

**The Santer Commission Resignation Crisis:
Government-Opposition Dynamics in Executive-Legislative Relations of the EU**

Nils F. Ringe
Department of Political Science
University of Pittsburgh
February 2003

Prepared for delivery at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the
European Union Studies Association, March 27-29, 2003.

Correspondence:
Department of Political Science
4L01 Posvar Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Tel: 412-215-3266
Fax: 412-648-7250
Email: nir6@pitt.edu

Abstract:

The Santer Commission Resignation Crisis:

Government-Opposition Dynamics in Executive-Legislative Relations of the EU

The paper argues that the crisis leading to the resignation of the Santer Commission in March 1999 was the result of an unprecedented intensification of party competition in the EP, based on a *government-opposition dynamic* that was also observable at an inter-institutional level.

It employs the theoretical literature on executive-legislative relations, especially with regard to 'government' and 'opposition' modes, and considers the relationships between the Commission, EP Socialists, and EP Christian-Democrats.

The paper is based on fifty-two interviews, primarily with Members of the European Parliament, EP officials, and Commission officials. It also quantitatively analyzes MEP voting behavior throughout the crisis.

The paper identifies the government-opposition dynamic as a potential factor underlying political competition in the European sphere. It also maintains that government and opposition modes may converge and co-vary at national and EU levels; 'opposition' in the context of the EU can have several simultaneous targets: Commission, Council, and national governments. Accordingly, the paper suggests that there may be an overlap between 'national' and 'partisan' politics in the EU. In this sense, this paper helps determine where, when, and how the pro-/anti-integration dimension meets the left-right divide.

The Santer Commission Resignation Crisis:

Government-Opposition Dynamics in Executive-Legislative Relations of the EU

1. Introduction

On March 15, 1999, the European Commission under President Jacques Santer resigned collectively under pressure from the European Parliament. A long and intense political process preceded this final, unprecedented step, culminating in an open crisis during the Commission's final four months in office, from December 1998 to March 1999. At that point in time, recurrent accusations of fraud, nepotism and mismanagement of aid funds had generated a highly politicized atmosphere both within the European Parliament and between the two institutions. The dynamic that developed increasingly assumed the nature of a political battle for and against the Commission, as well as for and against the principle of the Commission's collective political responsibility.

The literature does not offer a comprehensive and conclusive discussion of the political motives, variables, and other factors explaining the nature of the conflict leading to the resignation of the Santer Commission.¹ In fact, the few studies using the resignation crisis as an empirical basis do not satisfactorily explain what caused the course of events and, ultimately, the outcome of the crisis, despite its singularity in the history of the European Union. Instead, even the most extensive – and exceptionally valuable – study of the resignation crisis by David Judge and David Earnshaw concludes that what fueled events was an “inflammable mix of national, partisan, and personal political motivations and interinstitutional interactions,” and that the “assertiveness of the EP” during the crisis was due

¹ There is a small number of studies using the resignation crisis as an empirical basis (Judge and Earnshaw, 2002; Nickel, 1999; Muntean, 1999)

to a “confluence of timing, intergroup competition, treaty amendment, intergovernmental and party politics, and Commission ineptness” (Judge and Earnshaw, 2002 pp. 354, 369). While this long list of different factors identifies a number of relevant aspects underlying the course of events, it hardly constitutes a parsimonious explanation for the resignation crisis and its outcome.

I argue that the resignation crisis was the result of an increasingly politicized atmosphere inside and outside the European Parliament, resulting from the unusual, and unprecedented, intensification of party competition. This new quality of party competition was based on a *government-opposition dynamic* observable both within the European Parliament and at an inter-institutional level: the Socialist Group maintained its role as a ‘government-supporting party’, while the EPP renounced its previous support of the Commission and increasingly, and consciously, acted like a *de facto* opposition party. This constitutes a novel argument in the context of EU governance, where the notion of a government-opposition dynamic is generally discounted and disregarded (e.g. Raunio, 1996, p.108; Coultrap, 1999 pp.100-112).

I demonstrate the prominence and critical importance of this government-opposition dynamic in the interaction among three actors – Commission, PES, and EPP – based on a theoretical framework provided by Anthony King (1976). King describes and analyzes the behavior and interaction of government and opposition parties in the context of executive-legislative relations and distinguishes between a number of different ‘modes’ that stand at the core of executive-legislative relations in European parliamentary democracies, including a ‘government-mode’ and an ‘opposition-mode.’ Applying this framework to the case of the Santer Commission resignation crisis, I compare and contrast the attitudes, motivations,

objectives, and strategic behaviors of the actors throughout the crisis. My findings are based on interviews with thirty-one Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from six party groups (primarily the Party of European Socialists [PES] and the European People's Party [EPP]), six officials from the European Commission, five officials from the European Parliament, four journalists from major European newspapers, and one member of the Committee of Independent Experts.² The conclusions are generally supported by the quantitative analysis of the voting behaviors of PES and EPP parliamentarians in the two central votes of the crisis: the vote on the 1996 budgetary discharge (December 1998) and the motion of censure against the Commission (January 1999). The comparison between quantitative and qualitative analysis, however, suggests that the government-opposition dynamic was more evident in the political process (behavior) than in the political outcomes (voting).

The structure of this paper is the following: After describing the course of events leading to the resignation of the Santer Commission in Part 2, I review the relevant literature in Part 3. Part 4 outlines the theoretical attributes of 'government' (or 'government-supporting') and 'opposition' behavior in executive-legislative relations. Part 5 is the empirical case study of the crisis leading to the collective resignation of the Santer Commission. The qualitative analysis of attitudes, motivations, objectives, and strategic behaviors throughout the crisis is followed by a quantitative analysis of voting patterns. Part 6 concludes this paper.

² The interviews took place between December 2000 and April 2001, and in July 2002. For a complete list, see Appendix I.

2. The Resignation Crisis – The Course of Events

The crisis ultimately leading to the resignation of the Commission was triggered in the Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament, whose most fundamental task is to discuss whether or not the Commission should be granted budgetary discharge. The right to grant budget discharge – which is the formal approval of Parliament for the way in which the budget was implemented by the Commission in a given financial year – constitutes the basis of Parliament's budgetary powers and constitutes the final act in adopting the European Union's accounts. The position taken by the Budgetary Control Committee on the discharge question serves as a recommendation to Parliament as a whole before the final vote on discharge is taken in the plenary.

In the Committee, a group of EPP parliamentarians assumed a radical stance in their evaluation of the question over the 1996 budget discharge as well as alleged cases of mismanagement in the Commission that had become public over the previous months, revolving primarily around French Commissioner Edith Cresson and Spaniard Manuel Marin – two Socialists.³ At this time, the Socialists prevailed in their position favoring discharge, and the Committee voted in favor of granting discharge with a narrow margin of 14 to 13 votes on December 11. With this vote, the Committee officially advised the EP plenary to grant discharge.

³ The allegations against Cresson concerned irregularities and cronyism in her department for Science, Research and Development. In the Leonardo Da Vinci program, the purpose of which was to implement the Community's vocational training policy, millions of dollars had allegedly been misappropriated by the program's contractor. Mrs. Cresson also came under scrutiny for an alleged case of nepotism: she was suspected of having secured her long-standing friend and dentist, Mr. René Berthelot, contracts from her own Directorate-General as a visiting scientist for work for which he was manifestly unqualified. The accusations against Marin went back to the 1980s, when he had been responsible for the Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and concerned the misappropriation of EU funds - including forged invoices, bogus reports, absence and possible destruction of supporting documents for expenditure, administrative irregularities in contract management, as well as suspected embezzlement (*Document presented by the EC at the press conference held in response to the allegations against it early January 1999*).

The issue was debated in the EP plenary on December 15, where the rapporteur of the Budgetary Control Committee publicly assumed a stance contrary to its Committee's official position and urged the EP not to grant discharge. The following day, Commission President Santer announced that the Commission would treat the matter of discharge as one of confidence in a letter sent to each Member of Parliament declaring the Commission's position. He urged Parliament either to grant discharge or to "clarify the situation by proceeding to a vote on a censure motion."⁴ In the vote on discharge of the EP plenary on December 17, 1998, however, discharge was denied.⁵

Based on the premise that a refusal of discharge is tantamount to an expression of non-confidence in the Commission, the President of the Socialist group in the EP, Pauline Green, announced immediately following the discharge vote that she would file a motion of censure against the Commission.⁶ She also emphasized that her group would vote against its own motion, thus effectively converting a vote of non-confidence into a vote of confidence (for which there is no treaty provision). This motion was to be voted upon in the January 1999 session of the EP.

By the time of the EP's January session, the focus of the conflict had decisively shifted from budgetary issues and the misdemeanors of individual Commissioners to the general question of political responsibility and accountability of and within the European

⁴ As quoted in Agence Europe, Friday, December 18, 1998, p.9

⁵ The EP rejected discharge for the 1996 budget in a vote of 268 to 223, with twenty-two abstentions. It is important to note, however, that Parliament neither granted discharge nor refused it. As a simple majority is enough to grant discharge, whereas a qualified majority is needed to refuse it, the Parliament in its vote on December 17 merely *rejected to grant discharge*. A final decision on the discharge for the 1996 financial year remains outstanding until today.

⁶ Neither the EU's rules of procedure, nor customary principle, nor historical precedent provide a definitive answer to the question of whether or not a refusal to grant budget discharge is indeed tantamount to an expression of non-confidence. Corbett et al. (1995 pp.254), however, maintain in their standard work on the European Parliament that there appears to be a procedural logic linking refusal of discharge and motion of censure.

