

## Chapter 7

### The radical right as driving force in the electoral arena?

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#### 7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 we have already presented an overall map of the levels of politicization in the electoral arenas of the six countries covered by this book. We demonstrated that European integration has become a relevant factor in national elections and that in general a trend towards higher levels of politicization in the post-Maastricht era exists. However, Chapter 4 also pointed to remarkable across and within country differences that could not be sufficiently explained by the questions at stake and the political context. More generally, we concluded that integration problems do not automatically lead to manifest political conflict, thus to politicization in election campaigns. They rather produce potentials for political mobilization, and these potentials have to be exploited by political actors.

The chapter at hand builds on these results and focuses on political parties, the key players in the electoral arena and the main non-governmental actors in the integration debates more generally (see Chapter 3). In other words, we analyse the factors which influence parties' decisions to strategically use European issues and we explore how they position themselves towards them. It is these strategic decisions that may finally explain the level of politicization in the electoral arena. Our data again cover the 61 national elections from 1970 to 2010. Besides the variation in *selective emphasis* and *position taking*, which we examine in this chapter, party strategies also differ, as discussed in Chapter 1, with respect to *justification framing*. This aspect, however, will be dealt with in the subsequent Chapter 8.

In the introductory chapter, it was argued that radical right and Eurosceptic parties belong to the most important driving forces of the politicization of Europe (*radical right hypothesis*). In contemporary politics, populist radical right parties seem to stand out as the most Eurosceptic party family. They oppose the pro-European mainstream, their (relative) standing in election campaigns is high when it comes to the articulation of European issues and they also focus on constitutive aspects which – as Chapter 6 has demonstrated – are the most conflict prone. Many authors (e.g. Kriesi 2007; Kriesi et al. 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2009b; Kriesi et al. 2012) therefore see these parties as the driving force of the politicization of Europe in the electoral arena. When comparing different routes towards politicization in this arena we will call a path shaped by this party family as *Type 1*.

However, as we will demonstrate, the sheer presence and strength of the populist radical right does not explain all of the variance in the level of politicization observed, neither between the countries nor over time. Furthermore, there are also countries and elections without (strong) populist radical right parties. We therefore have to look for an alternative path that also leads to high levels of politicization in this arena. A strong polarisation between (mainstream) parties in government and opposition is such a path which we call *Type 2*.

In the chapter at hand we therefore not only focus on populist radical right parties but will explore in more general terms under which conditions parties raise ‘Europe’ in the electoral arena, which aspects of integration they refer to and how they position themselves to European integration per se and towards specific issues. While most of the analyses are done at the level of parties we begin by re-examining the level of politicization in the elections covered by this book and the role of the populist radical right. Based on the existing literature on party competition we then analyse the determinants explaining issue saliencies and issue positions. Together with the relative standing of parties in the campaigns these variables

explain the level of politicization. Finally, we categorize the elections with the highest level of politicization according to the two paths.

## **7.2 The radical right as driving force?**

Until the 1990s, research on party competition rarely dealt with European integration. Mair's (2000) assessment of a 'limited impact' of Europe on national elections and national politics in general was a typical example of this dominant view in the literature. With respect to Sartori's (1976) conceptualization, Mair vehemently stressed that 'Europe' neither significantly affected the format nor the mechanics of party systems. With the exception of a few new parties, most parties rarely competed over European issues. In addition, the anti-EU bloc of parties only gained a small share of the votes (Mair 2000). However, since the 2000s scholars began to view the role of Europe differently. Gabel (2000) was one of the first who explored how Europe was changing party competition. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) wrote about a potential impact of Europe on party politics as voters' attitudes towards Europe seemed to be rather independent of their left-right position, the basis for party contestation in many countries. Policy entrepreneurs, these authors concluded, might therefore benefit from mobilizing the new issue. This *potential* for mobilization was latter compared to a 'sleeping giant' (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2007) which became a widely used metaphor.

While most authors now regard 'Europe' rather as a (potential) giant than as a dwarf, the actual role of Europe in electoral politics is still seen differently: With respect to the demand side of elections, de Vries and other authors stress the importance of Europe for explaining national voting behaviour, especially in elections where partisan conflict over Europe is high and Europe is a salient issue for many voters (see Tillman 2004; de Vries 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009b; de Vries 2010; de Vries et al. 2011a; de Vries and Tillman 2011; de Vries et al. 2011b). Other scholars, by contrast, found that the EU is still not an

important issue for voters' party choice (Van der Brug et al. 2007). Focussing more on the supply side of elections, Mair picked up his earlier ideas and argued that “the giant is not only sleeping, but has been deliberately sedated” (2007). Whereas anti-EU parties do fight this contest, Mair argued, they do it where it does not matter, in EP elections, but abstain from doing so where it matters, in national elections. In addition, Green-Pedersen (2012) recently found the European giant still “fast asleep” as mainstream parties had no incentive to give Europe a more prominent role in party competition.

While mainstream parties may have incentives to downplay this issue as they are often internally divided and the electorate not always enthusiastically supportive of further steps of integration, challenger parties might act as issue entrepreneurs and mobilize ‘Europe’ to change the structure of party competition in their favour. In a recent paper, Hobolt and de Vries defined challengers as parties that “have never held political office and occupy a non-majoritarian position on the dominant dimension of conflict” (2012). This definition, however, excludes some parties of the populist radical right. While prominent exponents of this party family such as the French Front National or the Belgian Vlaams Belang are indeed excluded from (national) office, others such as the Austrian FPÖ, the Italian Lega Nord, the Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) or the Swiss SVP are not. We will therefore base our classification of challenger parties first of all on their membership in party families, as explained in Chapter 2. Two of these, the populist radical right and the communists/left socialists, are of interest in this regard. But also some green parties might belong to this group – at least in earlier phases of their development. Nevertheless, it is the populist radical right which first and foremost deserves our attention.

Several prominent members of the populist radical right family have addressed ‘Europe’ to mobilize new voters in the countries covered by this book: In Austria, the FPÖ gave up former pro-European positions and argued against the country’s membership and subsequent

steps of deepening and enlargement (Heinisch 2004; Fallend 2008). In Switzerland, the SVP heavily opposed all steps towards membership (McGann and Kitschelt 2005). In Sweden, the Swedish democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) have been anti-EU since their existence (Widfeldt 2008). And also in France Euroscepticism is a significant feature of the Front National's programme (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi 2001). Besides their anti-immigration positions, which is their most prominent feature (Ivarsflaten 2008), as well as criticism against political elites, Euroscepticism is the most important common denominator of populist radical right parties in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g. Taggart 2004). When the circumstances are favourable, i.e. when mainstream parties do not react to rising scepticism in the electorate, Euroscepticism may also be a potential vote-bringer (Buhr 2012).

