The mobilization of the political potentials linked to European integration by national political parties

Hanspeter Kriesi
Dept of political science
University of Zurich

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Introduction

Peter Mair (2001) discusses the impact of the European integration process on national party systems and arrives at the conclusion that it had very little impact both on their format and on their mechanics. He cannot find a new dimension of party competition focusing on Europe and he maintains that Eurosceptical parties – such as the Austrian FPÖ, the French FN, the Italian AN or the Swedish Left party – cannot be reduced to their anti-european appeal, their opposition to the European Union being part and parcel of their general oppositional stance. As Taggart (1998) has already shown, Euroscepticism is characteristic of parties outside of the mainstream, both on the extreme left and the extreme right. Sitter (2001) argues in a similar vein in his study of Euroscepticism in Scandinavia: in his view, opposition to European integration is neither issue-specific nor indicative of a new cleavage line. It is much rather inextricably linked to patterns of party competition and essentially expresses the “politics of opposition”. For this reason alone, Mair doubts whether European integration has so far had any direct effect on the mechanics of the national party systems. Once we take into account the characteristics of eurosceptical parties, he maintains, Europe appears neither as a necessary, nor as a sufficient condition for the conflict. Mair then explains the absence of impact by two kinds of arguments: first, for various reasons there is an absence of spillover effects from the European level of partisan structuring to the national level. Second, the lack of congruence between the electoral arenas and the decision-making arenas in the multi-level governance system of Europe leads to the depoliticization of the European integration process at the level of national politics.

Stefano Bartolini (2005: 260) has a hard time to accept Mair’s diagnosis of an absence of impact of the European integration process on national party systems, although he largely concurs with Mair that the political elites engage in collusive behaviour at the national level aiming at the depoliticization of the European question or at shifting the blame to the European level. In Bartolini’s view, there is hardly any other issue in European post-war electoral history that has had similar large and standardizing effects across the European party systems. Even if he accepts
that there are good reasons for not exaggerating the impact of European integration on national party systems, he would not want to exclude the possibility that the anti-EU position might provide the common denominator for the “strange amalgam of discontent across the traditional political spectrum for which the EU could indeed be a strong unifying catalyst”.

In a replication of a previous study of their own, van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) support this hunch. Based on the 1989 European election survey, these authors had arrived at the conclusion that the positions of parties with respect to European integration closely corresponded to the positions of their voters on this issue. In their replication, based on the 1999 European election survey, they came to quite different conclusions: at the end of the nineties, the voters’ positions vary more strongly with respect to European integration than with respect to the classic left-right scale, while the reverse applies for the parties. In other words, by the end of the nineties, there exists a high conflict potential among the voters with regard to EU integration – van der Eijk and Franklin call it the “sleeping giant”, which, they maintain, is not mobilized (yet) by the political parties. Given the depoliticization of the European integration process by national political elites, this conflict potential still waits for some political entrepreneur to be exploited. At least, that’s the way they see it.

The depoliticization of the European integration process of course corresponds to the famous “permissive consensus” in the European public with regard to European integration. This consensus consisted in a combination of generally positive attitudes about European integration with a low salience of the issue. It has allowed the pro-European elites to further the process of European integration without having to take into account the general public. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) suggest that there are good reasons to expect that the unexploited conflict potential among the voters with regard to European integration will soon be exploited: on the one hand, “the EU moves more and more into areas that impinge on the lives of individuals, it becomes harder and harder for governments to argue successfully that these are areas in which
they should be allowed free rein” (p. 48). On the other hand, “by hiding behind the EU as a shield from voters, governments increase the likelihood that voters will respond to any proposal that may be made to address that shield directly”. In other words, the tendency of governments to blame Bruxelles for their predicament will go awry once anti-European mobilizations are calling their bluff. More generally, once political enterpreneurs seize the issue of European integration, it may have the potential to fundamentally restructure the existing national party systems.

But the permissive consensus has ceased to exist already more than ten years ago. It has been called into question ever since the shock of the Danish referendum on the Maastricht treaty in 1992 and the conflict potential of the European integration. It has increasingly been exploited by political enterpreneurs in many countries, which means that mainstream political elites no longer benefit from a “splendid isolation” with respect to European integration. As a matter of fact, they find it increasingly difficult to depoliticize the issue of European integration, as the recent referenda in France and the Netherlands have documented once again. In this paper, I would like to address the question to what extent and in what direction the political parties in six Western European countries – Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK – have been mobilizing with regard to the issue of European integration since the seventies. The general expectation is that, indeed, this issue has become more salience for the political parties in the nineties and that the mobilization has mainly been carried by the Eurosceptics.