Commission – especially the matter of individual versus collective responsibility. These issues were reflected in the different resolutions tabled by the EP party groups. The EPP promoted the idea of individual political responsibility in the Commission, a position that was overtly targeting Commissioners Marin and Cresson, the two Commissioners who had been especially implicated in the alleged scandals surrounding the Commission. The resolution tabled by the Socialists, on the other hand, promoted the notion of collective responsibility and called for Commission President Santer to resign if individual Commissioners, in this case two Socialists, were considered guilty of mishandling financial and administrative affairs. The resolution also called for the establishment of an independent committee of experts that should examine how fraud, mismanagement, and nepotism are being identified and handled by the Commission. Moreover, the plenary of the EP was due to vote on two motions of censure, one tabled by Pauline Green (her “vote of confidence”), the other one by a coalition of MEPs from all party groups except the Socialists, as “a true motion of censure” reflecting the “political link between the refusal of discharge and a motion of censure.”⁷

In its voting session on January 14, the EP denied the EPP resolution targeting Commissioners Marin and Cresson, while accepting the Socialist one. Hence, a Committee of Independent Experts was to examine the charges leveled against the Commission and present a first report by March 1999. The EP also refrained from censuring the Commission by voting 293 to 232 (27 abstentions) against censure.

The Committee of Independent Experts was convened under the auspices of the Parliament and the Commission. Its members were designated jointly by Parliament’s Conference of Presidents, i.e. the heads of the individual party groups, and the European Commission. The group was, in the words of an EP official, a mixture of insiders and

⁷ Reasons supporting motion of censure tabled by Mr. Fabre-Aubrespy MEP, B4-0053/99, January 11, 1999.

outsiders and somewhat balanced between the financial/auditing and the legal types.⁸ After two months of examination and deliberation, the Committee submitted its first report to Commission and Parliament on March 15, 1999. While the report cleared most Commissioners of the charges brought against them – with the exception of Edith Cresson – its concluding chapter on the question of political responsibility broke the Commission’s collective neck by stating that “the studies carried out by the Committee have too often revealed a growing reluctance among the members of the hierarchy [of the Commission] to acknowledge their responsibility. It was becoming increasingly difficult to find anyone who has the slightest sense of responsibility.”⁹ Following the publication of the report, even the PES publicly revoked its support of the Commission. Late that night, President Santer announced the collective resignation of the European Commission.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

3. Literature Review

This brief overview draws attention to the prominent role of EP party groups and inter-party competition during the course of events leading to the resignation of the Santer Commission. According to the recent literature on European parties and the evolving European party system, party competition in the EP is on the rise (Kreppel and Tsebelis,

⁸ The Committee was composed of Chairman André Middelhoek, the Dutch auditor and former President of the European Court of Auditors; Inga-Britt Ahlenius, a Swedish auditor; Juan Antonio Carrillo Salcedo, a Spanish international human rights lawyer; Pierre Lelong, a French auditor and former president of the European Court of Auditors; and Walter van Gerven, a Belgian lawyer and former Advocate-General at the European Court of Justice.

⁹ Committee of Independent Experts, First Report, para 9.4.5.

1999; Hix, 2001) and based increasingly on an ideological left-right divide.¹⁰ It is also characterized by high levels of cohesion in EP party groups that is actually comparable to national standards (for data on the 1979-84 and 1984-1989 Parliaments: Attina, 1990; for the 1989-94 Parliament: Bay Brzinski, 1995, Raunio, 1997, 1998, Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999; for the current Parliament: Hix, 2001). This development went hand in hand with a deterioration of what was commonly known as the 'Grand Coalition' between the Socialists and the Christian-Democrats in the Parliament (Kreppel, 1999; Hix, 2001; Hix et al., 2002),¹¹ and has resulted in what Peter Mair would call an "open" competition structure displaying unpredictable, differing patterns of alternatives – the norm in newly emerging party systems (Mair, 1997 pp.211-2).

The increase in ideological sentiment in the Parliament has been highlighted by studies of voting patterns and voting behavior in the EP, which determined that party affiliation and ideology constitute the most powerful variables explaining voting behavior in the EP (Kreppel, 1999; Kreppel and Tsebelis, 1999; Hix, 2001; Noury and Roland, 2002), while level and quality of collusion and competition in the EP depend on a number of institutional factors, as well as the issues at stake (Hix et al., 2002).

Some of these quantitative analyses of party competition in the EP have taken into consideration a potential inter-institutional dynamic by including variables accounting for a number of possible 'relationships' between EP and Commission or EP and Council. These analyses have not found a discernable pattern linking an inter-institutional dimension with party positions in the EP and generally discarded the notion of a European-level 'government-

¹⁰ For a long time, it was widely believed that ideology plays a minimal role in the EP's legislative process due to the apparent absence of a significant ideological cleavage in the EP (e.g. Laffan, 1996 p. 93; Wessels and Diedrichs, 1999 p. 145).

opposition' dynamic. Only Simon Hix (2001 p.673) suspects that it may exist and be linked to the EU integration dimension. By examining executive-legislative relations during the resignation crisis, this paper will more closely examine the inter-institutional aspect of party competition in the EU. This will add to our understanding of the relationship between European Parliament and Commission, which has received little theory-driven attention,¹² and help us understand how the different 'dimensions' of EU politics interact.

4. Different Modes of Executive-Legislative Relations

I am examining the behavior and interaction of three actors: the Party of European Socialists (PES), the European People's party (EPP), and the European Commission. The question I am asking is what motivated these actors to pursue their respective strategies throughout the course of events leading to the Commission's resignation? Why did they act in the way they did?

I argue that the different actors were driven by a government-opposition dynamic at the European level. This dynamic triggered the crisis, aggravated it critically, and proved to reinforce itself throughout the course of events. The Socialists, on the one hand, acted as a government (or government-supporting) party. The EPP, on the other hand – though internally divided – defected from the Commission-supporting 'Grand Coalition' and acted as the primary opposition party throughout the course of events leading to the fall of the Commission.¹³ In order to establish the validity of this argument empirically, however, it is

¹¹ The notion of the centrist Grand Coalition has been discussed by Westlake, 1994; Corbett et al., 1995; Wessels and Diedrichs, 1999; Dinan, 1999; Raunio, 1999.

¹² The little research that does exist is primarily descriptive (e.g. Westlake, 1994; Corbett et al., 1995)

¹³ For analytical reasons, I am treating Commission, PES, and EPP largely as unitary actors, although I am well aware that this constitutes an oversimplification. After all, certain Commissioners played more prominent roles than others (such as President Santer or Commissioners Cresson and Marin), and both major party groups were internally divided. Yet, in each case a common, 'official' position is clearly observable – despite individual

essential to define theoretically the concepts of “government” and “opposition,” both intra-parliamentary and in terms of executive-legislative relations.

The politics of the opposition in parliamentary democracies is a relatively neglected topic (Blondel, 1997 p.462), despite the importance of a functioning opposition in democratic systems (Dahl, 1966). The focus has traditionally been on the executive branch and the process of coalition building within the legislature. Robert Dahl provides one of the few studies of opposition politics in his classic book *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (1966), where he finds that there is no single universal pattern of opposition politics. In another study, Gregory Luebbert has evaluated the role of the opposition in the classification of democracy (1986). Anthony King describes and analyzes the behavior and interaction of government and opposition parties in the context of executive-legislative relations (1976). His analysis serves as the theoretical basis of this paper.

King distinguishes between a number of dynamics, or ‘modes,’ that stand at the core of executive-legislative relations in European parliamentary democracies. Most importantly, he talks of an “intra-party mode” that exists between governments and government backbenchers in parliament, and an “opposition mode” that constitutes the relationship between governments and government backbenchers and the members of parties in the legislature which are not included in the composition of the government. King’s goal was to identify and consider separately a number of distinct political relationships that are generally subsumed under the heading of “the relations between the executive and the legislature.”

While the application of his theoretical framework to the three cases of Great Britain, France, and West Germany revealed several distinct patterns of such relationships, King was able to

defections from this “party line” – and the government-opposition dynamic can be observed in the competitive configuration and interaction of these conflicting positions.

identify and classify a number of shared elements that constitute the core of executive-legislative relations in the three countries.

King's 'modes' of executive-legislative relations provide a useful theoretical framework for the examination of individual cases, such as the relationship between the EP (as the EU's legislature) and the European Commission (as the Union's quasi-Executive body, or what Simon Hix has identified as one part of the EU's 'dual executive', along with the Council [Hix, 1999 pp.54-5]). After describing the core elements of King's 'modes' of executive-legislative relations, I will apply his framework to the case of the Santer Commission resignation crisis.

The *intra-party mode* focuses on the relationship between government ministers and government backbenchers in the parliament. This mode is characterized by a high degree of what Kaare Strom (1995) calls "incentive compatibility," i.e. shared interests between principals (those members of parliament who choose to support the government) and agents (government ministers, particularly from 'their' party). This compatibility is not absolute, and the government is not assured of its backbenchers continued support. Overall, however, cabinet ministers and parliamentarians from a supporting party are 'in the same boat' in a competitive relationship with the opposition. The higher the share of cabinet ministers who are members of the respective government party, and the more competitive government-opposition relations, the higher the degree of incentive compatibility and the lower the risk of conflicts of interest between MPs and cabinet ministers. In addition, the stronger the requirements of partisanship are on the part of the cabinet ministers, the more effective is the bond between the government and the government-supporting parliamentary party. (Saalfeld, 2000 p.358).

The concept of incentive compatibility is not as straightforward in the relationship between the European Commission and the government-supporting party/parties in the European Parliament as it is in traditional, national parliamentary systems. This is largely due to the institutional peculiarities of the Union's system of governance. After all, the link between Commissioners (as the EU equivalent of government ministers) and the party groups in the EP with which they are affiliated, is weak compared to the situation in national West European democracies. Most importantly, Commissioners are not selected from the ranks of EP party groups, but nominated by member state governments. Yet, the partisan affiliation of individual Commissioners is not inconsequential – despite the fact that it is difficult to identify the Commission as a single, cohesive, partisan entity (Peterson, 1999 pp.49-51) – and party groups are well aware of who 'their' Commissioners are.¹⁴ Hence, while the fate of the Commissioners may not be directly tied to that of the parliamentarians who support them, there exists some partisan-based relationship between them, and the partisan composition of the Commission is one of the elements determining the relationship between particular EP party and the Commission.¹⁵

The *opposition mode*, which describes the relationship between government and government backbenchers on the one hand and members of the opposition in the parliament on the other, is a relationship that is "characterized, indeed defined by, conflict" (King, 1976 p.18). This mode takes place in several different arenas: in parliamentary debates, confrontations in the media, or competitions for votes in the constituencies (King, 1976 p.17).

