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EU Issue Voting: Asset or Liability?

How European Integration Affects Parties' Electoral Fortunes

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ABSTRACT

This study develops and tests arguments about how political parties' electoral fortunes in national elections are influenced by voters' preferences regarding the European Union (EU). To date, there is increasing evidence demonstrating the impact of EU issues on vote choice in national elections - a process commonly referred to as *EU issue voting*. Yet little is known about which parties actually gain or lose as a result of EU issue voting. Using a two-step hierarchical estimation procedure, I first estimate an individual-level model of vote choice estimating the impact of EU preferences for individual parties. The first stage of the analysis reveals that the extent of EU issue voting varies substantially among political parties. In the second stage, I utilize party characteristics to account for this variation across parties by using an estimated dependent variable model. The analysis demonstrates that the inter-party variation in EU issue voting is largely a function of two factors: parties' *intrinsic positioning* regarding the EU and *strategic considerations*. The empirical analysis employs data from UK, Danish, Dutch and German elections between 1992 and 2002.

Introduction

If Jean Monnet had dozed off at a meeting of the European Coal and Steel Community in the early 1950s and had awoken in present-day Europe, what would have been his reaction? His first feeling would probably be one of pride. Not only are over 480 million Europeans citizens of Europe, the number of European Union (EU) institutions has grown considerably and so have their competencies, stretching from employment to foreign policy. Nonetheless, his second emotion might be one of surprise or even disappointment: Monnet and other early architects of the European integration process expected citizens to rally around Europe as the unification process contributed greatly to peace, welfare and stability. Until the late 1980s, the integration process was indeed accompanied by a diffuse feeling of approval on the part of the European citizenry (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), but current developments cast a shadow on Monnet's initial hope of building a union among people rather than states. Today, we are witnessing growing discontent regarding Europe. Although there have been downturns in support for European integration in the past, it is clear that Europeans have grown considerably more wary of the integration process than they once were (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). Not only do European citizens actively monitor the course of integration and, where necessary, voice their fears and objections (Steenbergen et al., 2007), Eurosceptic sentiment is also increasingly being exploited by political entrepreneurs in EU referenda and national elections (Taggart, 1998).

Recent analyses reveal that European integration has become a contested issue in national elections (Evans, 1998, 2002; Gabel, 2000; Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007, 2009). Specifically, voters' EU preferences seem to influence their vote choice in national elections, a process referred to as *EU issue voting*. The research on EU issue voting shows that the degree to which voters' positions on European matters influence their vote choice varies cross-nationally depending on the level of EU issue salience among the electorate as well as on the choices on offer by political parties regarding European issues (Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007, 2009; Schoen, 2008).

Notwithstanding the importance of this work, it provides no insight into which political parties thrive as a result of EU issue voting. This lacuna in the literature is unfortunate because we currently fail to understand the effects of the increased contention over European integration on domestic politics. Does EU issue voting affect the electoral fortunes of political parties differently? If so, which parties stand to gain or lose as a result? By addressing the impact of EU issue voting on political parties' electoral fortunes at the national ballot box, we gain a better understanding of the way in which EU issue voting intersects with domestic structures of political competition.

This study proposes and empirically substantiates a model explaining variation in EU issue voting across political parties on the basis of two factors: parties' intrinsic positioning regarding European integration and strategic considerations. In other words, the way in which EU issue voting influences parties' electoral fortunes in national elections is contingent upon parties' ideological positioning towards European integration as well as on party strategy (see also Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Hooghe et al., 2002). This explanatory framework combining intrinsic party positioning and strategic considerations may not only be useful in the case of variation in EU issue voting, but may also provide a valuable starting point for understanding inter-party variation in issue voting in other issue areas, such as immigration or globalization. Consequently, this study not only speaks to the ongoing debate within the field of EU studies about contestation regarding EU matters in national contexts, but also is relevant to scholars of issue voting in general. The empirical analysis employs data from UK, Danish, Dutch and German elections between 1992 and 2002. The impact of EU issue voting on parties' electoral fortunes in national

elections is gauged by means of a two-step hierarchical estimation procedure in order to deal with the multi-level nature of the data (Huber et al., 2005; Duch and Stevenson, 2005, 2008; Kedar, 2005). In the first stage, I estimate an individual-level model of the impact of EU preferences on vote choice for individual parties. In the second stage, I utilize party characteristics to account for inter-party variation by using an estimated dependent variable model.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I briefly discuss the concept of EU issue voting. The next section presents expectations regarding which party characteristics mediate the extent of EU issue voting. In a third step, I discuss the data, the operationalizations and the method guiding the empirical analysis. The fourth section presents and discusses the empirical results. Finally, the conclusion highlights the implications of these findings and carves out several lines of future research.

Conceptualizing EU issue voting

Whilst we know a lot about how national politics influences voting for the European Parliament (EP) (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug and Eijk, 2007), we know much less about the way in which European integration intersects with national electoral politics (Börzel and Risse, 2003, 2007; Tillman, 2004). This lack of understanding is regrettable because national elections constitute important channels through which citizens can communicate their interests regarding the EU. For example, government officials elected through national elections participate in the EU Council of Ministers. Additionally, elected government leaders directly represent the interests of their member states and their citizens in the European Council (Gabel, 2000; Mair, 2005, 2007).

The influence of EU issues on domestic electoral politics can occur in a number of ways. It can take place indirectly, either through the influence of European parliamentary elections on national voting behaviour (e.g. Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Eijk et al., 1996; Marsh, 1998) or through the impact of European integration on economic voting in national elections (e.g. Scheve, 1999; Bohrer and Tan, 2000). But it can also occur directly through a mechanism referred to as *EU issue voting*. EU issue voting is the process whereby individual preferences over European integration directly influence vote choices in national elections.

