



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

**Arguing against accusations of national disloyalty:
analyzing sequences of confrontational maneuvering in
Dutch plenary debates on EU issues**

Steenbergen, M.I.

Citation

Steenbergen, M. I. (2025, June 4). *Arguing against accusations of national disloyalty: analyzing sequences of confrontational maneuvering in Dutch plenary debates on EU issues*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4245990>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4245990>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Arguing against accusations of national disloyalty

Analyzing sequences of confrontational maneuvering
in Dutch plenary debates on EU issues

Steenbergen, I.

Arguing against accusations of national disloyalty. Analyzing sequences of confrontational maneuvering in Dutch plenary debates on EU issues

Printed by: Proefschriftspecialist | proefschriftspecialist.nl

Interior layout: Katie McGonigal, persoonlijkproefschrift.nl

Cover design: Roos ter Kuile & Isabella Steenbergen

ISBN: 978-94-93431-48-5

© Isabella Steenbergen, 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system of any nature, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronically, mechanically, by photocopying, microfilming, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the author.

Arguing against accusations of national disloyalty

Analyzing sequences of confrontational maneuvering
in Dutch plenary debates on EU issues

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op woensdag 4 juni 2025
klokke 10.00 uur

door

María Isabela Steenbergen

Promotor

Prof. dr. T. van Haaften

Co-promotores

Prof. dr. F.H. van Eemeren

Dr. A.F. Snoeck Henkemans

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. E. J. L. Fortuin

Prof. dr. A. Gâță (Dunărea de Jos University of Galati, Romania)

Dr. H. Jansen

Prof. dr. P. Wu (Jiangsu University, China)

To Klaus, Mats and Noah

Acknowledgements

As I reach the culmination of this PhD project, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who supported, guided and encouraged me along the way.

First of all, I thank my supervisors Frans van Eemeren, Ton van Haften, and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans for their dedicated guidance. It was initially Francisca who convinced me, several years after she had supervised my Master's thesis, to write this dissertation. This meant a lot to me. I want to thank her for her precise comments and unwavering trust in me. As one of the founders of the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory, Frans's guidance was vital for this dissertation. His intellectual generosity, careful reading of my texts, and pointed yet constructive feedback took it beyond what I could have achieved on my own. I am equally grateful to Ton. His analytical clarity helped me to refine my empirical observations. I also thank him for keeping me on schedule and ensuring I could defend this dissertation in Leiden as planned.

Additionally, I am much indebted to my argumentation peers from the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Amsterdam VU and the Netherlands Defense Academy. Through many discussions, they were the whetstones of my thinking. Moreover, their company over dinners and drinks has made my PhD life infinitely more enjoyable. In particular, I would like to thank Ingeborg van der Geest, Francisca Jungslager, Roosmaryn Pilgram, Bertijn van Steenhoven, and Charlotte van der Voort, who willingly joined their critical minds to help me prepare for my defense. Thanks also to Claske Vos, who invested in preventing me from getting lost in the EU labyrinth, and Angela van der Veer, my regained "pink help" who edited my manuscript. Furthermore, I am grateful for having such great colleagues at the Dutch Safety Board; their interest in this research and concern for my well-being were a moral support during the final stretch.

Although writing a PhD requires spending many hours alone, thanks to my family and friends, I never felt lonely. I think of my mother, María Olga Veiroa y Garcia, who stood by me from the start but regrettably did not live to see this dissertation defended. I am also thankful to Andrés, Adrie, Octavio, Mercedes, Javier, Gaia, Sarah, Gerrit, Paula, Wilma, Gaëlle, Frank, Roos and Jeroen, and of course the Marsen, Jürgens and Burghard families, who have always given me a home (and sometimes even a home office) in Hamburg. Last but not least, my gratitude goes to my partner Klaus and our children, Mats and Noah, to whom this dissertation is dedicated. They were the ones who actually lived with the daily reality of my academic ambition. The time I spent on this research was often time I could not spend with them. Klaus, I especially thank you.