While the partisan mobilization of the issue of European integration constitutes the focus of this paper, I would like to suggest that this issue should not be viewed in isolation. The European integration process should be conceptualized as part and parcel of a larger structural conflict that provides the potential for a profound transformation of the Western European political party systems. European integration is one of a number of processes which currently open up and unbundle the boundaries of the nation-states. This set of processes is generally referred to by the term of “globalization”. Maybe more appropriately, Zürn (1998) refer to it by the term of
“denationalization”. Processes of political competition (the construction of new supranational centers of authority), economic competition (liberalization and market integration, immigration, delocalization) and cultural competition (immigration and its multicultural consequences) put the national political community under strain. As we have argued elsewhere (Kriesi et al. 2005), the likely winners of these competitive processes include people with high qualifications in sectors open to international competition as well as all cosmopolitan citizens. The losers include the patriots who identify with the national community, the economic sectors which have traditionally been protected by the nation-state and which find themselves increasingly exposed to foreign competition, as well as all those who lack the qualifications and the cultural competence to meet the economic and cultural challenge of a globalizing world. The winners are expected to support the opening up of the borders, including European integration, while the losers are likely to constitute the potential for the mobilization not only against European integration, but also for the mobilization against immigration and its consequences, for the backlash against the cultural liberalism of the new social movements, and for the defense of the national traditions, the national privileges and the national sovereignty. Our research group refers to this larger structural conflict as the conflict between integration and demarcation (Kriesi et al. 2005).

Parties as the mobilizing agents of the political conflict potentials linked to European integration

For the discussion of the mobilization of the political conflict potentials linked to European integration and to the integration-demarcation conflict more generally, it is important to distinguish between the two sides of these phenomena – their economic and their cultural aspects. This distinction is important, because the two sides pose different challenges for the different types of established parties. In the economic domain, a neoliberal free trade position is opposed to a position in favor of protecting the national markets and the national welfare states. In the cultural domain, a universalist, multiculturalist or cosmopolitan position is opposing a
position in favor of protecting the national culture and citizenship. The orientations in the two dimensions need not coincide.

On the left, mainstream parties tend to wholeheartedly embrace the cultural side of the European integration process, but they face a dilemma with respect to its economic side. With regard to the cultural side of denationalization, the left connects with its internationalist and universalist tradition which has been reinforced by its infusion with the values of the new social movements and the new left in the seventies and eighties. The dilemma with respect to the economic side arises for the left, because European integration is above all a project of market making (deregulation, mutual recognition or “negative integration”) without an equivalent project of market correction (re-regulation or “positive integration”) (Streeck 1996, Scharpf 1999). Accordingly, economic integration in Europe (and more globally) poses a threat to the national social achievements – in the domains of the welfare state and industrial relations. Marks and Wilson (2000) maintain that, in the founding member states, social democracy has accepted European integration as the only game in town. In subsequent member states, however, European integration was originally seen as a threat in countries (Scandinavia and UK), where social democracy is strong, while this was not the case in countries (Southern Europe), where social democracy at the national level is weak or difficult to sustain. In the meantime, even in the former countries, social democracy has come to accept European integration.

Although the social democratic leadership presently endorses the process of European integration everywhere, social democracy is still internally divided on the economic dimension, as is the left in general. We may distinguish between a “classical left” position that remains Eurosceptical and “altermondialiste”, and the position of a “modernized left” which roughly corresponds to the Third Way, formulated by the British Labour Party and later also discussed in other countries – especially in Germany. The opposition to the opening up of the borders by the social-democratic dissidents and the radical left corresponds to the position of the “classical left”
and is mainly an opposition to economic liberalization and the threat it poses for the left’s achievements – in the domains of social policy and industrial relations – at the national level. The Third Way, by contrast, constitutes a novel attempt to come to terms with the problems posed by the integration-demarcation conflict line more generally: Third Way politics takes globalization seriously, adopts a positive attitude towards it, and seeks to combine a neoliberal endorsement of free trade with a core concern with social justice (Giddens 1998: 64ff.). For the architects of the Third Way, taking globalization seriously also requires steps in the direction of “positive integration,” in the form of global economic governance, global ecological management, regulation of corporate power, control of warfare and fostering of transnational democracy (Giddens 2000: 122-162).