Recent studies provide evidence of EU issue voting. In his examination of Austria, Finland and Sweden, for example, Tillman (2004) finds evidence of EU issue voting at the time of accession, a period in which EU membership can be assumed to have been salient and at least somewhat divisive. Similarly, De Vries (2007) finds evidence of EU issue voting in Denmark and the United Kingdom, two countries characterized by high levels of party conflict and issue salience over Europe, yet fails to find such evidence in Germany or the Netherlands, where party conflict and issue salience regarding European integration are much more limited. Looking at the 2005 German elections, Schoen (2008) argues that attitudes towards Turkey's potential accession to the EU played an important role, with voters being more likely to support parties that held positions closer to their own on the Turkish question. Taken together, these findings suggest that the degree to which voters' positions on European matters influence their vote choice varies cross-nationally depending on the level of EU issue salience among the electorate as well as on the choices on offer by political parties regarding European issues.

A factor neglected in this work is the consequence of increases in EU issue voting for party politics. Put differently, for which parties does EU issue voting constitute an electoral asset and for which an electoral liability? It is of crucial importance to understand the extent to which political

parties may be affected differently by the EU issue because it allows us to get a sense of the effect of increased conflict over European integration on domestic party politics. This study complements our current understanding of EU issue voting by providing a theoretical and empirical understanding of its ramifications for domestic politics.

EU issue voting and the electoral fortunes of political parties

Which parties benefit or lose as a result of EU issue voting? Two sets of factors are crucial in explaining inter-party variation in EU issue voting: parties' *intrinsic positioning* regarding European integration and *strategic considerations*. Both factors are based on general party literature as well as on theories explaining parties' EU positions. By relying on the general literature regarding party positioning and strategy, the use of the explanatory model proposed here may not necessarily be confined to understanding variation in EU issue voting across parties. It may also provide important insights in understanding inter-party variation in issue voting concerning other issue areas, such as immigration or globalization.

The role of parties' intrinsic EU positioning

The first line of argumentation focuses on parties' intrinsic EU positioning. Three factors are expected to affect the extent to which parties are influenced by EU issue voting: *issue importance*, *issue extremity* and *internal dissent*. Saliency theory (Budge and Farlie, 1983) and the theory of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) draw our attention to the salience of the EU issue to a party as a factor likely to affect that party's susceptibility to EU issue voting. This literature informs us that political parties build their electoral appeal around issues for which they have (or could have) the support of their constituents and/or a majority of voters. Parties make certain core issues of primary importance to their electoral campaign in order to reap electoral gains. Although issue ownership has long been regarded as fairly static, recent studies show that policy reputations are relatively flexible and, hence, open to strategic manipulation (Bélanger, 2003; Meguid, 2005; Tavits, 2008). To the extent that this is true, one would expect political parties to heighten the importance of relatively new issues, such as European integration, if they expect to be able to alter mass alignments in their favour (see also Carmines and Stimson, 1989). Parties that play up an issue seek to persuade voters to base their voting decision on that particular issue.

This argumentation implies that voters also respond to party cues regarding European integration. Recent evidence suggests that this assumption is reasonable (Ray, 2003; Gabel and Scheve, 2007; De Vries and Edwards, 2009). Steenbergen and his colleagues (2007) show that cue-taking in the context of European integration resembles a dual process whereby party elites both influence and respond to voters' positions on European integration (see also Down and Wilson in this issue). Issue importance is likely to relate to EU issue voting in the following way:

H1A (Issue Importance Hypothesis): The more important the EU issue is to a party, the higher the extent of EU issue voting for that party.

The second factor explaining the differential impact of EU issue voting across parties is issue extremity, which is largely derived from the work on directional voting by Rabinowitz and MacDonald (1989). Building on Stokes (1963), they argue that issue positioning of voters consists of two elements: *direction* and *intensity*. Intensity refers to the strength of the opinion, ranging from strong preferences at the end-points of the scale to weak feelings at the neutral mid-point of the scale. The direction of the opinion has three positions: favourable, unfavourable and neutral. The directional component determines whether a voter likes or dislikes the party. In general, voters tend to like parties that are on the same side of an issue as they are. The intensity component indicates the extent to which the issue evokes an attitudinal response and how essential the issue is for a voter's judgement. More extreme positions indicate that the issue evokes stronger feelings and has a greater weight in voters' party evaluations. Thus, according to the directional model, voters do not utilize a continuum of policy positions when evaluating parties but instead focus on a party's agreement or disagreement with their personal policy preference (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989: 94). So, in our case, the intuition is that when parties take a firm stance on Europe, i.e. are clearly Eurosceptic or Euro-enthusiast, they are expected to experience higher levels of EU issue voting than parties with middling positions.

The issue extremity idea does not necessarily imply that parties propagating the most extremist positions are automatically expected to win votes. Although it is assumed that supporting intense issue positions is beneficial to a party, the directional model imposes a theoretical limitation to plausible issue stands, referred to as the 'region of acceptability' (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989: 108; MacDonald et al., 1991: 1111). The idea here is that a party's issue position must be reasonable in the eyes of (most) voters: 'A candidate must convince voters of his or her reasonableness. Voters are wary of candidates who seem radical and project harshness or stridency' (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989: 108). For our purposes, this penalty may be less relevant because both Euroscepticism – defined as opposition to the EU, its institutions or policies and/or the process of European integration (for an overview of definitions of Euroscepticism, see Ray, 2007) – and its antithesis – Euro-enthusiasm – are reasonable positions upheld by both mainstream and peripheral parties throughout the EU (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks et al., 2002). The issue extremity perspective leads to the expectation that parties with extreme preferences on the EU issue are more likely to arouse support from voters than are parties with a middling position regarding European integration:

H1B (Issue Extremity Hypothesis): The more extreme a party's EU stance, the higher the extent of EU issue voting for that party.

Although both issue importance and issue extremity tap into an aspect of a party's EU positioning, they are by no means identical. A party may be highly supportive of or sceptical about the European project while at the same time attaching minor importance to the issue within an electoral campaign. The Dutch List Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn, LPF) is exemplary in this respect. Although the LPF party platform was the most prominently Eurosceptic in the 2002 election campaign, other issues such as law and order and immigration policy were their key concerns in the campaign and overshadowed the EU issue (Pennings and Keman, 2003; Van Holsteyn et al., 2003; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2003). This example illustrates that issue importance and issue extremity do not necessarily go hand-in-hand.