¹⁴ Both EPP and PES provide a list of 'their' Commissioners on their websites (www.eurosocialists.org and www.eppe.org)

¹⁵ For instance, Jacques Santer, Wilfried Martens and others suggests that it was the absence of a German Christian-Democratic Commissioner that defined, to a considerable degree, the relationship between CDU MEPs and the Commission.

The politicians of government and opposition parties – both leaders and followers – have no incentives to agree:

“Their aim is not accommodation but conquest ... if the intra-party mode can be likened to a marriage (however stormy at times), the opposition mode resembles a war game. There are rules which each side must observe, but both sides play to win.”(King, 1976 p.18)

For the opposition party in the legislature, the ultimate goal is to defeat government initiatives, or at least to force the executive to defend its position and proposals publicly. It thus fixes accountability for the government’s actions and puts itself in a position to assess a political cost for these actions at the next general election (Mezey, 1998 p.784). To this end, it typically exploits the institutional tools available to extract information from the government, to monitor its activities, and to induce them to defend their positions and decisions (Saalfeld, 2000 p.165). It may, for example, “call into question the responsibility of the Government (or the Minister concerned) by tabling a motion on which the Assembly must take a decision, which then amounts to a motion of censure.” (Wiberg, 1995 p.186). Most dramatically, it can introduce a motion of censure directly, which determines the fate of the government straight out.¹⁶

5. The Resignation Crisis: An Analysis

5.1. The Government-Opposition Dynamic at Work: Attitudes, Objectives, Strategies

In order to determine the validity of the argument that the central underlying factor accounting for the course of events and its outcome described above was a government-opposition dynamic within the EP and in its relationship with the Commission, I will look at a number of elements and situations where this dynamic should be observable. In particular, I

¹⁶ For a discussion of the Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies see Huber, 1996.

will examine the following aspects of the resignation crisis: the attitudes of EPP and PES towards the two issues at hand, discharge and political accountability; their political goals and motivations; their strategic behavior throughout the months of December and January; and finally, the nature of their relationship with the Commission. I will contrast these positions with those of the Commission. I will then move on to an analysis of their voting behavior in the discharge and censure matters in the section that follows.

In the time period leading up to the resignation crisis, general discussion had broken out within the EPP group over the role of the EPP as a genuine European opposition party at the European level.¹⁷ This discussion was driven by a number of factors: the upcoming European election in June 1999,¹⁸ aggressive media coverage of the alleged ‘scandals’ in the European Commission,¹⁹ as well as the recent loss of power of the German CDU and the British Conservatives and, as a result, Europe’s “swing to the left”.²⁰ The events unfolding in early December 1998 offered a unique opportunity for the proponents of this new ‘opposition’ stance and caused the breakdown of the nominal ‘Grand Coalition’ between EPP and PES.²¹

The ‘opposition’ faction in the EPP, which was effectively conducting an electoral campaign,²² had two primary objectives. On the one hand, it sought to hold the Commission accountable for its positions, decisions, and actions in the budgetary realm (as well as to force

¹⁷ Wieland (December 14, 2001)

¹⁸ Duhamel (December 13, 2000), Hughes (December 13, 2000), McCartin (February 20, 2001), Mombaur (December 13, 2000) Ruhrmann (February 20, 2001), Santer (February 20, 2001), Tomlinson (February 19, 2001), Virrankoski (January 12, 2001) Watts (January 9, 2001).

¹⁹ McCartin (February 20, 2001), Pronk (February 20, 2001), Ruhrmann (February 20, 2001).

²⁰ Martens (February 20, 2001), McCartin (February 20, 2001), Santer (February 20, 2001), Virrankoski (January 12, 2001)

²¹ Corbett (December 14, 2000; MEP and co-author of the standard work on the European Parliament), Duhamel (December 13, 2000); Simon Hix (2000) finds that the grand coalition was evident in 15% less votes in the first 6 months of the 1999 Parliament compared to the previous one.

²² Mombaur (December 13, 2000)

the Commission to enact reforms and perform major changes in its administrative structure).²³ On the other hand, it perceived the mounting report of alleged scandals inside the Commission, which conveniently revolved primarily around two Socialist Commissioners, as an opportunity to assert itself against the leftist majorities in Parliament, Commission, and Council²⁴ – since numerous EPP parliamentarians viewed the center-left Commission as largely an executive acting upon the goodwill of the Socialist-dominated European Council.²⁵ This set of objectives corresponds with the “opposition-mode” outlined in Part 3, in that the EPP sought to force the executive to defend its position and proposals publicly and to fix accountability for the government’s actions,²⁶ call into question the responsibility of the Government as a whole (in the discharge question) or that of specific Ministers (i.e. Commissioners) – even before their cases had been properly investigated. In the words of one EP official, the EPP acted as if it had a right to undermine and confront whoever and whenever.

What is notable in terms of the composition of the opposition faction in the EPP is that those national groups leading the charge against the Commission – especially the Germans CDU members and the British Conservatives²⁷ – were also in opposition in their respective member states, while the more moderate EPP delegations, such as the Austrians and Spaniards, were part of the national government or government coalition. Hence, the opposition sentiment in the EPP was focused not only on the European Commission, but

²³ Ruhrmann (February 20, 2001)

²⁴ Martens (February 20, 2001)

²⁵ Wynn (January 10, 2001), Chichester (March 1, 2001). In this respect, it is interesting to note that this sentiment was carried into the new 1999 Parliament even after the victory of the EPP in the 1999 European elections. Rory Watson notes that the “robust opposition” to the Commission was “the order of the day” in the first session of the new Parliament for a strong segment of German and British EPP members.

²⁶ According to Ingo Friedrich (January 15, 2001), the European Parliament, following the EPP initiative, acknowledged and acted upon its “scrutiny functions.”

²⁷ All of my sources are in agreement about this being the case.

actually had three targets: it was aimed at the respective national government, the European Council (where it is not represented), and the largely center-left Commission that was perceived as acting upon the goodwill of the Socialist-dominated European Council.²⁸

The Socialists, for their part, felt compelled to counter the EPP's offensive against the Commission in order to protect 'their' Commissioners against what the party leadership perceived as a politically driven effort on part of the Parliament's Right to exploit the situation and legitimize itself at the expense of the Socialists in Parliament and Commission.²⁹ Their central interest was to prevent individual Socialist Commissioners from being ousted and thus, given the principle of collective responsibility on which the Commission rests, to protect the Commission as a whole.³⁰ The Socialists opposed the selective targeting or "cherry-picking approach" of their political opponents on the Right.³¹

These objectives and motivations are reflected in the positions the party groups assumed towards the issues of budget discharge and political accountability (i.e. censure), both of which are at the heart of executive-legislative relations (Herman, 1976 pp.731, 801; Coombes, 1976 p.390). Here, the EPP was divided over the discharge question, yet it must be emphasized that the 'opposition' faction assumed much greater visibility than the more moderate EPP parliamentarians. Indeed, the opposition faction successfully appropriated for

²⁸ Liese (February 22, 2001), Wynn (January 10, 2001). The 'opposition' members of the EPP indeed publicly accused the Council and their national governments of failing to fulfill its financial control function over the Commission by granting the 1996 discharge despite evident irregularities (e.g. Liese [February 22, 2001], Mombaur [December 13, 2000]).

²⁹ Duhamel (December 13, 2000) Chichester (March 1, 2001), Ruhrmann (February 20, 2001).

³⁰ As Pauline Green had announced during the BSE crisis in 1997, "We are not going to bring down a Commission where fifty per cent are Socialists." (Agence Europe, Saturday, February 8, 1997, p.5)

³¹ Green (April 10, 2001)

itself most of the publicity in the EPP to a degree that its agitation was perceived as a *collective* tactic of the EPP.³²

Granting discharge, in the eyes of the EPP parliamentarians in the opposition camp, meant losing important bargaining leverage in the EP's effort to ensure necessary changes. For this reason, they sought to keep the discharge decision open. At the same time, recognizing that the Socialist Commissioners Edith Cresson and Manuel Marin were in the most vulnerable position, the opposition EPP MEPs decided for "tactical and political reasons"³³ to link the issues of budget discharge with allegations of mismanagement in the Commission, despite the fact that their alleged misconduct bore little connection to the financial year 1996.³⁴ The question of whether or not the Commission was still in control of its structures, which had allowed for a number of serious cases of mismanagement, misallocation of resources, and alleged cases of fraud,³⁵ raised the broader question of political responsibility and accountability. The more militant members of the EPP opposition were especially insistent on this issue, to the degree that they consciously chose to disregard accepted EP rules and procedures. The EP rapporteur for the 1996 Budget Discharge issue, for example – the British Conservative James Elles - deviated publicly from the majority position in the Budgetary Control Committee, which recommended discharge. This was an

³² Lord Tomlinson (February 19, 2001), Klaus Hänsch (December 21, 200) and Peter Liese (February 22, 2001) maintain that there was no clear party line in the EPP that was articulated by the EPP leadership. Instead, all those individuals that kept a high profile throughout the crisis were part of the opposition against the Commission, such as James Elles, Diemut Theato, Reimer Böge, Hartmut Nassauer, Hans-Gert Poettering, Markus Ferber, and Ingo Friedrich.

³³ Martens (February 20, 2001). Other sources (e.g. Ruhrmann [February 20, 2001] and Liese [February 22, 2001]) admit that it was an appealing case for public opinion indeed.

³⁴ Even EPP colleagues considered the discharge procedure and the cases of individual misdemeanor two separate matters (e.g. McCartin [February 20, 2001], Pronk [February 20, 2001], Martens [February 20, 2001]). CDU MEP Peter Liese admits that the two matters were, strictly and technically speaking, "not directly connected" (February 22, 2001).