On the right, the conservatives also face a dilemma – one that is precisely the opposite of that faced by mainstream parties of the left (Marks and Wilson 2000): economically they tend to endorse liberalization, but politically and culturally they tend to be nationalists and opposed to the opening up of the borders. For parties on the right, including the conservatives, economic integration in terms of market-making is beneficial because it constrains the economic intervention of national governments. Conversely, cultural and political integration threatens national traditions and national sovereignty – values which have traditionally been defended by the conservatives. Accordingly, their positions are likely to vary especially along the cultural dimension. Depending on the perceived threat by integration to the national identity, the conservatives will be more or less opposed to integration. Moreover, just as on the left, we may distinguish between the “classical conservatives” and their more modernized version. Contrary to the left, however, in this case it is the more modernized version which is the more radical one: it is the new populist right, which has adopted a position most clearly opposed to European integration (and to globalization more generally) in political and cultural terms. The new populist right is not Eurosceptic in the first place. Its main characteristics are its opposition to immigration in Western Europe and its populist appeal to the widespread resentment against the
mainstream parties and the dominant political elites. Right-wing populists build on the losers’ fears with regard to the removal of national borders, and on their strong belief in simple and ready-made solutions. While economic issues tend to be secondary for such parties, Betz (1993) has identified neoliberal economic elements in the programmes of the new populist right. Similarly, Kitschelt (1995) has pointed out that not all right-wing populist parties shared this element, but he insisted that the most successful ones among them did. According to Kitschelt, the combination of cultural protectionism and economic neoliberalism constituted the ‘winning formula’ allowing these parties to forge electoral coalitions appealing both to their declining middle-class clientele and to the losers from the unskilled working class. However, more recently, both authors (Betz 2003; Kitschelt 2001: 435) have come to note that some populist right parties have moderated their neoliberal appeals and started to focus more on the themes of reactive nationalism, ethnocentrism and a more comprehensive protectionism.

Compared to the previously mentioned political families, at first sight the opening up of the borders seems to constitute less of a challenge for the Christian-democrats and for the Liberals. As is noted by Marks and Wilson (2000: 451), the Christian-democratic parties have been more closely associated with the founding of the EU than any other party family. More generally, they tend to take an intermediary position with regard to both the cultural and the economic dimension of globalization. As far as the Liberals are concerned, classical liberalism was both economically and politically and culturally liberal, i.e. supported the free market and political and cultural openness and tolerance. At closer inspection, however, we can find that European liberalism has been characterized by a strong ambivalence regarding the left-right dimension. As a consequence, we can distinguish at least two currents within the liberal party family (Smith 1988): “liberal-radicalism” and “liberal conservatism.” Whereas the former (e.g. the Dutch D66 or the French MRG) have been left-of-centre on economic issues, the latter (e.g. the Dutch VVD or the French RPR) have been emphasizing economic freedom and market liberalization and tended to be right-of-centre. Faced with the opening up of the borders, liberal-conservatives are
distinguished by the fact that, just like conservatives, they tend to put the accent on market liberalization, i.e. on the negative integration with respect to the economy, while they tend to be hard put to accept supranational political integration (Marks and Wilson 2000: 448-450).

Although several of the mainstream parties face a dilemma with regard to European integration, they have generally come to support it. They have been the main pillars of the “permissive consensus”. Given this mainstream consensus in favor of European integration, we may expect the mobilization of the issue of European integration to be mainly driven by the Eurosceptics. The Eurosceptics either come from the radical element on the left or the right, or they come from mainstream parties who have redefined their ideological profile under the impact of the new structural conflict. I expect the Eurosceptics from the conservative and radical right who put the accent on the cultural aspects of the opening up of the borders to make a bigger effort of mobilizing the potential linked to European integration than the radical (“classical”) left and I also expect them to have a bigger effect on the restructuring of the national political spaces. This expectation is based on results presented by Hooghe and Marks (2004), who show the key importance of exclusive national identities for Eurosceptic attitudes among the general public. I believe that cultural aspects are generally more important for the mobilization of the ‘losers’ than the defense of their economic interests. Given the heterogenous economic interests of the “losers” of denationalization, the defense of their national identity and of their national community constitutes the smallest common denominator for their mobilization. We should not forget that the national identity bestows a modicum of “dignity” and “self-pride” upon even the most disadvantaged members of the national community (Greenfeld 1999), nor should we forget that the nation-state has become a welfare state that also bestows some social rights on its members which they are likely to perceive as linked to their nation’s sovereignty. Finally, the mobilization of the “losers” is particularly consequential for the transformation of the national party systems, because, in contrast to the “winners,” the “losers” typically do not have the mainstream elites on their side (which means that their interests are usually not taken into
account) and they do not have individual exit-options at their disposal (when their interests are not taken into account). To improve their situation, they depend on collective mobilization. More generally, I expect the conservative and new populist right parties who most successfully appeal to the fears of the ‘losers’ to be the driving force of the current transformation of the Western European party systems.