Next to the importance and extremity of a party's EU position, the degree to which a party is internally divided over the issue of European integration is also expected to affect the extent

to which EU issue voting constitutes an electoral asset or liability. The intuition is simple: the higher the strife over European integration within a party, the less likely it is that voters will vote for this party on the basis of their EU preferences. Voters that vote on the basis of the European integration issue are likely to vote for parties that mirror their EU position (this is in line with the proximity model proposed by Enelow and Hinich, 1984). In order to do so, voters need information about a party's stance on the EU issue. When parties are internally divided over the issue of European integration, that is to say when they provide voters with conflicting information on the issue, voters are unable to relate their own EU position to that of a party. Consequently, they may be hesitant to vote for a party that is internally divided on the EU issue. The presentation of competing messages by party leaders and/or officials muddles the cues sent by a party regarding a particular issue to its supporters (see Zaller, 1992; Gabel and Scheve, 2007). Consequently, one can expect the extent of EU issue voting to be contingent upon the degree to which a party is internally divided over the EU issue. The British Conservatives are exemplary in this respect: Even though a large segment of British voters was much closer to the sceptical stance of the Tories on the EU during the 1997 general election, the party was unable to utilize this electoral asset owing to the high level of internal dissent over the issue (Evans, 1998). This expectation is formalized in the following hypothesis:

H1C (Internal Dissent Hypothesis): The higher the internal dissent over the EU issue within a party, the lower the extent of EU issue voting for that party.

The role of parties' strategic positioning

Besides the characteristics of parties' inherent EU positioning, variation in EU issue voting is likely a function of parties' strategic positioning within the party system. Two factors are the most relevant here: government-opposition dynamics and left/right extremism (see Taggart, 1998; Sitter, 2001, 2002).

A first important strategic factor is opposition status. Being in opposition is expected to increase the extent to which a party is affected by EU issue voting. Because European integration is a project driven largely by governments and government parties, criticism of EU policies tends to be the privilege of opposition parties (Sitter, 2002). Indeed, analyses show that main-stream opposition parties seem to increasingly play the anti-EU card (Sitter, 2001, 2002; Ray, 2007).

Governing parties often downplay the importance of European integration because they wish to avoid fighting elections on the issue, in part because it may bring about internal dissent (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Edwards, 2007; Netjes and Binnema, 2007). Moreover, it is not easy for government parties to adopt a sceptical position on Europe given that they usually have been deeply involved in shaping the integration process in the past. Hence, outspoken opposition may lack credibility. Of course, it is possible for government parties to oppose European integration, but they run the risk of isolation and consequently ineffectiveness at the EU level. As a result, government parties find themselves confronted with a steep trade-off between Euroscepticism and government effectiveness.

In contrast, opposition parties have an interest in restructuring contestation and stressing the integration issue as such a reorientation may bring about new voters. Moreover, an increase in the polarization on European integration by opposition parties may force government parties to take a clear-cut stance on the issue, which could destabilize the government coalition. Consequently, opposition parties are more likely to be affected by EU issue voting than government parties.

H2A (Opposition Party Hypothesis): The extent of EU issue voting is expected to be higher among parties in opposition.

Although it seems reasonable to assume that opposition parties have a strategic incentive to mobilize EU sentiment in order to differentiate themselves from government parties, this strategy may be less useful for mainstream opposition parties. Mainstream opposition parties, that is to say parties that alternate between government and opposition, have been part of the deepening and widening of European integration. Consequently, when it comes to the EU issue they may behave like their government counterparts. They may also have an incentive to avoid the European integration issue in order to deal with a more sceptical rank and file. Against this backdrop, the EU issue is likely to constitute an even larger strategic opportunity for opposition parties on the far left and right of the political spectrum. These parties can utilize contestation regarding European integration as a means to distinguish themselves from the predominantly pro-EU mainstream and thereby possibly enhance their vote share (Taggart, 1998; Marks and Wilson, 2000; Crum 2007). Owing to their extreme position in terms of left/right ideology, radical left or right parties have an incentive to play up new issues and thereby enable themselves to reap electoral gains. This idea is in line with Riker's (1982) view that political parties mobilize on new issues 'to find some alternative [issue] that beats the current winner' (Riker, 1982: 209). The EU issue provides an excellent opportunity for these parties for two reasons: first, public opinion is increasingly fickle and sceptical (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007); and, second, Euro-enthusiasm still constitutes the norm within the mainstream of West European party systems. The ideological mainstream, i.e. Conservative, Social and Christian Democratic parties, are generally supportive of the integration process because they have often been part of governing coalitions throughout Western Europe and, therefore, were largely responsible for the course of integration (Marks et al., 2002; Crum, 2007). The radical left and right, in contrast, have been at the forefront of the mobilization of Eurosceptic views in national elections (Taggart, 1998; Hooghe et al., 2002). This, accompanied by the fact that public opinion is on average more Eurosceptic than are mainstream elites (Hooghe, 2003), and perhaps increasingly so, makes the politicization of European integration in national elections a means by which extremist parties can enhance their electoral appeal (see Taggart, 1998). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H2B (Left/Right Extremity Hypothesis): The more extreme a party's left/right position, the higher the extent of EU issue voting for that party.

Data, operationalizations and methods

Do these hypotheses shed light on variation among parties in their susceptibility to EU issue voting? To determine this, I need to develop a measure of the extent of EU issue voting, which involves a complicated procedure because it cannot be observed directly. Instead, I need to rely on a measure estimated from the data for the two variables that make up the relationship: a voter's party choice and a voter's EU preference. In order to explore and explain variation in EU issue voting across parties, the analysis is based on a two-step hierarchical estimation procedure (Achen, 2005; Duch and Stevenson, 2005, 2008; Franzese, 2005; Lewis and Linzer, 2005). The first stage estimates individual-level multinomial logistic (MNL) regression analyses to model the impact of voters' EU preferences on vote choice for a particular party. In the second stage, an estimated

dependent variable model is used to examine which party characteristics can account for inter-party variation in EU issue voting. All estimations were conducted in STATA version 10. The data are national election survey data from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for the period 1992–2002.¹ With the exception of the German case, which includes only the 1998 and 2002 election, three elections were included per country: 1992, 1997 and 2001 for the UK; 1994, 1998 and 2001 for Denmark; 1994, 1998 and 2002 for the Netherlands. Question wordings for the different items used in the empirical analysis are very similar across the surveys in the different countries.² Moreover, the data provide an excellent basis for explaining EU issue voting across parties since there is considerable variation across the different party characteristics: issue importance, issue extremity, internal dissent, opposition status and left/right extremity.