³⁵ The Elles report states that "all the matters drawn to the attention of the Committee of Budgetary Control are but the outcome of administration and methods that considerably exceed the limits of the 1996 financial year alone." (Part A, K.)

unusual occurrence, because in his position as rapporteur he was expected to reflect the consensus, or at least the majority view, within the Committee, even if such a view contradicted his own preferences. It is the responsibility of the rapporteur to defend the position of the Committee, and a rapporteur often finds him or herself in defending a position which he or she finds objectionable (Bowler and Farrel, 1995 p.242).

In January, the issue of collective versus individual responsibility entailed a further division of opinion within the EPP group.³⁶ The question of whether or not to dismiss the entire Commission for the sake of sacking two individuals was hotly contested. Many opposition EPP parliamentarians determined that the Commission had indeed lost control over its administrative structures, that it was hiding behind the principle of collective responsibility to protect the misdemeanants among them, and that it should therefore assume its political responsibility collectively or be forced out of office.³⁷ Yet, a majority of Christian-Democrats and Conservatives was not prepared to dismiss the Commission as a whole. Accordingly, a large number of EPP members signed a declaration in which they manifested their will that the Commission be able to continue to “carry out the tasks that is hers in this crucial phase,” especially with respect to Agenda 2000, future financing, and enlargement.³⁸ Despite these divisions, however, the official EPP position – as established in the resolution tabled jointly by EPP, Liberals, and Greens – stood in unequivocal opposition to the positions of the Commission and the Socialists in that it promoted individual responsibility of Commissioners over the principle of collective responsibility. The resolution

³⁶ The case we are looking at is actually a typical element in executive-legislative relations: the possibility of the legislature attempting to impose its will on the executive arises “notably in cases where party discipline breaks down and dissident members of a government party join forces with the opposition to pass legislation on some particular issue.” (Laver and Shepsle, 1994 p. 293)

³⁷ Florenz (February 23, 2001), Ruhrmann (February 20, 2001).

³⁸ The declaration was signed in the majority by Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian, Luxembourg, Irish, Greek, and Swedish members of the EPP (Agence Europe, Thursday January 14, 1999, p.5).

explicitly singled out the Socialist Commissioners Cresson and Marin and included the possibility of applying Article 160 of the Treaty on European Union (Article 205 of the amended Treaty), which provides for the European Court of Justice (ECJ) compulsorily retiring a Commissioner if she/he has been guilty of serious misconduct.³⁹

The PES, on the other hand, was overwhelmingly in favor of discharge and opposed to censure.⁴⁰ Only the German SPD faction deviated from the party line.⁴¹ Other than that, the PES was a much more cohesive actor than the EPP. In the discharge vote on December 17, the great majority of PES parliamentarians voted for discharge, thus following the recommendation of the Budgetary Control Committee.⁴² Immediately following the refusal of discharge, PES President Pauline Green announced that she would file a motion of censure against the Commission, which would effectively be a vote of confidence (for which there is no treaty provision). She justified this step on the premise that a refusal of discharge is tantamount to an expression of non-confidence in the Commission.⁴³ This strategy reflected

³⁹ Joint Motion for a Resolution introduced by EPP, ELDR, and V Groups on January 13, 1999, to replace motions B4-0021, 0067 and 0107/99. Within the EPP, 79 members voted for the inclusion of Cresson's name, 49 against. With respect to the lack of responsibility taken by Mr. Marin in the administration of the ECHO program, 74 MEPs voted in favor of including his name, 57 against, with one abstention (Agence Europe, Thursday January 14, 1999, p. 14)

⁴⁰ 147 of 185 PES MEPs present for the discharge vote voted in favor; 160 of 199 PES MEPs voted against censure.

⁴¹ According to numerous sources in the EP (e.g. Florenz [February 23, 2001], Liese [February 22, 2001], Watts [January 9, 2001], Martens [February 20, 2001], Duhamel [December 13, 2000], Hughes [December 13, 2000]), the German positions in EPP and PES were decisively influenced by factors of domestic politics, where the German MEPs were facing a particularly zealous public opinion and press coverage. The critical reports in the daily press, but also and more importantly the frequent "critical inquiries" from the general public called for an aggressive and determined response. Accordingly, the Social Democrats had little choice but to take a tough stance on the alleged cases of fraud and misconduct in the Commission. Moreover, the SPD found itself in a defensive political position domestically after the new Schröder government's bumpy first few months in office, which made the SPD vulnerable to attacks from the opposition party, and could not risk leaving the field to the Christian Democrats in the run-up to the European elections.

⁴² The Budgetary Control Committee had voted in favor of granting discharge on December 10, 1998, with a narrow majority of fourteen to thirteen votes – a result that was mainly due to the fact that seven of nine PES representatives had voted in favor of discharge (PES: 7 for, 2 against; EPP: 4 for, 6 against; ELDR: 2 for, 1 against; GUE: 1 against; UPE: 1 against; Greens: 1 against; ARE: 1 for, Non-Attached: 1 against).

⁴³ Pauline Green, Speech on Motion of Censure on the Commission, delivered on January 11, 1999, before the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

and *instituted* the position of the Commission, which had decided to treat the matter of discharge as one of confidence or non-confidence. Commission President Santer had proclaimed the Commission's position in a letter sent to each individual Member of Parliament, which was perceived and denounced by the majority of the Parliament, excluding the majority of Socialists, as undue "interference" into internal parliamentary affairs, as "intimidation," or even as "blackmail."⁴⁴ PES President Green admits that she "probably" knew about the Commission's maneuver beforehand,⁴⁵ and the suspected collaboration between Commission and PES on this issue critically intensified the crisis.⁴⁶ The PES motion was generally interpreted as an effort to undermine the opposition's attempt to put political pressure on the Commission,⁴⁷ and Pauline Green herself acknowledged that the censure motion was "designed to bluff the Christian Democrats, Greens, and Liberals who had opposed the budget discharge."⁴⁸

The motion of censure was to be voted on during the January 1999 session of the European Parliament, along with different motions concerning the consequences of the discharge crisis and the issue of political responsibility. Given that it was unlikely for Parliament to achieve a two-thirds majority against the Commission, however, the immediate threat to the Commission did not lie in the censure motion, but in the new emphasis on individual responsibility in the EP.⁴⁹ Accordingly, in an effort to counter the EPP motion

⁴⁴ Cox (December 13, 2000), Pasty, Miranda (January 10, 2001), Cox, respectively.

⁴⁵ Green (April 10, 2001)

⁴⁶ Cox (December 13, 2000).

⁴⁷ e.g. Cox (December 13, 2000). Ironically, Santer's infamous letter seems to have changed the mood and the voting behavior in the EP the following day to the Commission's *dis*advantage. Several observers suggest that discharge would have been granted had Santer not brought a great part of the Parliament up against him. According to an informal vote in the Liberal group, for example, only one third of the group opposed discharge initially, while two thirds would have voted for discharge; according to this account, Santer's letter exactly reversed this trend. (Mulder, January 9, 2001)

⁴⁸ European Voice, 21-27 January, 1999.

⁴⁹ Agence Europe, Wednesday, January 13, 1999, p.3

calling for individual responsibility, the PES promoted the notion of collective responsibility and called for Commission President Santer to resign if individual Commissioners, in this case two Socialists, were considered guilty of mishandling financial and administrative affairs.⁵⁰ The resolution also called for the establishment of the Committee of Independent Experts.

For both Socialists and the Commission, the establishment of the Committee of Independent Experts was the central objective in the January session of the EP, since it was in both of their interest to have a non-partisan and non-parliamentarian committee of independent experts evaluate the situation.⁵¹ It is not clear who conceived of the idea first, but numerous people claim to have produced it. Pauline Green maintains that the idea of creating a “wise men’s group” was first raised in the Socialist Group Bureau by Renzo Imbeni, MEP; it was later developed by Allan Donnelly, MEP, and refined by the Socialist Group Bureau as a whole. According to Commission President Santer, however, it was Commissioner Neil Kinnock who conceived of the strategy.⁵² Either way, these claims underscore the high degree of incentive compatibility between the two actors.

For the Commission, and especially for Jacques Santer as a firm believer in the college structure of the Commission, the avoidance of setting a precedent of individual political responsibility of Commissioners was the primary goal, along with staying in office.⁵³ President Santer expected the report to be harsh but acceptable in its impact on the

⁵⁰ Motion for a Resolution “On improving the financial management of the Commission” (B4-0110/99), tabled by Pauline Green on behalf of the PES Group, §2.

⁵¹ Given the importance both leading Commission officials (including Jacques Santer himself) and leading PES MEPs bestow to the Committee, Dietmar Nickel’s assertion that the strategic choices (between appointing a committee of independent experts, an inquiry committee and other procedural options) ‘were remarkably absent from the minds of actors’ in appointing the CIE, appears largely inappropriate (as quoted in Judge and Earnshaw, 2002 p.353).

⁵² Santer (February 20, 2001)

⁵³ Testimony of high-ranking commission official close to President Santer

Commission as a whole, but concluded that the expected findings in the Cresson case would be devastating.⁵⁴ With the independent experts' official report to back him, Santer expected to be able to pressure Cresson and the French government, which had been arduously backing her, into giving in. With Cresson gone or demoted as a result of the findings of a neutral, non-partisan body – without establishing a precedent of individual responsibility – he could then, in his own words, focus his remaining months in office on structural reform and leave the Commission “a tidy house”⁵⁵ before the new Commission would begin its term one year hence.

The Committee would also allow the Socialists to eliminate the main factor of contention, i.e. Mrs. Cresson, without losing too much face in the public's eye and generally ‘clear the air.’ The Socialists wanted to make sure that it would not appear as if they lost one of “their” commissioners (one who had become untenable even in the Socialist leadership's view) as a result of political maneuvering on part of the Right. Hence, both sides thought the maneuver would result in the resolution of the crisis without sacrificing the Commission as a whole,⁵⁶ and simultaneously alleviate the intensely political atmosphere inside and outside the European Parliament without the ‘opposition’ forces gaining political leverage at the expense of the Socialists in either one of the two institutions.