If the populist radical right is the driving force of the politicization of Europe in the electoral arena, its electoral strength should be closely associated with the level of politicization in elections as observed in Chapter 4. To test this expectation Figure 7.1 plots the 61 elections with respect to the strength of the radical right based on their share of votes (horizontal axis) and the election's level of politicization (vertical axis) (see also Hutter and Grande 2013).<sup>1</sup>

[Figure 7.1]

Given the fairly large dispersion of the points representing the national elections, the association of these two variables is rather weak. There are many elections which do not fit the expected pattern at all. Especially the UK provides many cases in which the level of politicization is high but no relevant populist radical right party is present. As a matter of fact

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Hutter and Grande's (2013) study does not include Sweden which is why the correlation coefficient they report slightly differs slightly from the value shown in the chapter at hand.

this country's electoral system serves as major threshold for small parties without a 'natural' geographical concentration. But, as discussed in Chapter 4, also Germany provides elections with above-the-average levels of politicization (2005 and 2009) without having a strong populist radical right party operating at the national level. The most perfect example of the pattern we call *Type 1*, by contrast, is provided by Switzerland where in 1999 a strong performance of the SVP (together with some other small right-wing parties) coincided with the highest level of politicization observed so far (23.2). In general, however, the data correlate only moderately (Pearson's  $r=0.32$ ).

The sheer presence of the populist radical right, therefore, does not explain all of the variance of the politicization of Europe in the electoral arena. High levels of politicization in the UK already hint at the alternative *Type 2*, thus to a strong polarization between mainstream parties in government and opposition. As a matter of fact, the UK's value for 1997 (17.6) is the second highest in our sample of elections and this country certainly features a strong polarization between mainstream parties when it comes to European integration. Based on this initial result we have to explore in more general terms the conditions under which parties compete over 'Europe' in electoral campaigns and how they do it.

### **7.3 How parties compete over Europe: theoretical propositions**

Throughout this book we differentiate selective emphasis, position taking and justification framing as three distinct elements in the mobilization strategies of political actors. Focussing on parties, the type of actors we are interested in this chapter, the literature provides various explanations to account for differences in issue saliency and position taking with respect to European integration.

With respect to the salience of Europe as a party issue it is interesting to note that only few authors have explicitly focussed on this component of party competition in a comparative

perspective (Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Netjes and Binnema 2007; de Vries and Van de Wardt 2011). Based on this research, four factors might explain differences in the salience parties attribute to ‘Europe’: internal coherence, government status, party size and systemic salience.

Starting with *internal coherence*, parties that are not internally divided are most likely to adopt clear-cut positions in public statements and also to mobilize this issue. Thus, the mere presence of clear-cut positions (either positive or negative) might lead to an overall higher salience of the issue (de Vries and Van de Wardt 2011; see also Wagner 2012). Consequently, internal dissent over ‘Europe’ should decrease salience as parties have incentives to downplay the issue to avoid enhancing internal disputes (Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Netjes and Binnema 2007; de Vries and Van de Wardt 2011). However, serious intra-party conflict over ‘Europe’ makes it hard for a party to de-emphasise the issue and may therefore actually increase salience. This latter expectation is especially relevant when considering the type of data we use in this book because internal conflict has a high news value.<sup>2</sup>

Whether a party is in *government or opposition* (see also Sitter 2001; Netjes and Binnema 2007; de Vries and Van de Wardt 2011) or it expects to take in a specific role after an election (Steenbergen and Scott 2004) is a second major factor explaining different levels of mobilization. Several studies have explored whether participation in government alters previously negative stances towards Europe and constrains them into emphasising their criticism, or, to put it otherwise, whether Euroscepticism inhibits government participation (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). Also the strategic use of Europe in election campaigns is seen

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<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, coherence also relates to parties’ distance to the voters in general and especially to their own (potential) voters. Parties in congruence with its electorate may gain from emphasising the issue, while the larger the distance to its voters the less likely parties are to mobilize on this issue. Unfortunately, no comparable data on voter attitudes is available for the six countries and especially the long time period covered by this book, which is why the subsequent analyses cannot include this presumably important aspect.

as influenced by this divide. In general, governing parties are expected to downplay the salience of this issue (Netjes and Binnema 2007).

With respect to *party size* Netjes and Binnema (2007) expect small parties to focus more on their special issues and to downplay 'Europe' accordingly. While niche parties (Meguid 2005) might also define themselves in terms of this issue most of them do not. There are, however, some exceptions such as the Austrian Liste Martin, the Swedish June list or the UK Referendum Party. By contrast, Topaloff (2012) found higher shares of references towards the EU in the manifestos of smaller parties.

Factors at the party system or national level such as the *systemic salience* of Europe influence parties' strategies, too. If other parties stress this topic, remaining parties cannot totally circumvent it (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). And also external events such as European meetings or referenda on European issues put attention to Europe and may thus increase its systemic salience (Netjes and Binnema 2007). As shown in Chapter 4, critical steps of integration, especially when the final decision is reached in referenda do spill over into the electoral arena. Especially conflicts on membership are an extremely relevant issue. Finally, voters' opinion could also be relevant in this regard: If Europe is considered as an important issue it may be costly for parties to ignore it.

All these considerations are based on a rather superficial view of European issues which is common in most of the literature. Based on the discussion in Chapter 6, however, it is important to differentiate at least between constitutive and 'normal' or policy issues. While constitutive issues might serve challengers such as the populist radical right, mainstream parties, by contrast, might rather refer to policy issues. These issues are integrated in the left-right dimension and thus in the mainstream parties' preferred dimension of conflict (Börzel and Risse 2009; Höglinger et al. 2012).



Position taking is the second element of parties' strategies. If there is no real contestation over Europe and all parties promote similar positions there will be no politicization to speak of. While salience is a necessary basis of politicization, polarization of issue positions increases the level of conflict significantly. Thus, for national elections it is of interest whether parties adopt varying positions and which actors differentiate themselves from the rest. When it comes to parties' positions towards Europe several factors have been discussed in the literature which partly overlap with those introduced for salience. Following Bartolini (2005) we summarize them into three models: partisan, genetic, and institutional.<sup>3</sup>

*Partisan* and *genetic* models, by contrast, refer to parties' programmatic and ideological characteristics. While partisan models deal with a party's position on the main dimension of conflict, genetic models go back in time and derive a party's position towards Europe from its original cleavage position. According to the 'Marks-Hooghe model', the most important conflict dimension for party contestation over Europe relates to regulated capitalism versus neo-liberalism (Hooghe and Marks 1999; Hooghe et al. 2002). Here, the left is seen as a supporter of regulated capitalism, which is defined as "a project to build environmental, social, infrastructural, and redistributive policy at the European level" (Steenbergen and Marks 2004). Since regulatory issues have been taken up at the European level, most strongly in flanking measures such as environmental and employment policies, the (moderate) left has become more favourably disposed to integration. The far-left, however, opposes integration because it sees the EU as an elitist, undemocratic project that still enforces neoliberal policies. In contrast, mainstream parties on the political right have become more opposed to European