Let me begin by explaining in some detail the multiple stages of the model. In a first step, country-specific individual-level MNL regression analyses are conducted to model the impact of voters' EU preferences on vote choice while controlling for other factors. The dependent variable is vote choice for a particular party in a given election. Table A.1 in the Online Appendix provides a list of the parties that were included in every election. The main independent variable is a voter's EU preference, which is gleaned from several surveys in which voters were asked to place themselves on an EU scale. This scale is standardized around its mean, whereby low (high) scores indicate low (high) EU support. To assess the importance of the EU issue in relation to other central concerns, non-EU-related policy variables and socioeconomic controls are included. First, a respondents' self-placement on a left/right ideological scale; this scale was standardized around its mean whereby low (high) scores indicate left (right) placements. Additional policy variables tapping the 'new politics' dimension of political competition are included: immigration, law and order, and environment. Although this new politics dimension may include diverse issues, such as political participation, gender, abortion or lifestyle issues, immigration and environmental policy are usually considered key elements of new politics (Dalton, 1996). As with the variables presented above, the different scales were standardized around their respective means, whereby low scores indicate a less strict immigration policy, a less strict law and order policy, or a less green policy, whereas high scores indicate a stricter immigration policy, a stricter law and order policy, or a greener policy. Finally, several socioeconomic control variables, namely gender, religiosity, income, rural/urban living environment and education, are added to the model. In the German case, an additional variable is included indicating whether a respondent resides in the eastern or western part of the Republic.

In order to circumvent under-specification of the individual-level vote choice models at the first stage, the model specification at this stage varies across countries. This allows for the inclusion of country-specific factors. The inclusion of these different country-specific variables at the first stage greatly complicates the estimation of a one-step hierarchical model. Consequently, this analysis uses a two-step hierarchical set-up (on the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, see Franzese, 2005). After the first stage, MNL regressions are estimated; the second stage of the analysis proceeds by employing the first-stage estimates to model inter-party variation in EU issue voting. To ensure substantively meaningful comparability across cases, the first-stage MNL coefficients are transformed into predicted/expected values (see also Duch and Stevenson, 2005, 2008). In this case, the predicted change in vote probability for a particular party owing to a change in the distribution of EU preferences across voters is used. Specifically, I estimate the change in vote probability when a voter moves from one standard deviation below the mean of the EU support scale to one standard deviation above the mean, while holding all other control variables at their respective means. These changes are calculated using CLARIFY, which employs Monte Carlo simulations to convert raw statistical results into more intuitive quantities without changing the statistical assumptions (King et al., 2000).³ The changes in vote probabilities, i.e. the EU issue voting measure for a particular party, thus make up the estimated dependent variable in the second stage.

In turn, these predicted changes in vote probabilities are regressed against several party characteristics taken from the several rounds of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) on party positioning on European integration (Ray, 1996; Marks and Steenbergen, 1999; Hooghe et al., 2003). EU issue importance is measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (no importance) to 5 (high importance).⁴ EU issue extremity is measured by the absolute distance between a party's EU position and that of the median party in the system. Internal dissent is measured using a seven-point EU internal dissent scale from the CHES data on party positioning regarding European integration. This variable was recoded so that 1 indicates low internal dissent and 7 indicates high internal dissent.⁵ Similarly to EU issue extremity, left/right extremity is measured by the absolute distance between a party's left/right position and that of the median party. Finally, the opposition status of a party is measured using a dummy variable indicating whether or not the party was in opposition during the year prior to the election. This measure was determined using Siaroff (2000) and official government websites. All variables were standardized around their respective means. Table 1 summarizes the indicators used to operationalize the dependent and independent variables employed in the first and second stages of the empirical analysis.

Table 1 Description of dependent and independent variables

First stage: Individual-level analysis

Dependent variable

Vote choice Vote choice for a particular party in a given election.

Independent variables

EU position	A respondent's self-placement on a five-point European integration scale where 1 stands for exit out of the EU and 5 stands for the fastest possible build-up of the EU. In order to guarantee comparability across the different countries, items were collapsed into a five-point scale (different permutations of rescaling do not affect the results). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Left/right position	A respondent's self-placement on a five-point left/right ideological scale where 1 indicates left and 5 indicates right. Note that in the 1992 and 1997 British surveys respondents' left/right position was constructed using four different items: opinions about inflation, tax policy, privatisation and income redistribution. In order to guarantee comparability across the different countries, items were collapsed into a five-point scale (different permutations of rescaling do not affect the results). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Law and order	A respondent's self-placement on a five-point law and order scale where 1 indicates less strict law and order policy and 5 indicates stricter law and order policy. In order to guarantee comparability across the different countries, items were collapsed into a five-point scale (different permutations of rescaling do not affect the results). This variable is standardized around its mean.

Immigration position A respondent's self-placement on a five-point immigration scale where 1 indicates less strict immigration policy and 5 indicates stricter immigration policy. In order to guarantee comparability across the different countries, items were collapsed into a five-point scale (different permutations of rescaling do not affect the results). This variable is standardized around its mean.

Environment position A respondent's self-placement on a five-point environment scale where 1 indicates less green policy and 5 indicates greener policy. Note that in the British, Dutch and German surveys, self-placements on nuclear energy are used to tap into the environment issue. In order to guarantee comparability across the different countries, items were collapsed into a five-point scale (different permutations of rescaling do not affect the results). This variable is standardized around its mean.

Gender	Respondent's gender (0 = male; 1 = female). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Religiosity	Respondent's church attendance (high values indicate high religiosity). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Social class	Respondent's social class identification (high values indicate identification with higher social class). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Income	Respondent's household income (high values indicate high household income). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Education	Respondent's level of education (high values indicate high level of education). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Urban	Size of the town/city in which respondent resides (high values indicate large city size). This variable is standardized around its mean.
East	Dummy variable indicating if a respondent resides in East or West Germany (0 = West; East = 1). This variable is standardized around its mean.