The exact chronology of the different votes in the January 1999 session of the EP played into the hands of Commission and PES, who successfully pushed through their

⁵⁴ It is noteworthy that this assessment of the situation was, in fact, quite astute. Indeed, the first report published by the Wise Men did largely clear all individual Commissioners from the accusations against them, *except* Mrs. Cresson. In her case, their conclusions were indeed as devastating as expected.

⁵⁵ Jacques Santer, December 15, 1998, as quoted in: Agence Europe, Wednesday, December 16, 1999, p.4

⁵⁶ Duhamel (December 13, 2000)

agenda.⁵⁷ The Socialists forswore their insistence on collective responsibility once the threat of individual censure in the form of the EPP-ELDR-Green resolution had been eliminated by an overwhelming margin, and dropped the passage calling for President Santer's resignation.⁵⁸ Once their joint resolution with the GUE/NGL and ARE groups, minus the amendment on collective responsibility, was passed in plenary – thus establishing the Committee of Independent Experts – the PES also revoked its motion of censure, which had never been a serious motion to begin with.⁵⁹

In sum, while the extent of the deliberate collaboration between Commission and PES group remains unclear, the two actors were indeed 'in the same boat' in their competitive relationship with the opposition, as the intra-party or government-mode would predict. The PES goals so closely matched those of the Commission that it was willing to materialize the Commission's positions in the realm of the European Parliament (i.e. filing a motion of censure and the resolution establishing the Committee of Independent Experts). Moreover, it is also quite evident in the case of the resignation crisis that the more competitive the government-opposition relations became throughout the course of events, the higher was the degree of incentive compatibility between the PES group and the Commission. Ultimately, both the goals and strategies of PES and Commission converged (whether purposely or not) and resulted in the establishment of the Committee of Independent Experts.

Given the outcome of the crisis and the Commission's collective resignation in March 1999, the establishment of the Committee is often deemed a major political blunder. After all,

⁵⁷ Pauline Green herself proclaimed in reaction to a proposal by the Greens asking for the vote of censure to precede the votes on the individual resolutions that the outcome of the vote on the resolutions could affect positions on the motion of censure. (Agence Europe, Friday, January 15, 1999, p.4)

⁵⁸ See Joint Motion for a Resolution tabled by PSE, GUE/NGL, and ARE Groups to replace motions B4-0065, 0109 and 0110/99.

⁵⁹ Rothley (December 14, 2000)

the Commission effectively agreed to relinquish all control over the outcome of the crisis. It is important to note, however, that the only reason why the objectives of Commission and the PES were not realized was because the Committee of Independent Experts took an *unexpectedly* strong stance on the matter of collective responsibility, charging the Commission with having utterly and consciously failed to assume its political responsibility.⁶⁰ In this respect it must be emphasized that the great majority of allegations against individual Commissioners were deemed unfounded by the Committee, with the notable exception of the Cresson case! That the Committee nonetheless adopted such a definitive and unequivocal stance on the matter of *collective* responsibility and political accountability was the decisive factor, in the absence of which Commission and PES may have prevailed.

Before moving on to a quantitative analysis of the voting behavior of PES and EPP during the crisis, I summarize and illustrate the government-opposition dynamics between Commission and EPP, Commission and PES, and PES and EPP by comparing their positions of in the following table.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

5.2. Analysis of Voting Behavior

Hypotheses: In this section, I seek to determine if the qualitative findings of the previous section are confirmed in a quantitative analysis of the voting behavior of both PES and EPP in the discharge and censure votes.

⁶⁰ This development was generally unexpected among both insiders and outsiders. Jacques Santer, for example, maintains to this day that until the moment he laid eyes on the conclusion of the first report, he expected the situation to be resolved in his interest. Also, two correspondents from major newspapers who had been closely following the course of events as non-partisan observers, Mr. Peter Hort (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) and Mr. Michael Smith (*Financial Times*) maintain that they were utterly surprised by the content of the report as well as the Commission's sudden and definitive reaction.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The objective of this exercise is to examine if the government-opposition dynamic constituted a significant factor determining the voting behavior of MEPs and to weigh it against alternative explanatory variables. I will draw my hypotheses from the literature on MEP voting behavior as well as from the possible explanatory factors suggested by my interview partners in Parliament and Commission.

The first hypotheses should be obvious given the central argument of my paper: I expect to find that *the government-opposition dynamic strongly influenced the voting behavior of EPP and PES MEPs in both votes. More specifically, I expect the 'opposition' MEPs to vote against and the 'government' MEPs to vote for discharge (H1.a), while I expect the 'opposition' MEPs to vote for and the 'government' MEPs to vote against censure (H1.b).*

Another suggested factor influencing MEP behavior throughout the resignation crisis were different perceptions within the European Parliament as to what constitutes an acceptable standard of behavior for a public servant.⁶¹ According to this 'clash of cultures' argument, "what would be considered as nepotism or shameless patronage in Britain might be seen as fair practice or even a moral duty in other countries, including the countries of southern Europe" (Pujas and Rhodes, 1999 p.690).⁶² An analysis by Pujas and Rhodes (1999)

⁶¹ e.g. Dell'Alba (January 9, 2001), Colom I Naval (January 10, 2001), Maes (December 12, 2000); based on the 1998 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) from Transparency International (<http://www.transparency.org/cpi>), Denmark (1998 CPI Score: 10.0), Finland (9.6), Sweden (9.5), Netherlands (9.0), Luxembourg (8.7), UK (8.7), Ireland (8.2), Germany (7.9), and Austria (7.5) would belong to the 'nordic' group with high or relatively high such standards, while France (6.7), Portugal (6.5), Spain (6.1), Belgium (5.4), Greece (4.9), and Italy (4.7) constitute the 'southern' group with lower standards.

⁶² Commissioner Edith Cresson actually adopted this view for her purposes and accused the European north, and specifically the German members of the European Parliament, of enacting a virtual crusade against Europe's south (*Focus*, 3/1999, p.205).

suggests that the clash of cultures view with regard to the resignation crisis is to some extent justified (Pujas and Rhodes, 1999 p.701). Accordingly, I hypothesize that *those MEPs from countries with high expectations of what constitutes an acceptable standard of behavior for a public servant (i.e. a high CPI score) are more likely to vote against discharge, while those from countries with low such expectations (and a low CPI score) are likely to grant discharge (H2.a).*⁶³ *In the censure vote, I expect MEPs with high CPI scores to vote for censure and MEPs with low CPI scores to vote against censure (H2.b).*

It is important to consider that certain Commission members were at the center of the crisis, while others played marginal roles at best. French Commissioner Edith Cresson and Spanish Commissioner Manuel Marin belong to the former group and were targeted as the main ‘culprits’ in the Commission’s alleged misdemeanors. One should expect that MEPs from their respective home countries would be less inclined to support the opposition.⁶⁴ My third hypothesis thus states that *MEPs from member states whose Commissioners are ‘in the line of fire’ are more likely to vote for discharge (H3.a) and against censure (H3.b).*

The party affiliations of the members of the European Commission ought to be considered as well and, following the assumption that a national delegation would be less likely to act in opposition to the Commission if it is represented by a Commissioner ‘of their own’ (i.e. affiliated with this particular national party delegation), I am expecting to find that

⁶³ A recent study of MEP voting behavior in EP discharge votes by Hae-Won Jun (2002) uses this same hypothesis.

⁶⁴ Hix and Lord (1997), for example, point out that the plenary weeks of the EP are commonly used for meetings between transnational party groups and Commissioners of the same party affiliation (p. 116); extending this thesis, Hae-Won Jun (2002) suggests that both Commission and national party delegations gain from these unofficial links, since the Commission is most likely to win support from MEPs of their own political persuasion and affiliation, while MEPs are in a better position to express their opinions on policies to Commissioners from their same party and nationality (p.11).

*those national party delegations represented in the Commission are more likely to vote for discharge (H4.a) and against censure (H4.b).*⁶⁵

Several of my sources in the EP suggest that voting behavior during the crisis was simply a product of positive or negative attitudes towards the European Union (especially in the case of the British Conservatives),⁶⁶ i.e. that rather than a government-opposition dynamic it was the pro-/anti-EU dimension that determined voting outcomes. One would expect that *pro-European MEPs should be concerned about the negative impact of a discharge refusal and a vote of non-confidence in the Commission on the larger process of European integration and thus vote for discharge (H5.a) and against censure (H5.b). Eurosceptical MEPs, on the other hand, should be less concerned, and perhaps eager to deny discharge (H6.a) and censure the Commission (H6.b).*

I also hypothesize that *the government-opposition dynamic is a less powerful predictor in the censure vote than in the discharge vote (H7)*, given the qualitative difference between refusing discharge and sacking the European Commission as a collective body for the first time in the history of the European integration process. The stakes in January were substantially higher. I only expect the government-opposition dynamic to be less powerful as *a predictor of voting behavior*, however, due to the distorting influence of the prospect of 'breaking the government'. I do not actually believe that the government-opposition dynamic was any less pronounced in January than it was in December, especially since my qualitative evidence indicates that it, in fact, increased throughout the crisis.

⁶⁵ The determination of which Commissioner is affiliated with which party group is based on either national party affiliation and/or information available on the PES and EPP websites.