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<sup>3</sup> Bartolini (2005) discusses a fourth, geopolitical, model which is however less relevant here. According to the *geopolitical model* the positions of parties mainly reflect national interests. Positions, therefore, should first of all differ between countries not within. An important factor in this context is the opposition between Europe's wealthy north and the continent's relatively poor south and east. However, to facilitate comparisons all countries covered by this book belong to the rich north which is why this peculiar divide is of less interest for our exploration. Nevertheless, in a genuine Eurosceptic country such as the UK also pro-European actors might still be forced to reduce their enthusiasm to remain competitive. And also the different degrees of integration might impact on parties' strategies even though Chapter 4 has already demonstrated that these different levels did not systematically explain variations in the level of politicization.

integration, since they would prefer a more neo-liberal solution, with a common European market and minimal European regulation. However, the populist radical right's position is less clear in such a (predominantly) economic model which is why the GAL-TAN antagonism, thus the conflict between green-alternative-libertarian vs. traditional-authoritarian-nationalist positions is the more important dimension (Hooghe et al. 2002). This conflict is of special importance with respect to constitutive issues. Thus, the populist radical right opposes further deepening and widening of Europe as it is seen as a threat to national sovereignty and identity. As such we expect the support for European issues to be structured according to parties' belonging into party families and strong scepticism being restricted to the far ends of the left-right conflict dimension, thus to communists/left socialists and the populist radical right.

The *institutional model*, finally, explains positions as a function of parties' role in the system of government. Mainstream parties that typically govern prefer to contest left/right issues and try to avoid contestation over European integration by adopting a generally pro-integration stance, thereby maintaining the status quo and avoiding the politicization of this issue (e.g. Hix 1999; Marks et al. 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2009a). This provides an opportunity for opposition and mobilisation from challenger parties (Taggart 1998; Sitter 2001, 2002). As a result, Eurosceptic parties are expected to modify or avoid Euroscepticism when they seek to, or actually do, participate in governing coalitions (Topaloff 2012; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). Consequently, the government-opposition hypothesis is postulating that a party's position within the party system affects whether or not it adopts a Eurosceptic stance, although this will rarely be detached from its core values.

Closely related, also party size might matter. As the size of a party is related to its relative location in the party system, this rationale connects to the government-opposition dynamics. Additionally, as argued by Wagner (2012), smaller parties may have an advantage in emphasising non-centrist and more extreme positions to become more distinctive from their

opponents. Thus, even though the strategic-tactical considerations of parties are emphasised, they are rarely considered in isolation from parties' ideologies or values. Nevertheless, we expect government parties to advocate more supportive opinions than opposition parties as incumbent parties are also constrained by their involvement in the EU decision making process (Hooghe et al. 2002; Arnold et al. 2012). Consequently, we expect smaller parties to take on more sceptical positions than larger parties on average.

#### **7.4 Explaining parties' strategies in the electoral arena**

In our search for the driving force of the politicization of Europe in national elections we examine three distinct elements in the strategies of political parties: their standing in the campaign (thus their visibility in media reports), the salience they attribute to different European issues and their positions towards them. With respect to the specific role of the populist radical right we expect them to feature a high standing in the campaigns, a clear focus on constitutive issues and negative positions towards all aspects of European integration.

##### *Standing and issue salience*

While the standing of parties in mass media reports depends on various factors, which we will analyse in a moment, Figure 7.2 gives us a first indication about the presence or absence of parties in the actual campaigns. The figure is based on all observations (n=14,219) where parties are the 'active part', i.e. the subject of actor-issue or actor-actor-sentences (see Chapter 2). In addition, we also include those parties that gained at least one per cent of the vote (or

one seat) for which we did not find any statement in mass media at all.<sup>4</sup> Besides the different roles in the debate, the non-presence of parties is certainly an important aspect, too.

[Figure 7.2]

The results presented in Figure 7.2 do not support the challenger hypothesis. All three party families belonging to this group – communists/left socialists, greens, and also the populist radical right – are by far less present than are the traditional parties. The party family which is by far the most important actor in the electoral arena is the Christian democrats/conservatives (42.8%), followed by the social democrats (27.6%). These two mainstream forces account for 70.4 per cent of all observations, followed by the liberals (14.7%). Challenger parties from the left and right, by contrast, are less visible. Interestingly, the dominance of the Christian democrats/conservatives is stable over time whereas the social democrats are far more present in the first period and the liberals experience a gradual and severe decline. All three challengers, by contrast, increase their standing in each period but nevertheless remain at a low level.

By averaging all country results, Figure 7.2 obviously diminishes especially the impact of the populist radical right as this party family does not have a relevant representative in each of the six countries. Especially in Switzerland and Austria, by contrast, these parties heavily contribute to the debate on Europe. In the former, they account for about 32 per cent of the observations (1993–2000).

In Table 7.1 we therefore investigate the standing of parties in more detail, using linear regression and parties as unit of analysis.<sup>5</sup> We account for the before mentioned country

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<sup>4</sup> In France this refers to the share of candidates with a party affiliation in the first round of presidential elections.

differences by including country dummies in the models. In addition, we include all variables for the relevant factors we discussed above: party size, government versus opposition, internal coherence, and systemic or overall salience. Party size is measured as the percentage of votes gained in the elections for the lower chamber (or first round of the presidential election for the French elections).<sup>6</sup> To measure whether a party has a clear or distinct position on European issues compared to other parties in a given election, we calculate the absolute distance between the position of the party and the mean position of all other parties (weighted by their vote share). Thus, higher values indicate that a party has a more distinct issue position. As a proxy for the systemic salience of European issues in an election campaign we use our salience measure developed in Chapter 4. Finally, based on the discussion in Chapter 2 also four time periods are included in the analysis.

[Table 7.1]

Model 1 to 4 in Table 7.1 show the results of the individual predictors, model 5 the results for the individual party families and model 6 and 7 the full empirical models. In model 7 ‘internal coherence’ and ‘salience’ are removed as they showed no noticeable effect in model 6. The results of the bivariate regressions in model 1 to 4 are rather clear cut: Party size and government status both are positively and highly significantly related to a parties’ standing in the contestation over Europe. However, parties with a high internal coherence or clear position are, contrary to our expectation, less visible in the campaigns. Additionally, we

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<sup>5</sup> Given the nature of our dependent variable, i.e. its boundedness and extreme skewness, using linear regression techniques might cause some problems. We therefore calculated fractional logit models, a GLM-model based on a logit transformation (see Baum 2008), too. As the results did not differ substantially we only report the more widely used and more easily interpretable linear models.

<sup>6</sup> This measure has one obvious disadvantage: It is based on the result of the election and thus includes information not available during the campaign.

find no support that the overall salience is associated with a higher standing at the party level. However, based on the share of the explained variance, only size and government status have a substantial impact. The standing of the party families in Model 5 mirrors the results of Figure 7.2. Compared to the Social Democrats – and the Christian Democrats/Conservatives – all other parties are significantly less visible. Model 6 and 7, finally, include all factors and thus provide a clear picture: Party size, government status, as well as belonging to the party family of Christian Democrats/Conservatives or Greens gives parties a higher standing. However, as seen in model 6, whether a party has a clear or distinct position compared to other parties, while controlling for other allegedly relevant factors, does not appear to affect the standing of parties.