Second stage: Party-level analysis

Dependent variable

Extent of EU issue Estimated dependent variable based on the first stage voting for each party individual-level multinomial logistic regression coefficients

measuring the impact of a respondent's EU position on a respondent's vote choice. Extent of EU issue voting signifies the absolute change in vote probability for a given party when a voter moves from one standard deviation below the mean of the EU scale to one standard deviation above while holding all other control variables at their respective means. This measure ranges from 0 to 34.6.

Independent variables

EU issue importance	EU issue importance is operationalized by using a five -point EU salience scale from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) data on party positioning regarding European integration ranging from 1 (no importance) to 5 (high importance). This variable is standardized around its mean.
EU issue extremity	EU issue extremity is measured as the absolute distance between a party's EU position and that of the median party. A party's and the median party's EU position were operationalized using an EU position scale from the CHES data ranging from 1 (strongly opposed to European integration) to 7 (strongly in favour of European integration). This variable is standardized around its mean.
EU internal dissent	EU internal dissent is operationalized by using a seven -point EU internal dissent scale from the CHES data on party positioning regarding European integration. This variable was recoded so that 1 indicates low internal dissent and 7 indicates high internal dissent. This variable is standardized around its mean.
Left/right extremity	Left/right extremity is measured as the absolute distance between a party's left/right position and that of the median party. A party's and the median party's EU position were operationalized using a left/right position scale from the CHES data ranging from 0 (left) to 1 (right). This variable is standardized around its mean.
Opposition party	Dummy variable indicating if the party was in opposition during the year prior to the election. Information obtained from Siaroff (2000) and official government websites. This variable is standardized around its mean.

Empirical analysis

Does the extent of EU issue voting vary across parties? If so, who benefits? The answer to the first question is yes. Figures 1–4 provide estimates of the extent of EU issue voting for the UK, Danish, Dutch and German parties in their respective elections between 1992 and 2002. These figures present the post-estimation results of the MNL regression analyses conducted at the first stage of the analysis. MNL coefficients are the log odds of voting for the party in relation to the reference category,⁶ i.e. the factor by which we multiply the odds of voting for the party rather than for the reference category for each one-unit increase in the independent variable, and are difficult to interpret (Agresti, 2002; Menard, 1995). In order to ease interpretation and to ensure comparability of the EU issue voting effects across the cases, changes in predicted probabilities are provided in Figures 1–4. These values reflect the change in vote probability for each party when a voter moves from one standard deviation below the mean of the EU support scale to one standard deviation above the mean, while holding all other control variables at their respective means. The figures allow for a straightforward comparison of the extent to which a party's vote probability is influenced by EU issue voting across parties and elections. The grey bars around the point estimates in Figures 1–4 signify the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence intervals. Positive values indicate an increase in the expected vote probability of a party as a result of an increasingly pro-EU voter, and negative values signify a decrease in the expected vote probability. Readers interested in the MNL coefficients are referred to Table A.2 in the Online Appendix, which provides the specific MNL estimates of the impact of a voter's EU preference on vote choice for the

different parties in a given election. Each such coefficient is one of a full model of vote choice estimated. Full results are available in the Online Appendix.

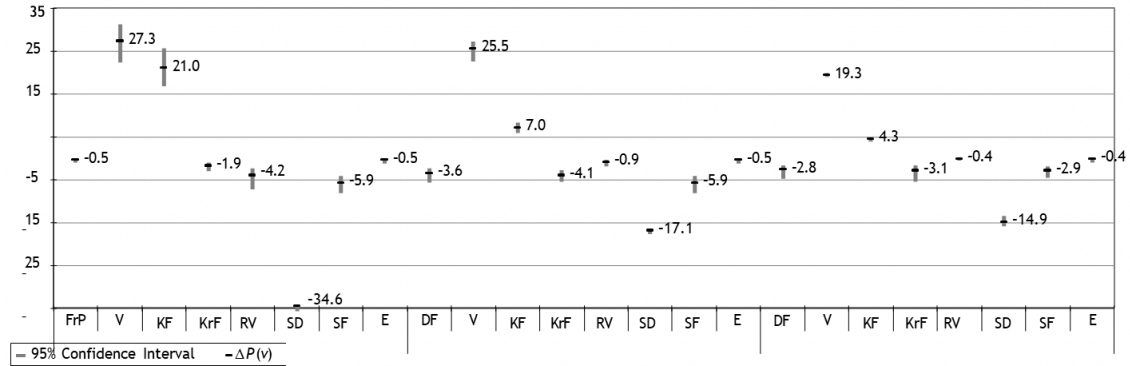


Figure 1 The extent of EU issue voting across political parties in Denmark, 1994-2001.
Notes: The values on the y-axis denote the change in the expected vote probability $P(v)$ for a party as a function of an increasingly pro-EU voter, i.e. when a voter's EU preference moves from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean of the EU scale. Positive values indicate an increase in the expected vote probability of a party as a result of an increasingly pro-EU electorate and negative values indicate a decrease in the expected vote probability. The individual parties are labelled with their abbreviation. For full details on the Danish parties included, see Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