⁶⁶ e.g. McCartin (February 20, 2001), Santer (Santer (February 20, 2001); also: Vincenzo Viola (Agence Europe, Thursday January 14, 1999, p.5)

Operationalization: My data set consists of all the members of the European Parliament from the PES and EPP groups, a total of 415 cases. My dependent variables are the voting behavior in the discharge (VOTE D) and the censure votes (VOTE C). These variables are dummy variables where a value of zero equals NO (i.e. denial of discharge and denial of censure) and a value of one means YES (i.e. granting discharge and favoring censure).⁶⁷ I will run logistic regression analyses for my whole population (PES plus EPP), as well as for PES and EPP individually. The independent variables are defined and coded as follows:

1. GOV-OPP: A dummy variable based on the national government or opposition status of particular national PES and EPP delegations.⁶⁸ A value of zero equals opposition party; one equals government party. My decision to operationalize the government-opposition dynamic in terms of national government or opposition status is based on the observation that the EPP delegations acting as the 'EU-level' opposition during the crisis also seemed to be in opposition in their respective member states. They did not only target the largely center-left Commission, but also their respective national government and the European Council (where they were not represented). This triple targeting only made sense for those MEP whose national delegation were not part of a national government, however, since government participation would effectively eliminate both the national government and the European

⁶⁷ I treat abstentions as *de facto* votes against discharge (value = zero), due to the fact that under the voting rule pertaining to discharge, i.e. the absolute majority rule, abstaining has the same effect as voting against discharge. The censure vote is a vote of no confidence in the Commission; hence, each abstention means one less vote for censure. Therefore, I counted abstentions as a vote against censure (value = zero).

⁶⁸ Simon Hix (2001) uses the same indicator for his analysis of 949 roll-call votes between July 1999 and June 2000. The variable does not achieve statistical significance. This indicates that the most prominent dynamic explaining the case of the Santer Commission resignation cannot be generalized with regard to every decision and policy area. The government-opposition dynamic does not constitute a permanent and continuous feature in EU politics, but seems to depend on the partisan configuration of Council, Commission, and EP.

Council as reasonable targets of opposition behavior. Accordingly, any opposition behavior in the European sphere should be accompanied by opposition status at home.⁶⁹

2. CPI: A continuous variable operationalizing the second hypothesis, i.e. the ‘clash of cultures’ argument. I am using the 1998 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) from Transparency International,⁷⁰ ranging from one to ten, where ten indicates that a country is perceived as totally corruption-free.⁷¹

3. EC SCANDAL: A dummy variable based on the national affiliation of those Commission members most “involved” in the crisis, or ‘in the line of fire’. I reserve this privilege for Commissioners Cresson and Marin, and for President Jacques Santer as the head of the Commission; the other national groups receive a zero.

4. EC PARTY: A dummy variable, such that if a national party delegation has a member in the Commission, they score one, otherwise zero.

5. EU+/EU-: Continuous variables based on the national party values provided by Budge et al. 2001. The greater the value, the more integrationist or eurosceptical a MEP is, respectively.

Results:

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

⁶⁹ Wilfried Martens, the President of the EPP Group during the crisis, also suggests that the basis for the opposition sentiment of a particular national party delegation had its roots in the member states.

⁷⁰ <http://www.transparency.org/cpi>

⁷¹ According to my hypothesis, a low CPI score should entail a greater propensity to vote for discharge and against censure, since the perception of what constitutes an acceptable standard of behavior for a public servant is much lower for a MEP from a low CPI country and, therefore, the alleged ‘scandals’ in the Commission should appear trifling. Similarly, a recent study by Hae-Won Jun (2002) hypothesizes that the less corrupted country the MEPs are from (i.e. the higher-scored country in the index), the more sensitive to the corruption at the European level they are, and consequently the more willing they are to control the Commission in the budget implementation.

For the vote on the 1996 budget discharge, the regression results show that the government-opposition was indeed an exceptionally powerful and significant predictor of voting behavior of the two major EP party groups: being part of a national government made a vote for discharge almost 173 times as likely (significant at the .001 level).⁷² Hypothesis 1.a is thus confirmed. The only predictor more powerful than the government-opposition variable is the 'Commissioner in the line of fire' variable, indicating that those Parliamentarians whose national representatives in the Commission were under special pressure during the crisis (i.e. the French, Spaniards, and Luxembourgers) were eager to protect their Commissioners (i.e. Commissioners Cresson, Marin, and President Santer) against increasing attacks. This desire to protect individual commissioners made Parliamentarians almost 289 times as likely to support budget discharge (significant at .001 level). This confirms Hypothesis 3.a.

The other three statistically significant variables – national party representation in Commission, Corruption Perception Index, and pro-EU attitude – demonstrate considerably less predictive power than either the government-opposition or the 'line of fire' variables. These findings confirm Hypothesis 4.a (i.e. MEPs having national party representatives in the Commission were three and a half times as likely to vote for discharge), but do not support Hypotheses 2.a and 5.a. Contrary to our expectation, MEPs from countries with high expectations of what constitutes an acceptable standard of behavior for a public servant were actually twenty-seven per cent more likely to grant discharge; they were, perhaps, more inclined to give the Commission the benefit of the doubt, based on their own positive experience of decent civil servant behavior at their respective national levels. The analysis also shows that euro-friendly MEPs were twice as likely to vote *against* discharge. It seems

⁷² Some of the exponential B values appear unusually high and seem to indicate possible data problems. The data has, however, been tested for degrees of freedom problems, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. The

that the Europhiles were more concerned about the negative implications of the highly publicized alleged scandals at the EU level than about the consequences of a denial of discharge. Finally, Hypothesis 6.a does not hold due to statistical insignificance.

[TABLES 5 and 6 ABOUT HERE]

The regression results show further that the government-opposition dynamic was stronger, and statistically significant, in the EPP group, where participation in a national government made a vote in favor of discharge ten times as likely. EPP parliamentarians were also highly eager to protect Commissioners under fire, and pro-European EPP members tended to vote against discharge. The analysis of PES voting confirms that the Socialists were indeed mostly driven by the desire to prevent individual PES Commissioners and the largely center-left Commission against political attacks from the Right, since the indicator of national party representation in the Commission constitutes the most powerful predictor of the voting behavior of PES parliamentarians. Other than that, voting in the PES only confirms the aggregate finding that pro-European MEPs tended to vote against discharge.

[TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

The analysis of the vote on the censure motion in January 1999 confirms Hypothesis 7, which predicted that the government-opposition dynamic should be a less powerful predictor in the censure vote than in the discharge vote. At the same time, it fails to support Hypothesis 1.b, since the government-opposition variable does not actually achieve statistical

unusually high values reflect the actual predictive power of the variables.

significance in the case of the censure vote. The government-opposition dynamic was evidently diluted by the fear of ‘breaking the government’ and causing a major, and unprecedented, institutional and constitutional crisis in the EU.⁷³ It is interesting to note, however, that the variable does constitute a powerful and highly statistically significant predictor in a bivariate model. Here, being part of a national government made it almost three times less likely to vote for censure.

[TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

The most powerful predictors are the pro-/anti-EU variables. The direction of the pro-EU variable is once again unexpected, however: higher pro-EU scores almost double the likelihood of a vote for censure. At the same time, anti-EU sentiment *also* makes a vote for censure about twice as likely, thus indicating a U-shaped relationship between support and opposition to the EU and the propensity to support or oppose censure.

The only other significant variable, the ‘Commissioner in the line of fire’ variable, once again has great predictive power. MEPs from member states whose Commissioners were ‘in the line of fire’ were 166 times as likely to vote against censure (which confirms Hypothesis 3.b). Hypotheses 2.b and 4.b do not find support in the analysis due to statistical insignificance.

[TABLES 9 and 10 ABOUT HERE]

⁷³ Jacques Santer apparently threatened to resign should the resolutions calling for individual liability pass, thus adding increased pressure on the moderates in the anti-Commission coalition to refrain from supporting the

The only significant predictor variable of voting behavior in the PES group in the case of the censure vote is the pro-European attitude. Voting patterns in the EPP, on the other hand, depend both on pro- and anti-European attitudes. Moreover, EPP members from countries with high CPI scores (i.e. high expectations of what constitutes an acceptable standard of behavior for a public servant) were more likely to censure the Commission.

In sum, there is evidence for a government-opposition dynamic in the voting patterns of European parliamentarians during the resignation crisis. This dynamic is more tangible in the case of the discharge vote, where the government-opposition variable constitutes a powerful and statistically significant predictor of voting behavior, while it fails to be reflected in the censure vote. This inconsistency should be treated with care, however, given the distorting prospect of forcing the first ever collective resignation of a European Commission. The impact of a forced resignation on the project of European integration was evidently a powerful constraint, and can be observed in the fact that pro- and anti-European sentiments were the most important predictors in the case of the censure votes. Hence, the predictive significance of the nationally based government-opposition variable in the discharge vote should not be discounted based on the negative finding in the case of the censure vote.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that, while the correlation between national government or opposition status and Commission-supporting or Commission-opposing behavior at the EU level may not be perfectly mirrored in voting patterns, there are other indications for government-opposition behavior. A bivariate model, for example, does indicate a government-opposition dynamic, while the Socialists were primarily driven by the desire to protect Socialist Commissioners in the discharge vote. What these findings suggest

motions, according to an EP official.

is an overlap between national and European government or opposition sentiment leveled against multiple simultaneous targets at both levels.

It is interesting to note that the one variable consistently rivaling the predictive power of the government-opposition indicator throughout the analysis is the ‘Commissioner in the line of fire’ variable. It should be noted, however, that this variable merely demonstrates why Parliamentarians from Spain, France, and Luxembourg voted to support the Commission; it fails to explain why other MEPs did not. The government-opposition dynamic, on the contrary, does constitute such an explanation.

In sum, the government-opposition dynamic is observable both in the behavior *and* in the voting patterns of European parliamentarians during the crisis. The comparison between quantitative and qualitative analysis, however, suggests that it was more evident in the political process (behavior) than in the political outcomes (voting).

6. Conclusion

The present paper does not suggest that there is a permanent government and opposition in the European Union, or a constant and continuous government-opposition dynamic. What it does suggest is that a government-opposition dynamic cannot be ruled out from the outset as a factor underlying political competition in the European sphere, as it has been the case in the past. Hence, this paper contributes to the existing literature primarily by identifying and acknowledging the potential relevance of government and opposition modes in the inter-party relations of the EP, as well as in the executive-legislative relations in the European Union.