The country-specific conditions for the mobilization of the political conflict potentials linked to European integration

While expecting an increase in the salience of European integration in all Western European party systems, we should allow for variation of its salience from one country to the other. The process of European integration constitutes a very specific issue the meaning of which varies between countries. The country-specific differences with respect to the evaluation of the European integration process are well known from the regular Eurobarometer surveys. Thus, the Irish, the Southern Europeans and the people from Luxemburg evaluate their country’s membership in the EU generally far more favorably than the British and the Scandinavians, with the other countries falling somewhere in between. In part, these differences can be explained with the relative economic benefits and costs accruing to a country from its membership in the EU: the Southern European net receivers view EU-membership generally more favorably than the Northern European net contributors. More importantly, however, these differences have deep cultural roots. As Diez-Medrano (2003: 249) has observed, the European citizens’ image of the EU and of the European integration process is filtered by national or subnational cultures. Their attitudes and opinions with respect to the EU are shaped by cultural repertoires which, in turn, are rooted in their national histories and their collective experience. Thus, for the Spaniards, membership in the EU has been a means for the modernization of the country, for improving its international prestige and for overcoming its isolation. By contrast, for the British, EU
membership is at best a necessary evil (Haller 1999). Above all, however, it is perceived as a threat to their national sovereignty.

In the present study, I shall compare the positioning of political parties with regard to Europe in six countries and it is well to note the fundamental differences in their way to perceive Europe and the process of European integration. For different reasons, the populations in four of our countries – Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands – view the European integration process generally quite favorably. Three of these countries belong to the core of the six original members. Austria is a latecomer to the EU – its permanent neutrality was the main reason for its delayed application –, but when it had to express itself on EU-membership, its population embraced it with a two-thirds majority in the 1994 referendum. Even after the experience with the European sanctions, with the exception of the voters of the FPÖ, Austrians generally maintained their Euro-optimistic attitudes (Pelinka 2004). Things are very different with respect to the citizens of the two remaining countries in our study – Switzerland and the UK. The Swiss have not joined the Union so far. Although they would become the greatest net contributor (per capita), it is not so much for economic reasons that they are sceptical with regard to the integration process. The main reasons are cultural and political: the Swiss perceive the EU as a threat to their cherished political institutions – neutrality, federalism and direct democracy, which constitute the core of their national identity. Just as the British, the Swiss are afraid to lose their national identity when joining the EU.

In the two countries, where the citizens perceive the EU as a threat to their national identity, the cultural heritage provides a fertile ground for the Eurosceptics who mobilize on the basis of the cultural dimension of the new conflict, i.e. for the Eurosceptics from the right. Accordingly, the conservatives in these countries should be particularly tempted to modify their profile and to adopt a eurosceptic position. More generally, I expect the salience of the European issue to be
greater and the Eurosceptics from the right to be more successful in the UK and in Switzerland than in the other four countries.

Data

The data for this analysis come from a larger project on the impact of globalization on the national political space. As already indicated, in this project we study six Western European countries: Germany, France, Britain, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands. This comparative study focuses on national elections, since we consider these still to be the crucibles for the structuring of national political contexts. Included in the study are the three elections of the 1990s and early 2000s and, for each country, one electoral contest from the 1970s as a point of reference from a period before the national politics were undergoing the presumed restructuring effect of globalization in general and, more particularly, before the permissive consensus with regard to European integration was starting to break down. The data used here concern the supply side of electoral competition.

We assume that the most appropriate way to analyze the positioning of parties and the way in which they deal with the new issues linked with globalization and European integration is to focus on the political debate during electoral campaigns, as reflected by the mass media. Furthermore, we consider both the saliency with which parties address certain issues and the positions (pro or contra) they take. While extensive research based on party manifestos has shown that parties tend to avoid direct confrontation and that they differ from each other mainly through the selective emphasis of their priorities (see Budge 2001 for a review), we also know that new issues usually do not have a valence character, and that direct confrontation – i.e. parties advocating diverging positions on political issues – is much more pronounced in the media and during electoral campaigns than in party programmes (Budge & Farlie 1983: 281). The voters, too, see the parties mainly in confrontational terms.
The obvious disadvantage of this methodological choice is that we could not rely on already existing data, but had to produce our own data. In order to identify the salience of the campaign issues for the various parties and their issue-specific positions we rely on a content analysis of the editorial part of major daily newspapers. For each country we chose a quality paper and a tabloid. For each one of the four electoral campaigns per country, all the articles related to the electoral contest or to politics in general have been selected in both newspapers for the last two months before Election Day. For the articles selected the headlines, the ‘lead’ and the first paragraph were coded sentence by sentence using a method developed by Kleinnijenhuis and his collaborators (see Kleinnijenhuis et al. 1997; Kleinnijenhuis & Pennings 2001). This method is designed to code every relationship between ‘political objects’ (i.e. either between two political actors or between a political actor and a political issue) appearing in the text. For the present purposes, we are only interested in relationships between political actors, on the one hand, and political issues on the other. Each sentence is reduced to its most basic structure (the so called ‘core sentence’) indicating only its subject (political actor) and its object (issue) as well as the direction of the relationship between the two. The direction is quantified using a scale ranging from -1 to +1 (with three intermediary positions).