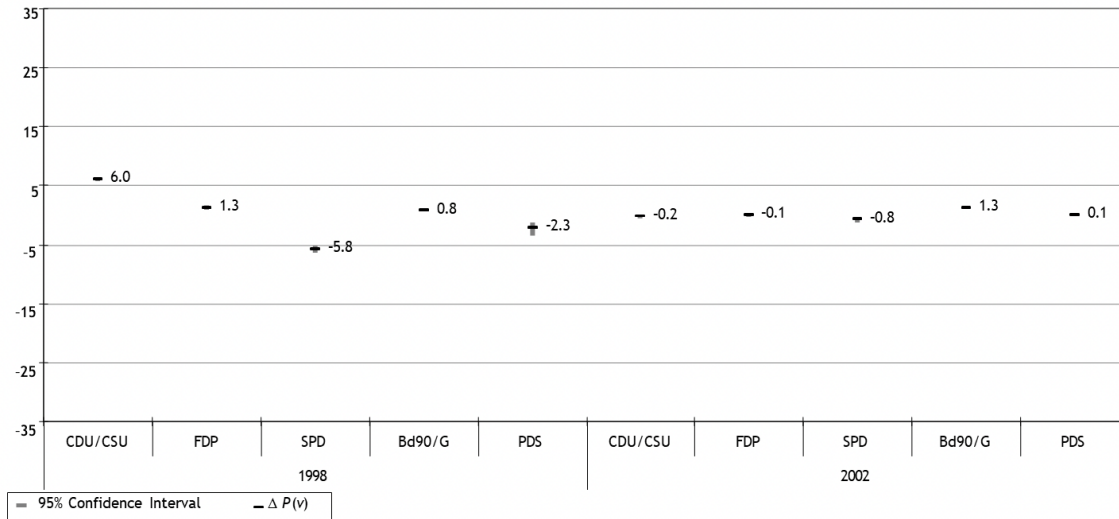


Figure 2 The extent of EU issue voting across political parties in Germany, 1998-2002.
Notes: The values on the y-axis denote the change in the expected vote probability $P(v)$ for a party as a function of an increasingly pro-EU voter, i.e. when a voter's EU preference moves from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean of the EU scale. Positive values indicate an increase in the expected vote probability of a party as a result of an increasingly pro-EU electorate and negative values indicate a decrease in the expected vote probability. The individual parties are labelled with their abbreviation. For full details on the German parties included, see Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

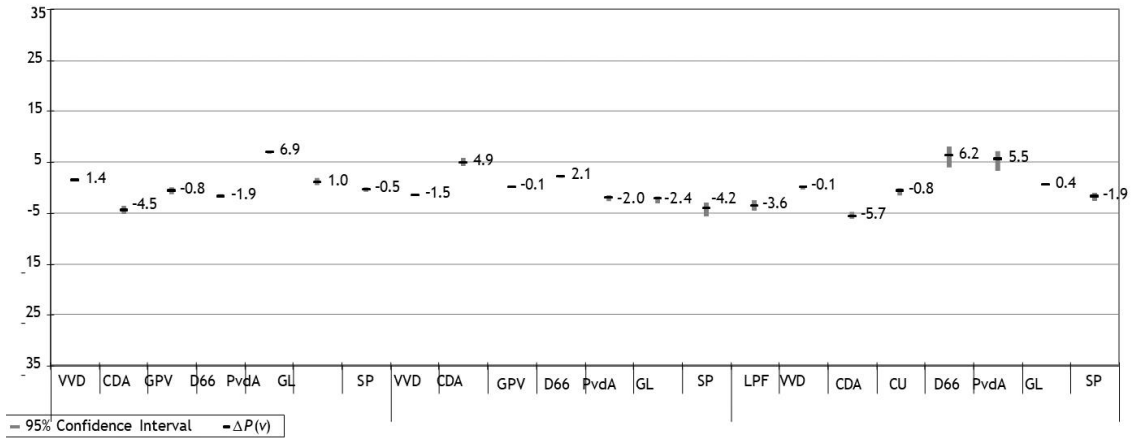


Figure 3 The extent of EU issue voting across political parties in the Netherlands, 1994-2002.
 Notes: The values on the y-axis denote the change in the expected vote probability $P(v)$ for a party as a function of an increasingly pro-EU voter, i.e. when a voter's EU preference moves from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean of the EU scale. Positive values indicate an increase in the expected vote probability of a party as a result of an increasingly pro-EU electorate and negative values indicate a decrease in the expected vote probability. The individual parties are labelled with their abbreviation. For full details on the Dutch parties included, see Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

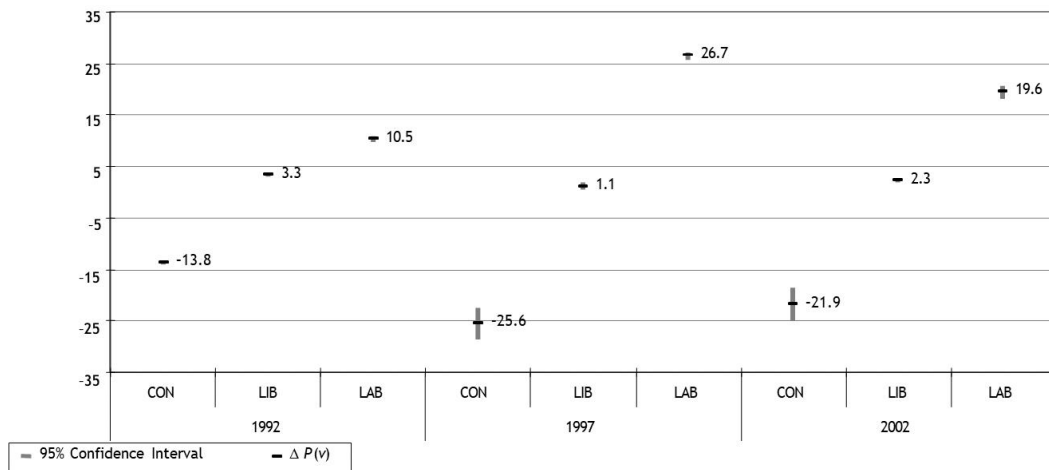


Figure 4 The extent of EU issue voting across political parties in the United Kingdom, 1992-2001.
 Notes: The values on the y-axis denote the change in the expected vote probability $P(v)$ for a party as a function of an increasingly pro-EU voter, i.e. when a voter's EU preference moves from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean of the EU scale. Positive values indicate an increase in the expected vote probability of a party as a result of an increasingly pro-EU electorate and negative values indicate a decrease in the expected vote probability. The individual parties are labelled with their abbreviation. For full details on the British parties included, see Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