In addition, this paper suggests that government-opposition interaction at the European level may have multiple levels: government and opposition modes may converge and co-vary at national and EU levels, if the composition of Commission and Council share a common partisan basis. This element was manifest even after the 1999 European election, when Christian-Democrats expressed dissatisfaction with the high number of Socialist Commissioners in the new Commission (Judge and Earnshaw, 2002 p.362). Accordingly, 'opposition' in the context of the EU has several potential and simultaneous targets: Commission, Council, and national governments. In the case at hand, party political conflicts between the two major party groups corresponded to a parallel inter-institutional conflict between EP and Commission. A consolidation of such a pattern may have important implications for law- and policy-making in the EU, since it would entail a partisan dimension tying Commission, Council, and Parliament together. Further research in this direction seems imperative.

The findings of this paper confirm Simon Hix's suspicion that the EU integration dimension has something to do with 'government-opposition' dynamics in the EU aimed at Council and Commission (Hix, 2001 p.673). Yet, the government-opposition dynamic does not take place just along the integration dimension, but also – and perhaps more significantly – along the ideological left-right divide. In fact, this paper suggest that there may be a significant and substantively important overlap between 'national' and 'partisan' politics in the European Parliament, as well as in the institutional interaction at the EU level, consisting of a government-opposition dynamic that links national arenas with the European sphere. While it may not be possible to collapse the two dimensions into a single one, as Hix rightly points out (Hix, 2001 p.665), we may have to give up the traditional *a priori* insistence on

their incompatibility in the European realm, and try, instead, to incorporate the potential overlap between the two into our understanding of politics at the European level. In this sense, this paper is a first step towards disentangling different dimensions of party competition in the EU and determine where, when, and how the pro-/anti-integration dimension meets the left-right divide.

The paper also adds a qualitative element to the largely quantitative literature on party competition in the European Parliament: competition and collusion between PES and EPP depend partially on the partisan configuration of Council, Commission, and EP. This conclusion not only helps explain the divisions within EP party groups during the crisis, but also suggests an answer to the question of what caused the breakdown of the infamous ‘Grand Coalition’ between PES and EPP as the defining element of intra-EP politics. Hence, this paper helps explain the new patterns of party competition and coalition-formation within the new 1999-2004 European Parliament, which seem to revolve primarily around an increase in interparty competition, especially between EPP and PES.⁷⁴ If nothing else, the paper constitutes the first parsimonious and conclusive explanation for the fall of the Santer Commission as a major juncture in the history of the European Union and its institutions.

⁷⁴ For discussion of these new patterns, see Judge and Earnshaw, 2002; Hix and Kreppel, 2002.

Appendix:

Interviews:

My discussion partners were (in alphabetical order, including interview date):

- Bergius, Andreas (Journalist, Frankfurter Rundschau, Jan. 12, 2001)
- Blokland, Johannes (MEP, Independents for a Europe of Nations, Jan. 9, 2001)
- Bösch, Herbert (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 11, 2001)
- Bonde, Jens-Peter (MEP and President, Independents for a Europe of Nations, Dec. 14, 2000)
- Chichester, Giles (MEP, European People's Party, March 1, 2001)
- Colom I Naval, Joan (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 10, 2001)
- Corbett, Richard (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 14, 2000; July 16, 2002)
- Cox, Pat (MEP and President, Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Dell'Alba, Gianfranco (MEP, European Radical Alliance, Jan. 09, 2001)
- Duhamel, Olivier (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Florenz, Karl-Heinz (MEP, European People's Party, Feb. 23, 2001)
- Friedrich, Ingo (MEP, European People's Party, Jan. 15, 2001)
- Görlach, Willi (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 11, 2001)
- Green, Pauline (former MEP and President EP Party Group, Party of European Socialists, Apr. 10, 2001)
- Hänsch, Klaus (MEP, Party of European Socialists, former President of the European Parliament, Dec. 21, 2000)
- Hoff, Magdalene (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 13, 2001)
- Hort, Peter (Journalist, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Dec. 20, 2000)
- Hughes, Stephen (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Liese, Peter (MEP, European People's Party, Feb. 22, 2001)
- Maes, Nelly (MEP, European Radical Alliance, Dec. 12, 2000)
- Martens, Wilfried (former MEP, President European People's Party, Feb. 20, 2001)
- McCartin, John Joseph (MEP, European People's Party, Feb. 20, 2001)

- Middel, Andreas (Journalist, Die Welt, Jan. 12, 2001)
- Miranda, Joaquim (MEP, European United Left/Nordic Green Left, Jan. 10, 2000)
- Mombaur, Peter Michael (MEP, European People's Party, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Mulder, Jan (MEP, Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, Jan. 9, 2001)
- Pronk, Bardo (MEP, European People's Party, Feb. 20, 2001)
- Reichert, Peter (Press Secretary, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Rocard, Michel (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 13, 2000)
- Rothley, Willi (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Dec. 14, 2000)
- Ruhrmann, Katrin (Press Secretary of Hans-Gert Pöttering, MEP, European People's Party, Feb. 20, 2001)
- Santer, Jacques (MEP, European People's Party, former President of the European Commission 1994-1999, Feb. 20, 2001)
- Shackleton, Michael (Official, European Parliament, Dec. 15, 2000; July 16, 2002)
- Smith, Michael (Journalist, Financial Times, Jan. 12, 2001)
- Tomlinson, Lord John E. (former MEP, Party of European Socialists, Feb. 19, 2001)
- Van Gerven, Walter (Member, Committee of Independent Experts, Dec. 20, 2000)
- Virrankoski, Kyoesti T. (MEP, Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, Jan. 12, 2001)
- Watts, Mark Francis (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 9, 2001)
- Wieland, Rainer (MEP, European People's Party, Dec. 14, 2000)
- Wynn, Terence (MEP, Party of European Socialists, Jan. 10, 2001)

(Five of the six Commission officials and two of the five officials from the EP asked to remain anonymous.)

Table 1: Timeline December 1998 – March 1999

- December 10, 1998: Budgetary Control Committee votes in favor of budget discharge.
- December 11, 1998: Elles Report tabled.
- December 15, 1998: EP debate on discharge question.
- December 16, 1998: Commission President Santer announces that the Commission would treat the matter of discharge as one of confidence and sends a letter to each individual member of Parliament declaring the Commission's position ("back us or sack us!").
- December 17, 1998: Parliament rejects to grant discharge for the 1996 budget
PES President Pauline Green announces that she will table a motion of censure against the Commission.
- January 12, 1999: EP's debate on the two motions of censure against the Commission.
- January 14, 1999: EP vote on Group resolutions.
PES withdraws its motion of censure.
EP rejects second motion of censure against Commission.
- January 27, 1999: Members of Committee of Independent Experts designated.
- March 15, 1999: 5 p.m.: Committee of Independent Experts submits its first report.
EP Groups meet to deliberate.
9 p.m.: Commission gathers for extraordinary meeting.
10 p.m.: Pauline Green calls, on behalf of the PES, for the Santer Commission to resign collectively.
Late at night, President Santer announces the collective resignation of the European Commission.

[Table 2 this page!]

Table 2: Comparative Positions of Commission, PES, and EPP

	<u>Commission</u>		<u>PES</u>		<u>EPP</u>	
Question of Budget Discharge	For Discharge	For Discharge	Against Discharge			
Question of Political Accountability	Collective Responsibility	Collective Responsibility	Collective Responsibility	Individual Responsibility		
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget Discharge 2. Stay in office 3. Avoid precedent of individual responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect individual PES Commissioners against political attacks from the Right. 2. Protect largely center-left Commission as a whole from EPP attacks. 3. Prevent EPP from exploiting situation and legitimizing itself at the expense of the Socialists in Parliament and Commission. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold Commission accountable for its positions, decisions, and actions in the budgetary realm 2. Force Commission to enact reforms and perform major changes in its administrative structure. 3. Exploit opportunity to assert itself against the leftist majorities in Parliament, Commission, and Council. 			
Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treat the matter of discharge as one of confidence or non-confidence, based on the premise that a refusal of discharge is tantamount to an expression of non-confidence in the Commission. 2. Demote Cresson through means of Committee of Independent Experts without setting precedent of individual responsibility. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separate discharge issue from other 'scandals' 2. Use motion of censure to ensure vote of confidence in the Commission 3. File resolution in January ensuring collective responsibility (withdrawn once EPP resolution denied). 4. Install non-partisan, non-EP (i.e. independent) committee of experts to examine fraud, mismanagement, and nepotism cases in the Commission; then withdraw motion of censure. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Link the discharge issue with other 'scandals' 2. Force Socialist Commissioners Cresson and Marin to resign. 3. Enforce individual responsibility by specifically targeting Cresson and Marin in January resolution. 			
Relationship with Commission		Contacts with Commission primarily via "British Labour"-connection (Santer, February 20, 2001), high degree of incentive compatibility (even suspicion of straight-out collaboration). No consultations with EPP over the issue (Martens [February 20, 2001]).	Some contacts between EPP President Martens and Commission President Santer, little between EPP faction and Commission. No contacts between opposition faction in EPP and Commission (Santer, February 20, 2001). No consultations with PES over the issue. (Martens [February 20, 2001])			

Table 3: PES and EPP Votes on Discharge and Censure

	EP Vote on Discharge, December 17, 1998.				EP Vote on Censure Motion, January 14, 1999.			
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Absent</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Absent</i>
PES (Total: 214)	147	32	6	29	37	160	2	15
EPP (Total: 201)	42	112	13	34	70	92	21	18

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis of Discharge Vote – PES plus EPP.

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	5.152	.000	172.858***
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.239	.049	1.270*
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	5.665	.000	288.723***
National Party represented in Commission	1.272	.009	3.569**
Pro-EU	-.713	.000	.490***
Anti-EU	.256	.340	1.292
Constant		.000	.014***
Number of Observations			415

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Discharge Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Table 5: Logistic Regression Analysis of Discharge Vote – PES.

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	-5.168	.909	.006
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.151	.455	1.163
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	18.180	.614	78642094.442
National Party represented in Commission	2.204	.044	9.062**
Pro-EU	-1.309	.000	.270***
Anti-EU	-.866	.778	.421
Constant		.843	7960.577
Number of Observations			214

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Discharge Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Table 6: Logistic Regression Analysis of Discharge Vote – EPP.