Without your support, patience, intelligence and sense of humor, it would have been very hard for me to see this journey through.

March 2, 2025
Isabella Steenbergen

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	7
1. Introduction	13
1.1 Strategic sequences initiated by an accusation of national disloyalty	13
1.2 Theoretical framework: the pragma-dialectical approach	19
1.3 Objectives and research method	23
1.4 Organization of the study	26
2. The institutional macro-context of Dutch plenary debates on EU issues	29
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 The Dutch House of Representatives and EU decision-making	30
2.2.1 A multilevel governance	31
2.2.2 Facing European challenges	33
2.2.3 A decentralized approach to EU issues	34
2.3 General features of Dutch plenary debates on EU issues	35
2.3.1 Political-ideological positions towards the EU and EU integration	36
2.3.2 Adaptation pressure and the domestication of EU issues	39
2.4 The institutional point of preserving a democratic culture	42
2.5 Institutional preconditions	46
2.5.1 National institutional preconditions	47
2.5.2 EU-related institutional preconditions	48
2.6 Argumentative characterization	57
2.6.1 Initial situation	57
2.6.2 Starting points	61
2.6.3 Argumentative means and criticism	61
2.6.4 Outcome	65
2.7 Prototypical confrontational maneuvering	67
2.8 Conclusion	68
3. The accusation of national disloyalty as a confrontational strategy	71
3.1 Introduction	71
3.2 Accusing a political opponent of national disloyalty	72
3.2.1 The accusation variant of disregarding Dutch interests	75

3.2.2 The accusation variant of misleading Dutch Parliament	80
3.3 Reconciling dialectical and rhetorical goals	83
3.4 Undermining a political opponent's representational authority	85
3.5 Achieving the result aimed for: two types of disputes	87
3.6 Two strategic designs for undermining an opponent's representational authority	91
3.6.1 Two ways of using a circumstantial personal attack	95
3.6.2 Two ways of exploiting the initial basic argumentative pattern	101
3.7 Conclusion	111
4. Prototypical strategic sequences	115
4.1 Introduction	115
4.2 Dialectical routes opened up by argumentative patterns	116
4.3 Mapping analytically relevant strategic responses	117
4.4 Response options to the accusation variant of disregarding Dutch interests	118
4.5 Response options to the accusation variant of misleading Dutch Parliament	125
4.6 Deploying a zero-standpoint in preparatory strategic sequences	133
4.7 Managing the provoked conflict	134
4.8 Conclusion	135
5. Responding strategically to accusations of disregarding Dutch interests	137
5.1 Introduction	137
5.2 Managing the dispute's conflict from ideology	138
5.2.1 Associating EU solidarity with Dutch sovereignty	140
5.2.2 Reversing the perspective on the charge raised	149
5.2.3 Shifting from a conflict <i>from</i> ideology to a conflict <i>on</i> ideology	156
5.3 Preparing for a counterattack	163
5.4 Making a convincing case	168
5.5 Conclusion	171
6. Responding strategically to accusations of misleading Dutch Parliament	173
6.1 Introduction	173
6.2 Managing the conflict of facts at the dispute's main level	174
6.2.1 Avoiding the conflict by strategic reprieve	175
6.3 Managing the conflict of facts at the dispute's sublevel	180
6.3.1 Denying commitment to FACT I or FACT II	181
6.3.1.1 Counterstrategies for denying commitment to FACT I	183
6.3.1.2 Counterstrategies for denying commitment to FACT II	187
6.3.2 Proposing an opportune trade-off	195

6.4 Preparing for a counterattack	200
6.5 Making a convincing case	204
6.6 Conclusion	208
7. Conclusion	211
7.1 Main findings	212
7.2 Implications of the study	218
7.3 Suggestions for further research	222
References	225
Summary	239
Samenvatting	245
Curriculum vitae	251