Political actors are coded according to their party membership. For the present analysis, I have regrouped them into a limited number of categories or analyzed just the most important parties respectively, from three in Britain to eight in France. These parties or groups of parties are the following ones:

- Austria: Greens, Social-democrats (SPÖ), Liberals-left (Liberales Forum), Christian-Democrats (ÖVP), radical right (FPÖ).
- Britain: Social-democrats (Labour), Liberals (Liberal Democrats), Conservatives.
- France: Radical Left (PCF, Trotskyist parties), Greens, Social-democrats (PSF), Christian-democrats (UDF), Liberals-left MRG, Liberals (RPR), radical right (FN).

1 The selected newspapers were Die Presse and Kronenzeitung in Austria, The Times and The Sun in Britain, Le Monde and Le Parisien in France, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Bild in Germany, NRC Handelsblad and Algemeen Dagblad in the Netherlands, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Blick in Switzerland.
- Germany: Radical Left (PDS), Greens, Social-democrats (SPD), Liberals (FDP), Christian-democrats (CDU/CSU).
- Netherlands: Greens, Social-democrats (PvdA), Christian-democrats (CDA), Liberals (D66, VVD), radical right (LPF).
- Switzerland: Greens, Social-democrats (SP), Christian-democrats (CVP and other minor centre parties), Liberals (FDP and LPS), conservatives (SVP) and radical right.

Note that, for the present analysis, the conservatives and the new populist right will be grouped together into a single “party family”. In other words, this “conservative” family will include the British Tories, the Swiss People’s Party, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn and the French Front National.

For the political issues, we used a detailed coding schema, distinguishing between 200 or more categories (depending on the country). For the analysis, we have regrouped them into 12 categories, one of which is Europe – support for European integration – including enlargement – and of European membership in the case of Switzerland and Austria. The other categories refer to the expansion of the welfare state and defence against welfare state retrenchment (welfare), budgetary rigor (budget), support for deregulation, for more competition, and for privatisation (economic liberalism), support for the goals of the new social movements, with the exception of the environmental movement (cultural liberalism), support for education, culture, and scientific research (culture), Support for a tough immigration and integration policy (immigration), for the army, including Nato (army), for more law and order (security), for environmental protection, institutional reform and for the improvement of infrastructures.

The first three categories refer to the traditional economic opposition between state and market, i.e. to the class-based opposition between left and right. On this dimension, the left tends to defend the welfare state while the right tends to support economic liberalism and budgetary rigor. More recently, Third Way approaches have come to blur the distinctions, as has the recognition on both sides of the traditional divide that structural budgetary deficits cannot be

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2 Economic protectionism is part of the economic liberalism category (with opposing sign), since there were only few core sentences defending this goal.
sustained forever. The next six categories all refer to the cultural dimension. We first distinguish between three categories defending a universalistic, cosmopolitan point of view: support for cultural liberalism, European integration and education, culture and research. Next, we add three categories for the opposing point of view: support for a tough immigration policy, law and order and a strong army. A tough immigration policy is the closest we get to the notion of national protection. There are three additional categories – environmental protection, promotion of institutional reform and support for infrastructural projects.

All categories are formulated in such a way that they have a clear direction. Thus, the relationship with the category ‘Europe’ of a party supporting the adhesion of Switzerland to the EU takes a positive value (+1). Or, if a party advocates an increase in the state’s expenditures, its relationship with the category ‘budget’ will be negative (-1). This kind of data offer valuable information on two central aspects of the supply side of electoral competition: the positions of political parties regarding the various political issues, and the salience of these issues for a given political party. The position of an actor on a category of issues is computed by averaging over all core sentences which contain a relationship between this actor and any of the issues belonging to this category. The salience of a category of issues refers to the relative frequency with which a given political party takes a position on this category. It is important to understand that both aspects are relevant for an adequate description of the political space. Parties do not only differ from one another with respect to the positions they advocate, but also with respect to the priorities they set. It is also important to note that the salience of issues and parties can be computed in different ways. Here, party-issue relationships are analyzed for a given campaign.
Results

*Salience*

As expected, European integration has been gaining in salience between the seventies and the nineties: On average, issues related to European integration made up only 2.5 Percent of all issue-related statements in the campaigns of the seventies, but close to 7 Percent in the campaigns of the nineties. If Europe has become more prominent over time in the parties’ national electoral campaigns, it is still not one of the key themes. As is shown in Figure 1, there are, however, substantial country-specific differences with regard to the salience of European integration in national election campaigns. While European integration has become more salient in all six countries, as expected, the increase has been most substantial in the two most eurosceptical countries: in the UK and in Switzerland, Europe became one of the key issues in the electoral campaigns of the nineties with shares of respectively 11.2 and 12.2 of all issue-specific statements.