Comparing Figures 1–4 shows that the Danish Liberals (Venstre – V) and the Danish Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiet – SD) in the 1994 election experienced the highest change in vote probability owing to EU issue voting: a more pro-EU voter decreased the vote probability for the SD by 34.6% whereas it increased the vote probability for Venstre by 27.3%. In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party (LAB) and the Conservatives (CON) in the 1997 election were most strongly affected by EU issue voting. Whereas Labour profited from a more pro-EU voter, the vote probability for the Conservative Party decreased by over 25%. On average, for British and Danish parties, voters' EU attitudes are a more important factor in determining the likelihood of a voter to vote for a party than is the case for Dutch and German parties. This finding is in line with previous

work suggesting that EU issue voting is extensive in Denmark and the United Kingdom but rather weak in Dutch and German elections owing to the lack of partisan conflict on Europe and the relatively low salience of the EU issue in these countries (see De Vries, 2007). Nonetheless, the change in vote probability owing to EU issue voting exceeded the 5% mark for the Dutch Social Democrats (Partij van de Arbeid – PvdA) in 1994 and 2002, the Liberal Democrats (Democraten 66 – D66) and the Christian Democrats (Christen-Democratisch Appèl – CDA) in 2002. In Germany, the change in vote probability owing to EU issue voting was greatest for the Social Democrats (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – SPD) and the Christian Democrats (Christlich Demokratische Union/ Christlich-Soziale Union – CDU/CSU) during the 1998 German election. On the whole, however, the EU issue voting effects for Dutch and German parties are rather small.

Why are certain parties more susceptible than others to EU issue voting? Hypotheses H1A–H2B outline five factors that are expected to account for variation in EU issue voting across parties. These hypotheses are tested by means of an OLS regression using the absolute changes in expected vote probabilities as the dependent variable. Overall, the extent of EU issue voting for UK, Danish, Dutch and German parties between 1992 and 2002 varies between 0% and 34.6%. Since the dependent variable in the second stage of the analysis is based on estimates, the analysis should account for the un- certainty of these estimates. Lewis and Linzer (2005) put forward a weight- ing procedure that produces appropriate standard errors for the second stage but also show that using White’s heteroscedastic consistent standard errors is almost always as good. Hence, the latter strategy is used. Additionally, since the extent of EU issue voting is determined using several election surveys from the same country, one might expect the level of EU issue voting for the same party to be correlated across different elections. To control for this, the standard errors were clustered on parties in order to account for possible correlations between parties. Consequently, the resulting standard errors allow for unspecified forms of heteroscedasticity for the same party across the different surveys. Finally, in order to account for possible cross-country or cross-time effects, country and time-point dummies were included (see Franzese, 2005). Table 2 presents the OLS results.⁷ Four party observations (Dutch Socialistische Partij in 1994, the Danish Enhedslisten in 1998 and 2001 and Kristeligt Folkeparti in 2001) were excluded from the analysis because these parties were not included in the relevant rounds of the CHES surveys. With the exception of hypothesis H2A, the empirical findings support the theoretical conjectures. The results show that variation in the effect of EU issue voting across parties is largely a function of parties’ intrinsic EU positioning. EU issue voting is higher for parties that assign the EU issue a higher import- ance and for parties that are positioned closer to the Euro-enthusiast or Eurosceptic poles of the party system. Dissent over European integration within a party on the other hand decreases the extent of EU issue voting. Parties that are internally divided over European integration experience lower levels of EU issue voting. Next to characteristics of a party’s EU position, strategic considerations also mediate the extent of EU issue voting, but these effects are more mixed. Whereas left/right extremity has a statistically significant effect on the extent of EU issue voting, opposition status does not. Taken together, the different factors explain roughly half, i.e. 53%, of the variance in EU issue voting across parties. The strongest predictor of inter-party variation in EU issue voting is the importance a party attaches to the EU issue. A one-unit increase in issue importance results in a 4.29-point increase in EU issue voting on a 0–34.6-point scale, which results in a roughly 12-percentage- points increase in EU issue voting. This finding is in keeping with both saliency theory of party competition (Budge and Farlie, 1983) and the theory of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996). Parties seem to be able to strategically raise the importance of European integration in order to boost EU issue voting.

EU issue extremity also increases the extent of EU issue voting. A one-unit increase in EU issue extremity leads to a 3.20-point increase in EU issue voting, i.e. a shift of slightly more than 9 percentage points in EU issue voting. Thus, in line with a directional perspective on issue voting, parties that take either a clear Eurosceptic or a clear Euro-enthusiast stance may benefit from EU issue voting. By contrast, vote choice for parties that have a middling position regarding European integration within the party system is to a lesser extent influenced by a voter's EU preference. Internal dissent over European integration also affects the extent of EU issue voting: a one-unit increase in internal dissent leads to a 3.49-point (or about 10%) decrease in EU issue voting. This finding provides evidence for the idea that voters may be hesitant to vote for a party on the basis of the EU issue when this party provides them with conflicting information on the issue of European integration.

Table 2 Explaining inter-party variation in the extent of EU issue voting

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	
Intrinsic EU positioning:		
EU issue importance		4.29* (2.37)
EU issue extremity	3.20** (1.20)	
EU internal dissent		-3.49* (1.77)
Strategic considerations:		
Opposition party		-0.06 (2.08)
Left/right extremity		1.31* (0.74)
Constant	6.75** (1.17)	
R ²	.53	
F-test	7.12**	
		N 61

Notes: Cell entries are OLS estimates with robust standard errors clustered on party in parentheses. The model includes country and time-point dummies suppressed in the table (available upon request from the author).

** significant at $p \leq .01$; *

significant at $p \leq .05$

Finally, the expected value of EU issue voting is 1.31 points (or roughly 4%) higher for parties that are one unit further removed from the left/right ideological centre of the party system. This finding indicates that EU issue voting is part of strategic interactions within the party system. Nevertheless, the findings lend no support to the opposition party hypothesis. EU issue voting does not seem to be part of a government-opposition dynamic. This last finding can be explained through the fact that, although at first glance it seems reasonable to assume that opposition parties have a strategic incentive to mobilize EU sentiment in order to differentiate themselves from government parties, the opportunities for mainstream opposition parties to do so may be fairly limited. Mainstream opposition parties, that is to say parties that alternate between government and opposition, have been part of governing coalitions responsible for the build-up of the European integration process. Opposing Europe may not be a very convincing strategy. As a result, mainstream opposition parties may behave much like their government counterparts in steering clear of the EU issue. Consequently, EU issue voting constitutes a strategic opportunity on the basis of the location of a party on the left/right spectrum, not a party's opposition status.