In a second step of our analysis of party strategies in the electoral arena we examine whether parties differ in the way they refer to ‘Europe’. In Chapter 6 we discussed how to ‘disentangle’ the European integration issue and finally developed four broad categories: general orientations, widening, deepening, and policy oriented issues (see Figure 6-1). We also showed how important these issues were in different periods and countries. Consequently, we proceed our analysis by exploring which parties stress which type of issue and especially whether the share of constitutive vs. policy issues actually depends on parties’ extremism as expected by Börzel and Risse (2009). Starting again with the ‘broad picture’, Figure 7.3 summarizes the relative share of these categories by party family.

[Figure 7.1]

For all party families ‘deepening’ is the most important category and this category is always followed by policy issues. At first view, especially the low share of widening is rather surprising. However, as we demonstrated in Chapter 3 most rounds of enlargement did not

result in great debates. Only Eastern enlargement and especially the discussion on Turkey did so – but again not in every country covered by this book. Additionally, the membership of one's own country, as explained in Chapter 2, is summarized into the deepening category.

Following the argument by Börzel and Risse (2009) mainstream parties might benefit from articulating policy issues as these are imbedded in their preferred dimension of conflict. Our data indeed seem to support this expectation as the share of policy statements tends to follow an inverted u-curve with the Greens – a mainstream party family at least since the 1990s – as leading family (39%). The differences between the party families, however, are rather small. In Table 7.2 we investigate this initial result in more detail. However, here we focus only on constitutive issues (i.e. deepening and widening combined), as these kinds of issues are the most conflict prone (see Chapter 6). As before, we obtained analogous results when estimating the models using (the more suitable, but less interpretable) fractional logit models.

[Table 7.2]

The results in Table 7.2 on party specific issue saliencies largely confirm the patterns found in Figure 7.3. But they also indicate that when it comes to constitutive issues, larger parties are more likely to emphasize these issues (model 1 and 3). The weight the different party families give to these issues – while controlling for party size, government participation as well as differences over time and country – confirms the picture that is shown in Figure 7.3. That is, we cannot find any conclusive indications that one party family stresses constitutive issues more than any other. There are weak indications that, compared to the Social Democrats, Christian Democratic/Conservative parties, Greens and Communists/Left Socialists tend to mobilize on these issues to a lesser extent. At the same time, Liberals and

the Populist radical right mobilize on these issues about the same extent as Social Democratic parties. Thus, we cannot confirm that the challenger parties from the left to right mobilize to a larger extent on constitutive issues than others parties. With regard to country differences, parties in Switzerland and Austria do mobilize around constitutive issues to a greater extent than parties in other countries (results not shown). In addition, as seen in Table 7.2, constitutive issues take up a higher, but declining, share than other issues after the first time-period on average for all parties.

### *Issue positions*

Having analysed party standing and issue salience, we now turn to the question of how parties position themselves in the campaigns. In Chapter 4 (Figure 4.5) we already found – with some exceptions – an increasing polarization of positions within election campaigns. We now go into detail and first present descriptive results concerning the average positions of party families in different time periods (Figure 7.4).

[Figure 7.4]

It is evident from Figure 7.4 that all party families were generally positive (on average) in the first (1970-1986) and second period (1987-1992), with the exception of the populist radical right and the greens in the latter period. With regards to the greens, this is mainly because the Swedish and Swiss Green parties presented sceptical positions to constitutive issues during the time. In the third period (1993-2000) only the Swedish Green party remained an overall sceptical position. However, as they gradually become more and more positive towards Europe in the 2000s, and finally adopted a generally pro-European



programme in 2008, the Green party family has become on average one of the most EU-positive forces of all parties, after the Liberals. Communist or Left socialist parties have rarely stressed constitutive issues until the post-Maastricht period. On average they were slightly positive the years after the Maastricht treaty but became predominantly negative in the last period. The Social democrats, Liberals, and Christian-democrats and Conservatives have been generally pro-European with respect to constitutive issues, except for a declining support by the latter party family after the adoption of the Maastricht treaty. In fact, in the 2000s Christian-democrats and Conservatives have on average a somewhat negative position to constitutive issues. This extends previous studies of party positioning on Europe, which found that Conservative and Christian democratic parties have adopted more reserved positions in the post-Maastricht period, but still remained generally supportive of the European integration process (e.g. Hellström 2008). Rather, at least when it comes to constitutive issues, Conservatives/Christian democratic parties have become the only party family, except from the Populist radical right, that have negative positions on average. Thus, when it comes to the Populist radical right they are without doubt the most sceptical of all party families, being the only party family with overall sceptical positions over all periods.

To summarize, most parties – with the exception of the populist radical right – had positive (or few) positions up to the Maastricht treaty, while in the post-Maastricht period positions to constitutive issues can be described as an inverted u-curve with negative positions restricted to the far left and right. Examining this in more detail, figure 7.5 displays these differences between the countries and party families.

[Figure 7.5]

The more detailed picture in figure 7.5 largely confirms the broader picture in figure 7.4, but it also clarifies a few exceptions. For instance, it is only in Austria, France and Switzerland where the populist radical right stands out, not by promoting more sceptical positions over time, but rather being by far the most sceptical and furthest away from other parties in their positions on constitutive issues. In the UK, over time, the Conservative party stands out in having become the most sceptical party along with UKIP. In contrast, the only remaining Eurosceptical party in Sweden is the Left Party, after that the Green party adopted a more favourable stance in the 2000s. While the declining support among the Conservatives/Christian democrats is a general trend after Maastricht (as previously shown in figure 7.4) one notable exception is France where these parties have become more positively disposed towards constitutive issues. Another exception to the general pattern is Germany, in which all parties have taken on more negative stances over time. Germany from 1970-1986 and Switzerland also sticks out in having fairly homogenous positions among mainstream parties. While the differences have augmented in Germany over time, they remain rather small in Switzerland.

As Figure 7.5 does not take into account whether the size of parties or government participation affects party positions, we proceed by turning to an even more detailed analysis of parties' positions to constitutive issues. Table 7.3 presents the results of eight linear regression models (OLS). Unlike the previous results shown above, Model 1 and 5 also show overall positions, summarizing all statements (i.e. general orientations, economic and non-economic deepening, widening, as well as economic and non-economic intervention). This variable should therefore be most similar to other alternative measurements (e.g. manifesto data or expert survey data) on party positioning towards Europe. In addition, the remaining model shows the results of positioning on constitutive (model 2 and 6), deepening (model 3 and 7), and widening issues (model 4 and 8). Models 1 to 4 show the results without

controlling for time and country differences, while model 5 to 8 also includes time and country effects.