*Figure* 2 presents the salience of Europe in seven party families for the two time periods. As this figure makes clear, most but not all parties have paid increasing attention to the process of European integration. The radical left and the two parties of the liberal-radical family (the Dutch D66 and the French MRG) are the exceptions. The most important increase in mobilization with regard to Europe has taken place among the conservatives and the new populist right. This again confirms our expectations: it is the Eurosceptics who drive the mobilization with regard to Europe in national election campaigns. Three among these parties – the British Tories, the Swiss People’s Party and the Austrian FPÖ, are mainstream parties who have redefined their ideological profile under the impact of the new structural conflict. All three have experienced an intensification of internal conflicts about European integration in particular and the positioning with respect to the purported new conflict more generally, a conflict which was resolved by transforming the party’s profile in favor of Euroscepticism. Both the British Conservatives and
the Austrian Liberals had originally supported European integration, whereas Europe originally constituted Europe a non-issue for the Swiss People’s Party. The other two parties in this group are parties of the radical right who were both xenophobe and eurosceptic from the start.

Looking more closely at the mobilization patterns of the parties in the two most Eurosceptic countries – Switzerland and the UK, we find that, indeed, in both of these countries the conservatives heavily mobilized with respect to Europe in the more recent elections: in the nineties, one in seven issue-specific statements of the British Conservatives were about Europe, while one in five of the Swiss People’s Party’s issue-specific statements addressed Switzerland’s relation to Europe. In fact, it is only in these two Eurosceptic countries, that conservatives mainly mobilize with respect to the European integration process. In Austria, the FPÖ was only concerned with Europe in the 2002 elections, when one seventh of its issue-specific statements addressed European integration. In the two previous elections institutional reform (in 1994) and the welfare state (in 1999) were its key concerns. The French Front national has mainly been mobilizing against immigration. It took issue with Europe in the 1995 elections only. The Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn, finally, was hardly concerned with Europe at all. Nor was it primarily concerned with immigration. Its agenda was dominated by its critique of cultural liberalism and the welfare state, by questions of security, infrastructure and institutional reform.

In Switzerland, the parties did not discuss European integration at all in the elections of the mid-seventies. The 1972 Free trade agreement between Switzerland and the EU had settled the EU question for the Swiss political elites for some time to come. In the nineties, the Swiss Greens seem to have paid an even greater attention to this issue than the conservatives. Given the limited overall number of their statements, however, we should take this result with a grain of salt. Once
we disaggregate the results for the Swiss conservatives and consider each one of the three elections of the nineties separately, we find that they concentrated on the European question in the elections of 1995, when almost one half (45 Percent) of their issue-specific statements concerned Europe. In the 1991 and 1999 elections, by contrast, immigration was by far their most important issue. An analysis of their electoral success in the last three elections of 1995, 1999 and 2003 shows that it was Europe, and not immigration, which was above all responsible for their appeal to the voters (Kriesi et al. 2005).

In the 1974 British elections, only one year after the accession of their country to the EC, the British parties debated the question of European integration quite intensively. Interestingly, however, it was Labour who most often mentioned this theme and who was the main eurosceptic force in Britain at the time. In other words, this specific twist of the British debate about Europe confirms the overall notion that it is the Eurosceptics who constitute the driving force of the politicization of the European integration process. Once we disaggregate the results for the British conservatives for the three elections of the nineties, we find that, in their case, the salience of the European question has steadily increased: in 1992, only 3.1 Percent of their issue-statements concerned European integration, in 1997 this share had risen to 18.4 Percent and in 2001, when Europe became their key issue, it reached no less than 29.1 Percent.

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Figure 3 about here

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**Direction**

The direction of the mobilization has already been touched upon in the previous discussion of the salience of European integration, but now I would like to present the results concerning this second aspect of the partisan mobilization more systematically. First, the country-specific
differences with regard to the parties’ positioning are as expected: Euroscepticism (indicated by negative values in Figure 4) dominates the debates in Switzerland and the UK. The UK distinguishes itself insofar as Euroscepticism was already predominant in the seventies, while the Swiss did not discuss Europe at the time. The tone of the debate in the other four countries was predominantly pro-European in the seventies and remained so in Germany, France and Austria. In the Netherlands, however, pro- and anti-European statements almost canceled each other out in the campaigns of the nineties. Turning to party positions, we find the familiar inverted U-curve (see Hooghe et al. 2002: 968-71), with mainstream parties at the center of the political spectrum taking a predominantly pro-European position, while the radical left and the radical right are predominantly Eurosceptic (Figure 5).

