van de afbouw van douane- en toltarieven. Een vergroting van de markten biedt groeimogelijkheden voor onze bedrijven en leidt tot meer banen (PLEN, 137).”
PTB/PVDA	“Die verdragen vormen een bedreiging voor onze sociale verworvenheden, voor de sanitaire en gezondheidsnormen en voor de democratische rechten (PLEN, 100).”
MR	Ledit accord renforce la cohérence de la francophonie internationale à laquelle notre formation politique est attachée. Canada est l'un des principaux bailleurs de fonds de la francophonie internationale. À ce titre, cet accord est important
PS	“La procédure proposée pour la nomination des juges de l'ICS et de leur statut... ne répond pas aux exigences internationales concernant l'indépendance garantie des tribunaux (PLEN, 100).”
CdH	“Jean-Claude Juncker doit vraiment se réveiller ! Car on ne va pas régler les problèmes européens (sécurité, économie, dumping social...) par des traités. Il faut des investissements, une politique industrielle, énergétique, et montrer aux citoyens qu'on les écoute. (Le Soir, 31 October 2016).”
Open VLD	“De realiteit is dat elke lidstaat, bij het begin van een onderhandeling door de Commissie, een mandaat geeft aan de Commissie. Als de Commissie dan een akkoord bereikt met de andere partij, dan is het aan het Europees Parlement om dat verdrag goed te keuren (PLEN, 169).”
NV-A	Le PS utilise maintenant son pouvoir en Wallonie pour encore bloquer. La seule conclusion est que les deux démocraties doivent suivre des voies séparées (Le Soir, 31 October 2016).

MR	“le PS joue vraiment avec le feu, donnant de fait un coup de pouce au confédéralisme, la Wallonie décidant toute seule de bloquer tout, envers et contre tout, et faisant cavalier seul pour des raisons propres à Magnette et au PS. Qui est le seul parti socialiste européen à refuser le CETA. Cela va amener certains débats, comme celui-ci : faut-il encore que tous les parlements approuvent de tels traités (Le Soir, 22 October 2016).”
NV-A	“Ze gebruiken hun autonomie. Maar ze dragen er de gevolgen niet van. Dat zoiets kan, wijst op een systeemfout (De Standaard, 25 October 2016).”
Vuye&Wouters	“Er is nood aan een structurele oplossing. De deelstaten moeten voortaan aanschuiven aan de onderhandelingstafel van de EU en niet langer de federale regering. Nu is er eerst een wederzijdse afgrenzing en blokkering en op het einde komt er weer een typisch compromis <i>à la Belge</i> uit de hoge hoed (PLEN, 137).”
Open VLD	“Economie, welvaart en Europese betrouwbaarheid gaan voor mij boven complexe, institutionele realiteit in België (De Standaard, 20 October 2016).”
Sp.a	“Hoe is het mogelijk dat wij van een breed gedragen Europees project terechtgekomen zijn in een situatie waarin brede lagen dit project afwijzen? De vraag stellen, legt mij op om mijn antwoord met u te delen. Ik vat die evolutie in 30 jaar samen in drie woorden: neoliberalisme, globalisering en ordoliberalisme (PLEN, 118).”
Open VLD	“De beslissing is te betreuren, maar wij moeten de uitspraak van het Britse volk respecteren. Er zijn ook kansen, ik verwijs naar banken die een verhuizing van Londen naar Brussel overwegen. Open VLD wil een oplossing die onze burgers en onze economie centraal stelt (PLEN, 163).”
Ecolo/Groen	“Créer plus d' Europe est un moyen de créer une Europe avec un visage plus humain, une Europe sociale, une Europe qui investit dans l'économie, une Europe qui s'éteint pour les combustibles fossiles et qui est exemplaire pour le monde entier, une Europe qui prend aussi les paradis fiscaux au sérieux (PLEN, 118).”
Vlaams Belang	“Als u deze kans niet grijpt om een totaal andere Europese samenwerking te creëren, met veel meer soevereiniteit voor de lidstaten, zullen een nexit, een frexit, en wat ons betreft ook graag een vlexit, sneller realiteit zijn dan u voor mogelijk houdt (PLEN, 118).”

PTB/PVDA	“Le peuple britannique se voit proposer soit de rester dans une Union européenne néolibérale, soit de foncer dans une Grande-Bretagne ultralibérale. En gros, un choix entre la peste et le choléra (PLEN, 116).”
NV-A	“Het is een wake-upcall, een uitnodiging, een oproep om te doen aan kritische zelfreflectie. Eén zaak is duidelijk: de traditionele eurofiele of euroforische aanpak heeft gefaald. We hebben nu nood aan een eurorealistische aanpak. We herkennen ons wel in sommige argumenten van het brexitkamp. Ja, het is een terechte verzuchting om te pleiten voor meer soevereiniteit, voor meer zelfstandigheid (PLEN, 116).”
MR	“Notre faiblesse, ce n'est pas l'Union européenne mais c'est l'absence d'Union européenne. L'Union nous renforce. La désunion nous affaiblit. Notre mouvement politique désire, chers collègues, retrouver, pour chaque citoyen européen et chaque État membre, l'éthique qui a fondé l'adhésion au projet européen (PLEN, 95).”
Ecolo/Groen	“We zijn het gewend: als de cijfers slecht zijn dan komt dat volgens de premier door de brexit. Maar de gevolgen van de brexit gelden ook voor de andere Europese landen! (PLEN, 132).”
NV-A	“Les logiques des pays du Sud ne sont pas celles du Nord, dont nous sommes, en Flandre, des partenaires plus proches. De même, nous n'avons pas le même regard sur l'après-Brexit que les autres régions du pays (Le Soir, 25 August 2016).”
Vuye&Wouters	“Ik moet er u ook op wijzen, mijnheer de premier, dat uw visie op de EU en op de brexit nogal verregaande gevolgen heeft voor Vlaanderen. U weet zoals ik dat de Belgische export niet bestaat. De export is Vlaams: 84 % van de export is Vlaams. Wanneer we naar Groot-Brittannië kijken, loopt dat zelfs op tot 90 % (PLEN, 164).”