[Table 7.3]

Models 1 to 4 indicate that, when not taking country or time differences into account, parties in government have on average more positive positions than opposition parties, regardless of the specific issues at stake. However, in the full models (Models 5 to 8), that also include country and period dummy variables, this holds up only for widening issues. Otherwise, the results are consistent when it comes to how the different party families position themselves on European issues. Compared to the Social Democrats, only Communist/Left Socialists and Populist Radical Right parties differ in having very negative attitudes. In this regard, the Populist Radical Right parties stand out in being the most sceptical, in particular when it comes to widening issues – a type of issue that Communist and Left socialist parties choose to largely ignore (as previously shown in Figure 7.3). Thus, when controlling for government membership and size of the parties, it is only the far left and right that have negative positions on average, although the general support for European issues has declined by and large since the Maastricht treaty (as seen most clearly in Models 6 and 7).

## **7.5 Paths leading to highly politicized elections**

Having explored the general factors which explain variations of parties' standing, the salience they give to various European issues and the positions they take in, we now look into those 15 elections that were identified as highly politicized in Chapter 4. Our aim is to identify the constellations, i.e. the paths, that lead to high politicization of Europe in the electoral arena.

All six countries covered by this book feature in this table and thus have experienced at least one such election. One country, however, clearly stands out: the United Kingdom which features six such elections. While Austria and Germany have two, France and Sweden have only one each. In Switzerland, the non-member of our sample, we identified three elections.

[Table 7.4]

Table 7.4 includes one core measure for each path towards politicization: the strength of the populist radical right (Type 1) and the degree of opposition between (mainstream) government and opposition parties, as indicated by the mean positional differences between the two (Type 2). Both paths can provide a basis for highly politicized elections as indicated by the classification of elections based on their deviation from the two variables' average values. Elections in Austria, France and Switzerland feature strong results of the radical right. A strong positional difference between mainstream parties in government and opposition, by contrast, happened in the UK, Germany (2005), and Sweden.

Austria, France and Switzerland are the strongholds of the populist radical right. Most of the highly politicized elections in these countries are characterized by very strong results of the FPÖ (plus BZÖ), the Front National, and the SVP respectively. Though not the most important issue in the campaign, especially in 2008 Austria's populist radical right articulated Eurosceptic positions (Luther 2009; Müller 2009); in 2002 the FPÖ's share is rather low because it heavily suffered from its coalition with the conservative ÖVP. In France's polarized party system, opposition against Europe – as shown in this chapter – is expressed from both the left and right. In 2007, Europe was prominently addressed in the presidential election (Spoon 2008). And for the Swiss SVP the mobilization against Europe has been a

core element of their advance since the late 1980s (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008) which is why all three Swiss elections clearly conform to Type 1.

Germany and Sweden, but above all the UK, by contrast, provides clear examples of the Type 2. Especially elections in the UK stand for an opposition between mainstream parties that compete for government and have – amongst others – opposing views towards Europe. In 1974, Labour criticized Britain's accession decided by the conservative government and promised a referendum on it. Also, in the 1983 election Labour campaigned for leaving the European community. In the 1990s Labour and Conservatives had changed their positions in opposite directions. Euroscepticism became a core feature of the Conservative party and a basis for a general electoral realignment in the UK (Evans 2002). Also Germany (2005) and Sweden (1994) provide clear examples of this path towards politicization. In Germany, plans for a membership of Turkey led to strong criticism of the Union parties against the course of the red-green government and also influenced voting behaviour (Schoen 2008). In the Swedish case, the opposition was influenced by the country's debate on its membership, due to the forthcoming referendum on accession less than two months after the election (Håkansson 1996; Pierre and Widfeldt 1997). However, contrary to Germany, the strongest opposition came from the left, i.e. the Left Party and the Green Party, accompanied by mixed messages from the Social democrats, Centre Party and Christian democrats that were all openly split on the issue (Gilljam and Holmberg 1996). In the German election of 2009 the debate was intense, but the differences in positions between mainstream parties were less so. In this case, the high presence of European issues in the election campaign was mainly triggered by another important actor in German politics, i.e., the Constitutive Court and its decision on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the role of the national parliament. Because the populist radical right was – again – not a relevant actor, this election eludes our classification based on two party-based paths.

While the UK and to some extent Germany provide examples of Type 2, the politicization of Europe in these countries is nevertheless influenced by the populist radical right – at least indirectly. The British Conservatives and parts of the Union, especially the CSU, might be regarded as a ‘functional equivalent’ of a populist radical right-wing party. Both parties have tried to prevent the advent of a genuine populist radical right party and in the UK this has been done first of all with respect to Eurosceptic positions whereas in Germany, at least until the debate on Turkey, first of all by its critical positions on immigration and asylum.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

While most research has dealt with the impact of attitudes towards the EU on voting behaviour, we focussed on the supply side of politics and explored under which conditions parties mobilize this issue and how they position themselves towards it. Based on the results of Chapter 4 we started with an evaluation of the radical right hypothesis. While we do not doubt the specific role of these parties, we could nevertheless demonstrate that the sheer strength of the populist radical right does not explain all of the variance in the elections covered by this book. Rather, when it comes to the visibility or standing of political parties in the election campaigns it is incumbents and larger mainstream parties that are most present in the debates, and particularly Christian democratic and conservative parties (followed by social democrats and liberals).

In the introduction to this chapter we hypothesised that constitutive issues might serve challenger parties. Mainstream parties, by contrast, should particularly emphasise policy issues, as these issues are integrated into the left-right dimension, the mainstream parties’ preferred dimension of conflict. In the analysis we did not find any support for this expectation. Mainstream parties stress constitutive issues to about the same extent as the

challenger parties from the far left and right. However, when looking at differences in positions towards European issues that parties mobilize on, it is clear that the opposition is coming from communist/left socialist parties and, even more so, from the populist radical right. One exception to this is that whereas populist radical right parties oppose all kinds of European issues and especially issues related to the widening of the EU, the radical left has largely ignored the geographical expansion of Europe.

Coming finally back to the level of elections we identified two paths leading to high levels of politicization: Type 1 referred to the peculiar role of the populist radical right, while Type 2 included elections with strong polarisation between (mainstream) parties in government and opposition. Of the 15 elections identified as highly politicized in Chapter 4 we classified six as Type 1 but eight as Type 2 – one election did not fit our classification.

Thus, the general findings in this chapter confirm that populist radical right parties can be a driving force of the politicization of Europe in the electoral arena, but above all in two of the countries in this study, namely in Austria and in Switzerland, and partly also in France. In general, however, it is the mainstream parties, and particularly those in government, that are the most present in debating Europe in the campaigns. One exception is issues relating to the widening of the EU, where populist radical right parties are particularly present. The challenger parties from the both radical left and right do stand out, however, by being the sole opposition by promoting overall sceptical positions to European issues in election campaigns.