Concluding remarks

Which parties are affected by EU issue voting and why? This study has taken an important step towards understanding the way in which the process of European integration within national political arenas potentially alters mass–elite linkages at the time of election. Two main conclusions emerge. First, there is considerable variation in the extent to which political parties are influenced by EU issue voting. Second, this variation in EU issue voting underlies a dual logic. Inter-party variation in EU issue voting in national elections is directly connected to a party's intrinsic position on European integration: parties that care about European integration and those that take an outspoken and unified stance on the issue are much more susceptible to EU issue voting. In addition, EU issue voting is subject to party strategy. Although EU issue voting does not constitute a government–opposition dynamic, the location of a party on the left/right spectrum does matter for EU issue voting. Previous research has highlighted the important role of political entrepreneurs on the fringes of the political spectrum in facilitating EU issue voting; these findings indicate that those parties are also among the beneficiaries of it (De Vries, 2007).

These findings provide important empirical evidence regarding the ongoing debate about the nature of party competition over European integration. Some authors view the politicization of EU issues as a conscious party strategy often employed by political parties on the fringes of the party system (Taggart, 1998) whereas others maintain that EU party positioning is rooted in ideology – be it left/right or 'new politics' (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Hooghe et al., 2002). The empirical findings presented here underline the relevance of both perspectives: ideological as much as strategic considerations shape parties' electoral fortunes as a result of EU issue voting. As such, these findings have important implications for our understanding of how European integration affects national electoral and party politics.

Naturally, this study has limitations. A more comprehensive understanding of how EU issue voting varies across parties would include country characteristics, such as the party or electoral system. This would enable us to bring in the strategic context in which parties operate. For example, do party system characteristics matter when it comes to EU issue voting? Moreover, the proposed explanatory framework combining intrinsic party positioning and strategic considerations as means to understand variation in EU issue voting across parties may not be confined to the particular case of EU issue voting. The model is easily extendable to inter-party variation in issue voting for other issue areas, such as immigration or globalization. This study thus provides groundwork for future research parsing out these important topics. The theoretical and empirical findings presented here expand our understanding of how European integration affects national electoral politics. This study adds to the body of work that demonstrates that European and national politics are increasingly connected. We already know that voters' EU preferences influence their decisions at the national ballot box, but this study moves beyond the current status quo by demonstrating that EU issue voting affects political parties differently. Some parties can strategically use the EU issue to their electoral benefit. For example, by 'naming or shaming' or by increasing the importance of EU issues in their electoral campaigns, parties may reap the electoral benefits of EU issue voting. For other parties, especially those within the ideological mainstream or those that are internally divided, EU issue voting constitutes an electoral liability rather than an asset.

Notes

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- 1 The following data sets were used in the empirical analysis:
Denmark: (1) Valgundersøgelsen 1994, primary investigators: Jørgen Goul Andersen and Ole Borre, DDA-2210, Odense, Danish Data Archive, 2002; (2) Valgundersøgelsen 1998, primary investigators: Jørgen Goul Andersen, Johannes Andersen, Ole Borre and Hans Jørgen Nielsen, DDA-4189, Odense, Danish Data Archive, 1999; (3) Valgundersøgelsen 2001, primary investigators: Jørgen Goul Andersen, Ole Borre, Hans Jørgen Nielsen, Johannes Andersen, Søren Risbjerg, Thomsen and Jørgen Elklit, DDA-12516, Odense, Danish Data Archive, 2003.

Germany: (1) Politische Einstellungen, politische Partizipation und Wählerverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland 1998, primary investigators: Oscar W. Gabriel, Jürgen W. Falter and Hans Rattinger, ZA-3066, Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, 1998; (2) Politische Einstellungen, politische Partizipation und Wählerverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland 2002, primary investigators: Oscar W. Gabriel, Jürgen W. Falter and Hans Rattinger, ZA-3861, Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, 2002.

The Netherlands: (1) Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, 1994, primary investigators: Kees Aarts, Hans Anker, Joop van Holsteyn, Erik Oppenhuis, Paul Pennings, Karin Wittebrood, P1209, Steinmetz Archief, 1995; (2) Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, 1998, primary investigators: Kees Aarts, Henk van der Kolk and Jacques Thomassen, P1415, Steinmetz Archief, 1999; (3) Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek 2002, primary investigators: Galen A. Irwin, Joop van Holsteyn and Josje M. Den Ridder, P1628, Steinmetz Archief, 2004.

The United Kingdom: (1) British General Election Study 1992, primary investigators: Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, John K. Curtice, Jack A. Brand and James C. Mitchell, SN 2981, UK Data Archive, 1993; (2) British General Election Study 1997, primary investigators: Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, John K. Curtice and Pippa Norris, SN 3887, UK Data Archive, 1999; (3) British General Election Study 2001, primary investigators: Howard Clark, David Sanders, Marianne Stewart and Paul F. Whiteley, SN 4619, UK Data Archive, 2003.

- 2 The items did vary in the scaling of answer categories. These were re-scaled in a uniform manner across surveys. Re-scaling did not substantially change the results (see also Table 1). Specific information regarding these matters can be obtained from the author.
- 3 *CLARIFY* 2.1 is a STATA application that can be downloaded from Gary King's website: <http://gking.harvard.edu/clarify>.
- 4 EU issue importance for political parties in the 2002 CHES data was measured on a four-point rather than on a five-point scale, as was common in the previous rounds of the survey. In order to guarantee comparability across the surveys, the 2002 item was recoded to a five-point scale.
- 5 Internal dissent for political parties in the 2002 CHES data was measured on a ten-point rather than on a seven-point scale, as was common in the previous rounds of the survey. In order to guarantee comparability across the surveys, the 2002 item was recoded to a seven-point scale.
- 6 In this case, the reference category is the largest right-wing centrist party in the party system: the Danish Liberals (Venstre - V), the German Christian Democrats (Christlich Demokratische Union / Christlich-Soziale Union - CDU/CSU), the Dutch Christian Democrats (Christen-Democratisch Appèl - CDA) and the British Conservatives (CON).
- 7 There is no evidence of multicollinearity in the data. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) vary between 1.11 and 3.40 and are all well below the critical value of 10 (see also the

correlation matrix presented in Table A.3 in the Online Appendix and Chatterjee et al., 2000).

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