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	2.306	.022	10.037*
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.751	.118	2.118
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	10.162	.003	25888.734**
National Party represented in Commission	-.660	.689	.517
Pro-EU	-2.662	.002	.070**
Anti-EU	.766	.159	2.151
Constant		.296	.029
Number of Observations		201	

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Discharge Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Table 7: Logistic Regression Analysis of Censure Vote – PES plus EPP

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	-.570	.359	.566
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.222	.124	1.249
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	-5.092	.000	.006***
National Party represented in Commission	.606	.289	1.833
Pro-EU	.688	.000	1.991***
Anti-EU	.730	.001	2.076***
Constant		.000	.003***
Number of Observations		415	

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Censure Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Table 8: Logistic Regression Analysis (Bivariate) of Censure Vote – PES plus EPP

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	-1.357	.000	.257***

Table 9: Logistic Regression Analysis of Censure Vote – PES.

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	1.890	.965	6.620
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.075	.762	1.078
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	-21.356	.538	.000
National Party represented in Commission	-.618	.604	.539
Pro-EU	1.730	.000	5.639***
Anti-EU	-.117	.974	.890
Constant		.803	.000
Number of Observations		214	

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Censure Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Table 10: Logistic Regression Analysis of Censure Vote – EPP

Independent Variable	B	Significance	Exponential B
Government-Opposition	-1.323	.183	.266
Corruption Perception Index 1998	.595	.023	1.812*
Commissioner 'In Line of Fire'	2.580	.137	13.192
National Party represented in Commission	-2.546	.070	.078
Pro-EU	.295	.051	1.343*
Anti-EU	1.348	.000	3.850***
Constant		.002	.001***
Number of Observations		201	

*** = significant at 0.001 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level

a Dependent Variable: Censure Vote: 1 = for, 0 = against, A = 0

Bibliography:

Agence Europe, Saturday, February 8, 1997.

Agence Europe, Wednesday, December 16, 1998.

Agence Europe, Friday, December 18, 1998.

Agence Europe, Wednesday, January 13, 1999

Agence Europe, Thursday, January 14, 1999.

Agence Europe, Friday, January 15, 1999.

Attina, F. (1990): *The Voting Behavior of European Parliament Members and the Problem of the Europarties*. In: European Journal of Political Research 18 (4): 557-79.

Bay Brzinski, J. (1995): *Political Group Cohesion in the European Parliament, 1989-1994*. In: Rhodes, Caroline and Mazey, Sonia (eds.): The State of the European Union, Vol.3: Building a European Polity? Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, 135-158.

Blondel, J. (1997): *Political Opposition in the Contemporary World*. In: Government and Opposition 32 (4): 462-486.

Blondel, J. Sinnot, R. & Svensson, P. (1998): People and Parliament in the European Union – Participation, Democracy, and Legitimacy. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Bowler, S. and Farrel, D.M. (1995): The Organizing of the European Parliament: Committees, Specialization and Co-ordination. In: *British Journal of Political Science*, 25, 1995, 219-243.

Budge, I. et al. (2001): Mapping Policy Preferences – Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Committee of Independent Experts: FIRST REPORT on Allegations regarding Fraud, Mismanagement and Nepotism in the European Commission. March 15, 1999 (available at <http://www.europarl.eu.int/experts/>)

Corbett, R. (MEP) Jacobs, F. & Shackleton, M. (1995): The European Parliament. London, John Harper Publishing.

Coombes, D. *et al.* (1976): The Power of the Purse. London: Allen & Unwin/PEP.

Coultrap, J. (1999): *From Parliamentarism to Pluralism*. In: Journal of Theoretical Politics 11 (1): 107-135.

- Dahl, R.A. (1966): Political Oppositions in Western Democracies. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Dinan, D. (1999): Ever Closer Union? 2nd Edition. Boulder, Lynn Rinner.
- European Voice, 21-27 January, 1999.
- Green, P. (1999): Speech on Motion of Censure on the Commission, delivered on January 11, 1999, before the European Parliament in Strasbourg.
- Herman, V. (1976): Parliaments of the World: A Reference Compendium. London: MacMillan.
- Hix, S. (1999): The Political System of the European Union. London, Macmillan.
- Hix, S. (2000): How MEPs Vote. Briefing note 1/00, ESRC One Europe or Several? Programme, Brighton, University of Sussex (available at www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/hix-bn3.PDF).
- Hix, S. (2001): *Legislative Behavior and Party Competition in the European Parliament: An Application of Nominate to the EU*. In: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 39, No.4, 663-88.
- Hix, S. and Kreppel, A. (2002): From Grand Coalition to Left-Right Confrontation. Explaining the Shifting Structure of Party Competition in the European Parliament. Paper prepared for the 2002 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29-September 1, 2002, Boston.
- Hix, S. Kreppel, A. and Noury, A. (2002): The Party System in the European Parliament: Collusive or Competitive? Paper prepared for the conference on "The European Parliament at Fifty", 12-13 July 2002, Aberystwyth.
- Hix, S. and Lord, C. (1997): Political Parties in the European Union. New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Huber, J. (1996): *The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies*. In: American Political Science Review, Vol. 90, No. 2, June 1996, 269-282.
- Joint Motion for a Resolution introduced by EPP, ELDR, and V Groups on January 13, 1999, to replace motions B4-0021, 0067 and 0107/99.
- Joint Motion for a Resolution tabled by PSE, GUE/NGL, and ARE Groups to replace motions B4-0065, 0109 and 0110/99.
- Judge, D. and Earnshaw, D. (2002): *The European Parliament and the Commission Crisis: A New Assertiveness?* In: Governance Vol. 15, No. 3, 345-374.

Jun, H. (2002): Catching the Runaway Bureaucracy in Brussels. MEPs in the Votes of Budgetary Discharge. Paper prepared for the 2002 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29-September 1, 2002, Boston.

King, A. (1976): *Modes of Executive-Legislative Relations: Great Britain, France, and West Germany.* In: Legislative Studies Quarterly, 1 (1): 11-36.

Kreppel, A. (1999): Rules, Ideology and Coalition Formation in the European Parliament: Past, Present and Future. European Parliament Research Group Working Paper, No.4.

Kreppel, A. and Tsebelis, G. (1999): *Coalition Formation in the European Parliament.* In: Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 32, No. 8, December 1999, 933-966

Laffan, B. (1996): The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe. In: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.34, No.1, 1996, 81-102.

Laver, M. and Shepsle, K.A. (1994): Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Luebbert, G.M. (1986): Comparative Democracy: Policymaking and Governing Coalitions in Europe and Israel. New York, Columbia University Press.

Mair, P. (1997): Party System Change – Approaches and Interpretations. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Mezey, M.L. (1998): *Executive-Legislative Relations.* In: Kurian, G.T.: World Encyclopedia of Parliaments and Legislatures. Vol.II, Washington, DC, Congressional Quarterly, 780-786.

Motion for a Resolution “On improving the financial management of the Commission” (B4-0110/99), tabled by Pauline Green on behalf of the PES Group.

Muntean, A.M. (2000): The European Parliament’s Political Legitimacy and the Commission’s “Misleading Management: Towards a “Parliamentarian” European Union? *European Integration online Papers (EioP)*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 2000 (available at: <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-005a.htm>)

Nickel, D. (1999): Beyond Treaty Revision: Shifts in the Institutional Balance? Paper presented at the ECSA Sixth Biennial Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 1999.

Noury, A.G. and Roland, G. (2002): *European Parliament – Should It Have More Power?* In: Economic Policy, October 2002, 281-319.

Peterson, J. (1999): *The Santer Era: the European Commission in Normative, Historical, and Theoretical Perspective.* In: Journal of European Public Policy, 6, 1, 46-65.

- Pujas, V. and Rhodes, M. (1999): A Clash of Cultures? Corruption and the Ethics of Administration in Western Europe. In: *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1999, 688-702.
- Raunio, T. (1996): Party Group Behavior in the European Parliament. Tampere, University of Tampere.
- Raunio, T. (1997): The European Perspective – Transnational Party Groups in the 1989-1994 European Parliament. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing.
- Raunio, T. (1998): *Cleavages and Alignments in the European Parliament: MEP Voting Behavior, 1989-94*. In: Bell, D.S. and Lord, C. (eds.): Transnational Parties in the European Union, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Raunio, T. (1999): *The Challenge of Diversity: Party Cohesion in the European Parliament*. In: Bowler, S., Farrell, D. and Katz, R.S.: Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government, Columbus, Ohio State University Press.
- “Reasons supporting the motion of censure,” EP Document B4-0053/99, tabled January 11, 1999, by Mr. Fabre-Aubrespy MEP.
- Report “On giving discharge to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Communities for the 1996 financial year,” December 11, 1998, Rapporteur James Elles.
- Saalfeld, T. (2000): *Members of Parliament and Governments in Western Europe: Agency Relations and Problems of Oversight*. In: European Journal of Political Research 37: 353-376, 2000.
- “Schwer Ramponiert”. In: *Focus*, 3/1999.
- Thomassen, J. and Schmitt, H. (1999): *Issue Congruence*. In: Schmitt, Hermann and Thomassen, Jacques (ed.): Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union. Oxford: University Press, 1999.
- Strom, K. (1995): *Parliamentary Government and Legislative Organization*. In: Doring, H. (ed.): Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe. New York, St. Martin’s Press.
- Watson, R. (2000): *Shifting Sands*. The Parliament Magazine 24, July 7, 2000.
- Wessels, W. and Diedrichs, U. (1999): *The European Parliament and EU Legitimacy*. In Banchoff, Thomas and Smith, Mitchell P.: Legitimacy and the European Union – The Contested Polity. New York, Routledge, 1999, 134-154.
- Westlake, M. (1994): A Modern Guide to the European Parliament. London, Pinter.

Wiberg, M. (1995): *Parliamentary Questioning: Control by Communication?* In: Doring, H. (ed.): Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe. New York, St. Martin's Press.

www.eppe.org

www.eurosocialists.org

www.transparency.org/cpi