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Figure 7.2: Strength of populist radical right parties and the level politicization in national elections, 1970-2010

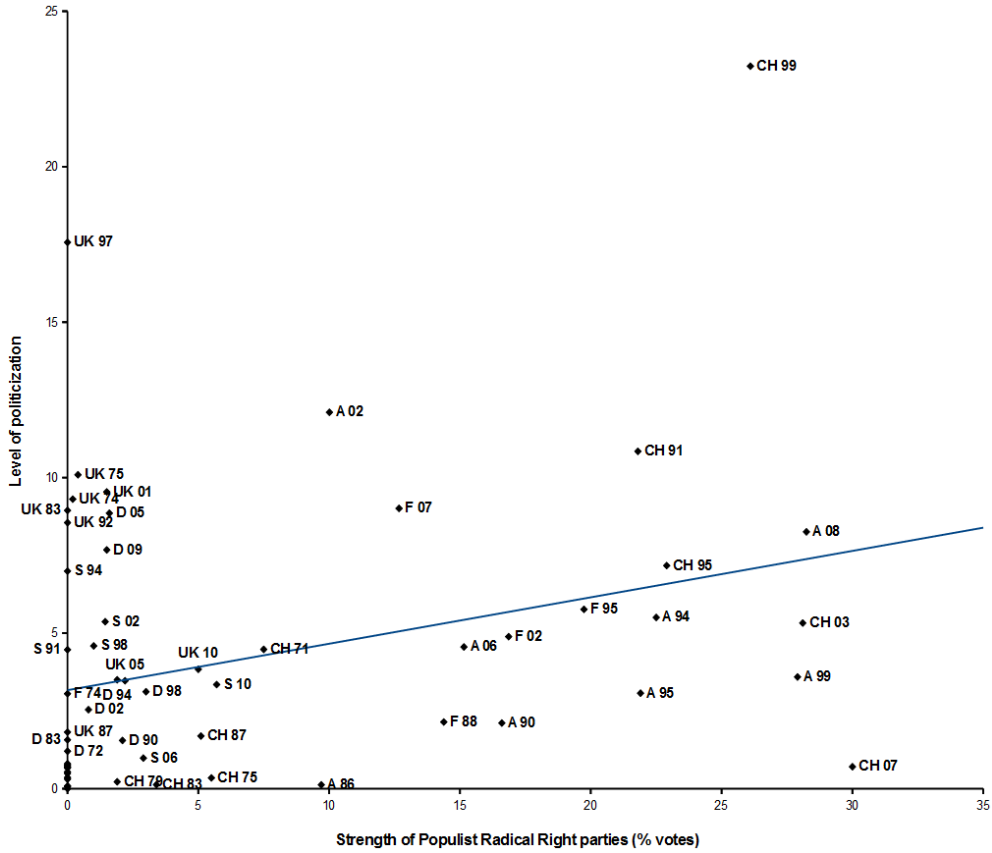


Figure 7.3: Average standing of party families in national election campaigns, 1970-2010

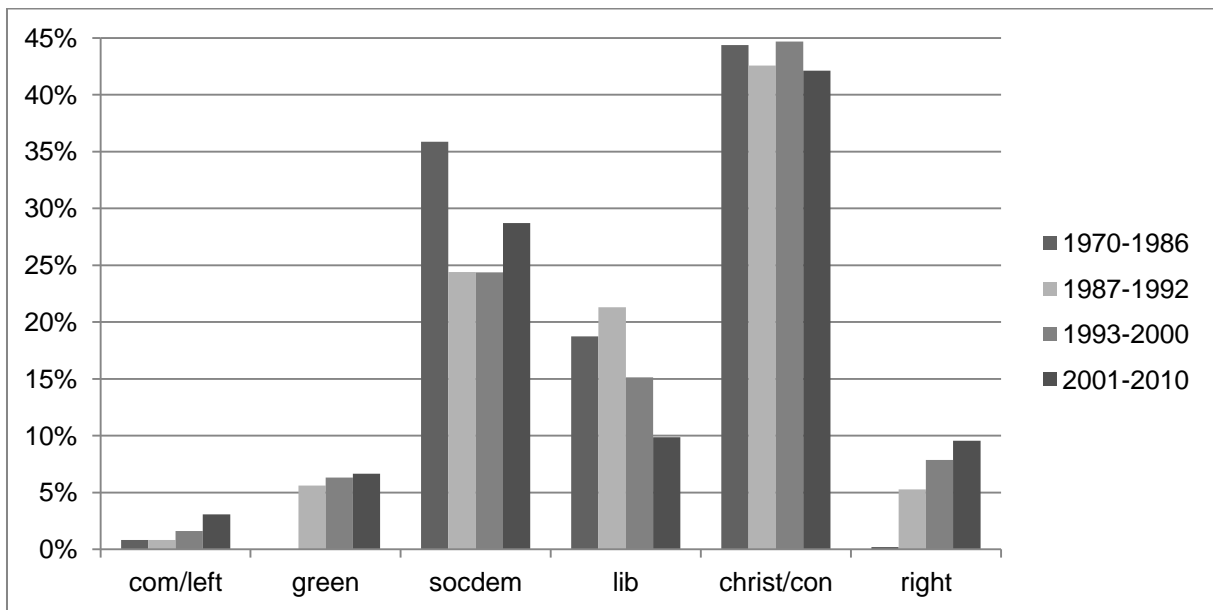
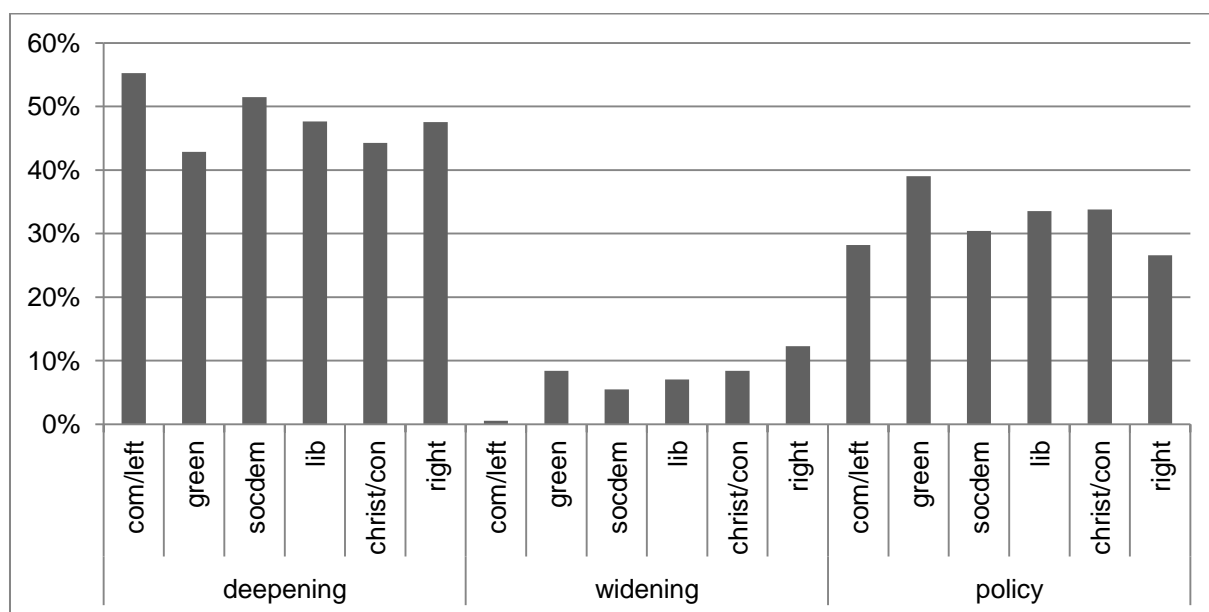