This overall confirmation of the received view merits some nuances, however. First, as it appears from Figure 5, the radical left was not always anti-European. In the seventies, the French radical left (which is the only one for whom we have sufficient data here, as is shown in Figure 6) was rather pro-European. It only turned against Europe later on. By contrast, while the Greens have become predominantly Eurosceptic, not all of them are. The Austrian Greens remain pro-European and the German ones do not take any position with regard to Europe during their campaigns in the nineties. Second, as Marks and Wilson (2000) have already observed, the social-democrats have not always been predominantly pro-European: thus, the Austrian and the British parties were eurosceptic in the seventies (Figure 6), and since Europe was virtually no relevant issue in the campaigns of the pro-European social-democrats in the other countries at the time, their overall position turns out to have been eurosceptic in the seventies. Similarly, with the liberals: the French RPR (here classified with the liberal-conservatives) and the British
liberals were quite or somewhat anti-European in the seventies, which gives the liberals an overall eurosceptic score for this period. Third, with the exception of the Dutch CDA in the nineties, the Christian-democrats are consistently pro-European. Fourth, with the exception of the FPÖ, the conservatives (together with the populist right) are consistently anti-European. The positioning of the FPÖ is essentially based on the 2002 elections, when the European issue became salient for its campaign.

These results with regard to the direction of the debate are based on the means of each party’s positioning. Now, many parties are internally divided about European integration, which means that their average position may not be as meaningful an indicator as implicitly assumed by the previous discussion. I have calculated the standard deviation of each party’s positioning with regard to European integration. The larger this measure, the more disparate are the statements attributed to a given party during the campaign. Table 1 presents the corresponding results for the nineties. According to these results, the French socialists and the British liberals turn out to be most homogenous with regard to the EU-question. The British liberals had only very few statements about Europe, which means that their homogeneity is not that impressive. The French socialists, however, have been very consistently pro-European across more than a hundred statements (see also their average fully pro-European positioning in Figure 6). Their dividedness about Europe is of a more recent vintage. By contrast, the British Labour party has been very much divided about Europe during the nineties, which is also shown in its almost neutral overall positioning in Figure 6. All the Dutch parties have been much divided about Europe during the nineties. The same is true of the French RPR, the Swiss Liberals and the populist right in
Austria, France and the Netherlands. The Europe-specific division of the populist right is particularly relevant here, because it puts into question the overall hypothesis that, together with the conservatives, it constitutes the driving force of Euroscepticism. In a national context, where the predominant mood is pro-European, the populist right does not appear to be coherently eurosceptic. Only in a profoundly eurosceptic country, such as Switzerland or the UK, the conservatives (taking the position of the populist right) turn out to be consistently eurosceptic.

The insertion of Euroscepticism into the overall national party space

In the already mentioned recent paper (Kriesi et al. 2005), we have used these data to study the structure of the national party space in the six countries. We have analyzed the positioning of the national party families with regard to the 12 issue categories with a weighted metrical multi-dimensional scaling procedure (WMMDS). The weights were provided by the salience of the issues for a given party. In other words, the more important an issue for a given party, the more heavily its positioning on this issue counted for the overall solution. We found two dimensional solutions – with an economic and a cultural dimension – for the national party space in all six countries. In some cases, such as Switzerland and France, the two dimensions turned out to be partially integrated, but they never coincide. Second, we also found that the positions of the parties usually vary as strongly with respect to the cultural dimension as they do with respect to the economic one. Both dimensions are polarizing. Furthermore, the cultural dimension (and not only European integration which constitutes one of its aspects) has generally been gaining in importance as it has become the primary basis on which new parties or transformed established
parties seek to mobilize their electorate. Finally, and most importantly from the point of view of
the present paper, we also found that the cultural dimension, which was originally defined by
cultural liberalism and the army became increasingly associated with immigration in all the
countries except the UK in the course of the nineties. In the two most eurosceptic countries –
Switzerland and the UK –, the question of European integration now replaces cultural liberalism
as the issue most clearly opposed to cultural closure. We interpret this transformation of the
meaning of the cultural dimension as strong evidence for the structuring capacity of the
purported new integration-demarcation cleavage. We note, however, that the structuring capacity
of this cleavage is not generally based on Euroscepticism. In fact, it is primarily associated with
Euroscepticim in the two most eurosceptic countries and in Austria.