Table 7.1: Explaining the standing of parties, 1970-2010 (OLS, unstandardized coefficients)

	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7
Size	0.92*** (0.065)					0.66*** (0.11)	0.67*** (0.070)
Government		25.4*** (1.94)				13.2*** (2.00)	15.2*** (1.87)
Internal coherence			-19.0*** (4.07)			-0.44 (2.88)	
Salience (party system level)				-0.20 (0.13)		-0.11 (0.20)	
<b>Party family</b> (Ref.: Social Democrats)							
Communists/Left Socialists					-23.2*** (2.86)	2.32 (3.69)	3.53 (2.24)
Greens					-20.1*** (2.90)	6.11* (3.66)	4.82** (2.24)
Liberals					-14.8*** (3.09)	2.05 (3.37)	2.58 (2.42)
Christian Democrats/Conservatives					-5.18 (3.43)	7.78** (3.13)	6.45** (2.53)
Populist Radical Right					-21.1*** (2.86)	0.64 (3.17)	2.46 (1.99)
<b>Period</b> (Ref: 1970-1986)							
1987-1992						-3.81 (3.20)	0.64 (1.40)
1993-2000						-6.02* (3.15)	-0.14 (1.35)
2001-2010						-4.69 (3.00)	0.22 (1.29)
Constant	0.60 (0.50)	4.46*** (0.45)	29.4*** (2.44)	12.0*** (1.38)	25.4*** (2.72)	1.30 (5.53)	-4.63* (2.75)
Country dummies	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Observations	549	560	239	560	548	239	543
(Adjusted) R-squared	0.488	0.395	0.087	0.004	0.255	0.511	0.584

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Figure 7.4: Relative issue salience by party family, 1970-2010



Note: This figure is based on all observations with parties as the subject of actor-issue sentences. Statements by coalition governments (except for Switzerland) are additionally distributed to the parties involved, which results in a total of 12,203 observations. Results for general orientations, as well as for the category of ‘Other parties’, are not shown.

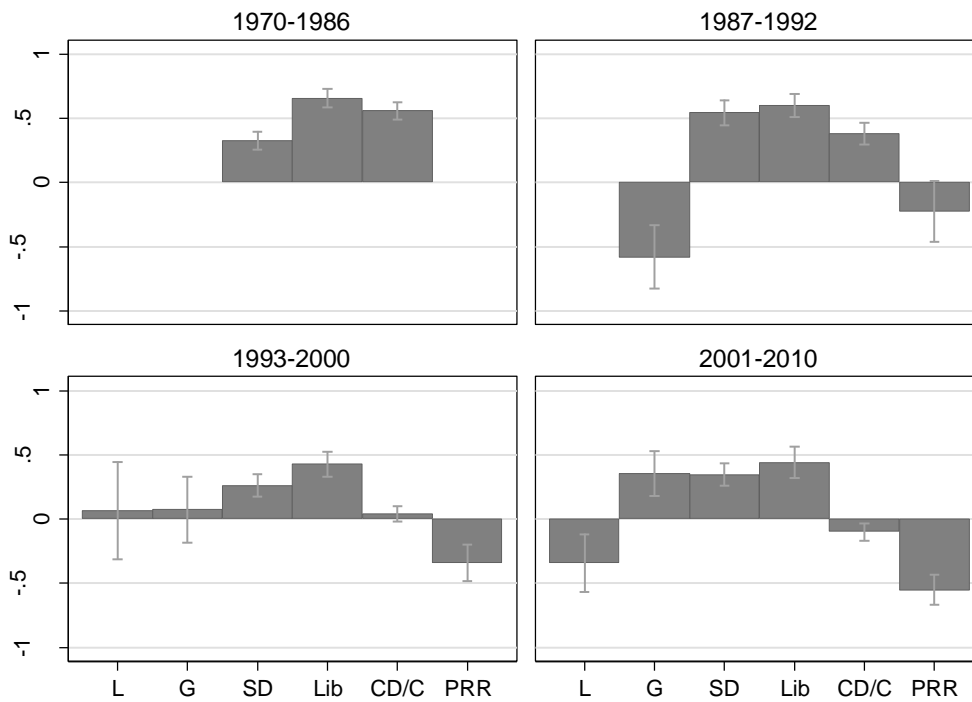
Table 7.2: Explaining the mobilization of constitutive issues, 1970-2010 (OLS, unstandardized coefficients)

	[at least five observations]			[at least ten observations]		
	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 1	M 2	M 3
Size	0.32*** (0.12)		0.52*** (0.15)	0.16 (0.13)		0.23 (0.17)
Government	0.66 (3.10)		-1.98 (3.16)	-0.57 (3.15)		-3.25 (3.31)
<b>Party family</b> (Reference: Social Democrats)						
Communists/Left Socialists		-13.52** (6.76)	6.36 (7.18)		-2.76 (5.83)	11.86 (7.37)
Greens		-12.93** (5.99)	5.88 (7.03)		-8.18 (6.46)	1.03 (7.74)
Liberals		-7.91 (4.87)	2.45 (4.66)		-3.49 (4.73)	0.09 (4.68)
Christian Democrats/Conservatives		-7.87* (4.13)	-1.59 (3.73)		-7.64* (4.20)	-3.17 (3.83)
Populist Radical Right		0.21 (5.60)	7.79 (5.66)		3.74 (5.54)	4.75 (6.00)
<b>Period</b> (Reference: 1970-1986)						
1987-1992			-5.43 (4.14)			-4.75 (4.33)
1993-2000			-15.66*** (4.15)			-16.64*** (4.17)
2001-2010			-10.92** (3.97)			-9.80** (4.20)
Constant	50.36*** (2.71)	62.25*** (3.23)	45.98 (6.78)	53.73*** (2.82)	60.28*** (3.31)	54.80*** (6.55)
Country dummies	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Adjusted R-squared	.03	.02	.25	.00	.01	.21
Observations	245	245	245	194	194	194

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. The regression is based on all parties with at least five/ten observations per election (including statements by coalition governments).

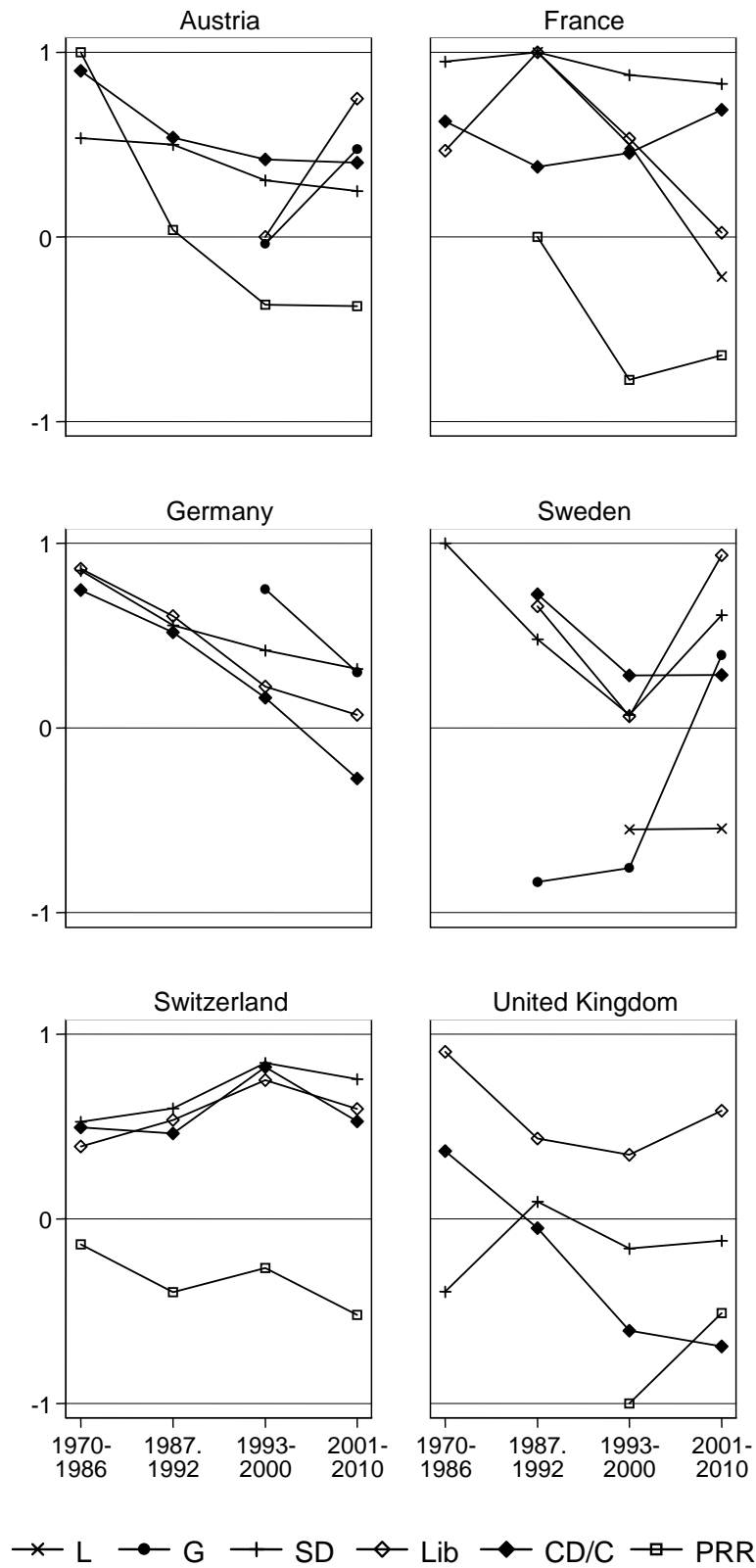


Figure 7.5: Position on constitutive issues by party family and time period



Notes: Some categories are missing due to too few observations; L= Communists/Left Socialists, S= Social Democrats; G= Greens; Lib= Liberals; CD/C= Christian-democrats and Conservatives; PRR= Populist Radical Right.

Figure 7.6 Mean positions on constitutive issues by party family over 6 countries



Note: Some parties/party families were removed to make the figure more readable.

Table 7.3: Explaining the position of parties, 1970-2010 (OLS, unstandardized coefficients)

	M 1	M 2	M 3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
	Overall	Const.	Deep.	Wide.	Overall	Const.	Deep.	Wide.
Size	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Government	0.17*** (0.06)	0.23*** (0.08)	0.18* (0.09)	0.46 <sup>†</sup> (0.25)	0.09 (0.06)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.09)	0.45** (0.20)
<b>Party family</b> <b>(Reference: Social Democrats)</b>								
Communists/Left Socialists	-0.40* (0.21)	-0.53* (0.27)	-0.54** (0.27)	n.a.	-0.45** (0.21)	-0.63*** (0.23)	-0.72*** (0.22)	n.a.
Greens	-0.20 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.22)	-0.17 (0.23)	0.31 (0.44)	-0.22 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.21)	-0.27 (0.21)	0.51 (0.52)
Liberals	0.12 (0.09)	0.14 (0.12)	0.17 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.45)	0.13 (0.09)	0.13 (0.12)	0.16 (0.12)	-0.19 (0.45)
Christian Democrats/Conservatives	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.11)	-0.31 (0.25)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.30 (0.28)
Populist Radical Right	-0.59*** (0.12)	-0.65*** (0.14)	-0.61*** (0.17)	-1.02*** (0.30)	-0.57*** (0.12)	-0.69*** (0.14)	-0.70*** (0.16)	-0.80** (0.38)
<b>Period</b> <b>(Reference: 1970-1986)</b>								
1987-1992					-0.03 (0.09)	-0.12 (0.09)	-0.16* (0.09)	-0.15 (0.37)
1993-2000					-0.20*** (0.08)	-0.20** (0.10)	-0.21** (0.10)	-0.23 (0.28)
2001-2010					-0.07 (0.08)	-0.26*** (0.10)	-0.25** (0.10)	-0.38 (0.29)
Constant	0.28** (0.11)	0.25 (0.16)	0.27 (0.16)	0.12 (0.51)	0.42*** (0.14)	0.43** (0.18)	0.46** (0.18)	0.45 (0.60)
Country dummies	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	252	204	196	44	252	204	196	44
Adjusted R-squared	0.24	0.23	0.20	0.11	0.30	0.33	0.34	0.24

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. n.a.= not available, i.e. variables dropped due to collinearity (due to too few observations). The regression is based on all parties with at least five observations per election for the relevant issue category.

Table 7.4: Paths leading to highly politicized elections

Country	Election	Strength of populist radical right	Mean distance between government and opposition (mainstream parties)	Classification (based on average values)
Austria	2002	10.0	0.13	Type 1
	2008	28.2	0.05	Type 1
France	2007	12.7	0.17	Type 1
Germany	2005	1.6	1.13	Type 2
	2009	1.5	0.08	-
Sweden	1994	1.2	1.00	Type 2
Switzerland	1991	21.8	0.12	Type 1
	1995	22.9	n.a.	Type 1
	1999	26.1	0.01	Type 1
United Kingdom	Feb. 1974	0.2	1.15 (0.07)	Type 2
	Oct. 1974	0.4	0.69 (0.75)	Type 2
	1983	0.1	0.55 (0.08)	Type 2
	1992	0.0	0.46 (0.58)	Type 2
	1997	0.0	0.56 (0.65)	Type 2
	2001	1.5	0.44 (0.13)	Type 2
Average		8.5	0.49	

Notes: The numbers for UK on positional differences corresponds to the difference between the Conservative party and Labour party. In the parenthesis the number for all parties belonging to mainstream party families are shown. Numbers for the Swiss 1995 election are missing due to low presence of opposition parties on European issues in the election campaign.