This result is confirmed by the simple bivariate correlations between the parties’ average
positioning with regard to Europe and their positioning with regard to the two most important
issues of the cultural dimension – cultural liberalism and a tough immigration policy – presented
in Table 2. These correlations are calculated for the nineties only. In Switzerland, the UK and
Austria, the parties’ positioning with regard to Europe is positively correlated with their
positioning on cultural liberalism. Moreover, in Switzerland and Austria, but not in the UK, it is
negatively correlated with their positioning with regard to a tough immigration policy. The
absence of the expected correlation with regard to immigration in the UK is the result of the fact
that the British parties have largely abstained from mobilizing on this issue until the last
elections in 2005. Thus, there is not a single statement about immigration for the Liberals in our
file. In France and in the Netherlands, by contrast, the positioning of the parties with regard to
Europe is hardly correlated with their positioning on cultural issues at all. This suggests that
European integration is part of the cultural dimension in the former countries, but not in France
and in the Netherlands. In Germany, finally, the European issue is also strongly associated with
the cultural dimension, but not in the expected direction: in Germany, support for European
integration goes together with opposition against immigration and against cultural liberalism.
Germany is the only country in our set without a conservative or populist right party mobilizing against Europe. This may explain why, among our countries, Europe has been least salient in German electoral campaigns (see *Figure 1*). The unexpected reversal of the sign of European integration on the cultural dimension is explained by the fact that the closest equivalent to a conservative party in the German party system, the CDU, has always been strongly pro-European, but has become strongly opposed to immigration in the nineties, while taking a middle-of-the-road position on cultural liberalism.

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*Table 2 about here*

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*Table 2* also includes the correlations between the parties’ position on Europe and their positions on welfare and economic liberalism – the two most important issues of the economic dimension. In the Swiss case, these correlations are very similar to those for the cultural issues, which suggests that, in Switzerland, Europe is linked to both the cultural and the economic dimension. In the UK, support for European integration is clearly linked to opposition to economic liberalism. In the other countries, the relationship between Europe and the two issues of the economic dimension are less than clear. In the Netherlands and especially in France, Europe is neither linked to the cultural nor to the economic dimension, but seems to constitute a – not very salient – question apart. This is at least the result we obtain on the basis of the national elections up to 2002. After the recent vote on the European Constitution in these two countries, these results appear, of course, a bit dated. But it is still interesting to note that the recent mobilization against the European Constitution in these two countries has had no precedent in previous national election campaigns.
Conclusion

The present analysis has confirmed the notion that eurosceptic mobilization is above all driven by the conservative or new populist right and that it is most pronounced in countries, where the general public mood has always been more or less eurosceptic. Where the conflict about the process of European integration is politically most salient, it is also most clearly inserted into the cultural dimension of the more general integration-demarcation divide. In countries, where the process of European integration is politically less salient, it is less clearly situated in the two-dimensional structure of the national political space.

Let me conclude with a brief methodological note. The results obtained in the present analysis are based on data documenting the mobilization of national political parties during national election campaigns. I have tried to replicate these results on the basis of Manifesto data, but failed completely. As is shown by the two figures in the appendix, neither the country-specific differences with regard to salience, nor the corresponding differences between the party families can be replicated using Manifesto data, although these data are said to be particularly well suited to measure salience. For European integration, Manifesto data also allow for the operationalization of the direction of a party’s positioning. But in this respect, too, the present results could not be confirmed using Manifesto data. I take this as an indication that we can discuss the issue of the relative “depoliticization” of the process of European integration only on the basis of data, which explicitly take into account the mobilization effort of the political parties. Party programmes do not reflect such mobilization efforts, which is why they cannot be used as source for analyzing this question.
Bibliography


Figure 1
Salience of Europe in 6 European countries, seventies and eighties: campaign data
Figure 2
Salience of Europe in 7 party families, seventies and nineties
Figure 3
Salience by country and party family: UK and Switzerland compared, seventies and nineties, campaign data

[Bar chart showing salience by country and party family for UK and Switzerland in the seventies and nineties.]
Figure 4
Direction with regard to Europe in 6 European countries, seventies and eighties: campaign data
Figure 5
Direction with regard to Europe by 7 party families, seventies and nineties: campaign data
Figure 6
Direction with regard to Europe by country and party family, seventies and nineties, campaign data
conservatives-rr

country

direction

D  F  A  NL  CH  UK

70  90
Table 1
Standard deviations of positioning: by country and party family

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Table 2
Structure of the national political space: correlations between European integration and other issues

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APPENDIX: Results with Manifesto data

a) Salience of Europe in 6 European countries, seventies and eighties (Figure 1)

b) Salience of Europe in 7 party families, seventies and nineties