THE UNSTOPPABLE FAR RIGHT?

How established parties’ communication and media reporting of European affairs affect the electoral advances of right-populist parties

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On the cover: British ballot papers for the local and European Parliamentary elections held May 22, 2014.
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The Unstoppable Far Right?

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Timo Lochocki1

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Executive Summary

Since 2010, the crises in the euro area have put European affairs at the forefront of national political debates. As a first step to improve the functioning of the European Monetary Union, there has been a gradual deepening of integration through financial rescue mechanisms and increased economic and fiscal policy coordination. This has led to a broad discussion featuring both advocates of a more integrated Europe and proponents of a re-nationalization of key policy areas. Commentators frequently consider these debates as triggers for the rise of right-populist support in recent years (e.g. the United Kingdom Independence Party in Great Britain). However, some right-populist parties actually lost voter support in the 2014 European elections (e.g. the Partij voor de Vrijheid in the Netherlands), which therefore challenges these assumptions. These facts raise the question how the electoral gains and losses of right-populist parties can actually be explained.

A detailed media analysis of national debates on European affairs from 2009 to 2014 and a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) identify several decisive factors for the rise and fall of right-populist parties. While other studies suggest that right-populist parties’ advances are contingent upon socio-economic conditions or actual European policies, this study focusses on the communication of European affairs to voters and finds that it is also key how moderate pro-European parties communicate European matters to the public. A cross-country analysis including Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Sweden specifically demonstrates that right-populists can only increase their share of votes if moderate political actors have already legitimized populist campaign topics.

In light of this, pro-European parties have three strategic options when facing popular eurosceptic parties in their countries.

The first option is to pursue clear-cut pro-European agendas in the upcoming years without specific references to the national context. While this was the preferred choice in the majority of EU member states until the early 2000s, it would come at the cost of substantial further voter gains of right-populist parties today.

The second option is to end campaigns for further European integration at least temporarily. It seems likely that both the process of European integration and the electoral advances of eurosceptic right-populist parties would come to a halt. Under this option, however, the EU would risk failing to tackle remaining European governance weaknesses.

The third strategic option is to devote substantial political energy to communicating European integration as a firmly imbedded component of national interest and a means to safeguard cherished, national values and assets. This is the only way by which pro-European parties can likely support and advocate further European integration while simultaneously hampering right-populist parties’ advances.
Introduction

In the May 2014 European Parliament election, eurosceptical right-populist parties increased their vote share from 11% to 15%. In some countries with large delegations in the European parliament, such as France and the (U.K.), they even won 25% of the total vote. In contrast, their gains in most other countries were rather limited. They even lost a substantial share of voters' support in the Netherlands. Consequently, the commonly held expectation that the ongoing debates regarding the future of the European project would automatically benefit right-populist parties does not seem to have been the case.

This is intriguing news for pro-European policymakers, who are at the moment caught in limbo. On one hand, they are inclined to cater to parts of their electorate who tend to support right-populists' renationalization rhetoric. On the other, there are various reasons to support a further deepening of European integration, in particular of the euro area.

This paper analyzes political debates on European issues in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.K. from 2009 to 2014. It finds that right-populists can only increase their vote share if established, moderate political actors have already legitimized right-populists' campaigning topics.

This reflection on the political mechanisms leading to right-populist parties' advances offers three political strategies on how pro-European parties can deal with their new competitors. The first option is to establish a clear pro-European discourse over the next few years. This could, however, be a self-defeating strategy for the European project, as it would most likely result in remarkable vote gains for right-populist parties.

The second option would entail abstaining from further European integration for now in order to attempt a substantial leap forward in years to come. This would prevent voters from turning to right-populist parties for at least the next few years. Finally, a third strategy would require by far the most political energy, but would also hold the most potential for pro-European parties: in framing European integration as a cause lying in the very national interest and embedded in each state's national narrative, pro-European parties could propel European integration while also weakening right-populist parties.

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1 We hereby define eurosceptical not as campaigning against certain aspects of European integration, but as calling for a return to the nation state as prime source of political power en lieu supra-national or intergovernmental arrangements on the European level.

2 While right-populist parties are indeed a rather heterogenous group, scholarly literature has established a consensus to accept a grouping of parties which all rather neglect socio-economic topics of political competition and instead focus their campaigns on some combination of racism, xenophobia, nationalism and a strong preference for law and order (e.g. by Arzheimer 2009a). In the countries under scrutiny, this definition applies to the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid (VVD), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Sverigedemokraterna (SD).

Since the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was only funded very recently, it still lacks a proper categorization. Still, as will be elaborated in the chapters to follow, the AfD is considered a functional equivalent to a right-populist party in the German case.
In 2008, the bankruptcy of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers helped to trigger a global financial crisis, which affected the various economies of the euro area to different extents. While the economies at the core of the euro area (including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands) were forced into recession, they could still refinance their sovereign debt nationally; whereas countries at the European periphery (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) were in danger of defaulting on their credit lines. Thus, coordinated sovereign debt crisis management in the euro area became necessary.

The public debate on the mutual management of the sovereign debt crisis showed an already visible reluctance on the part of substantial segments of European populations to further support European integration. Symbolized by the rejection of the European Constitution in national referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005, publics began to question the hitherto generally accepted procedure of European integration, reframing it as an elite-driven process. European affairs had taken the center stage of national politics, especially as the financial and sovereign debt crises revealed the weaknesses of the euro area’s architecture.

In particular the crises since 2010 have triggered policy choices which led to a substantial deepening of the euro area. On the other hand, there has been a strong calling for renationalization by some political actors, for instance to hamper the free movement of people in the Schengen area.

The most outspoken rejection of the shared handling of the sovereign debt crisis comes from Europe’s right-populist parties, which have established themselves as a major political force in European democracies over the last decade. Political commentators assumed that right-populists’ pledges to retreat from international cooperation would thrive in today’s economic environment. The May 2014 election for the European Parliament put these assumptions to the test — and indeed, parties presumably sceptical towards European integration increased their vote share from around 15% in 2009 to 20% in 2014 (Table 1).

While these vote gains presumably influence the political debate and decision-making on the national level more than the European level (Kietz and von Ondarza 2014), the European election spurred discussion of a pressing question: Why did right-populist parties perform so well in some countries (reaching 25% support in England and France, for example), while hardly gaining substantial support in other countries (e.g. Ireland and Spain) — and even losing support in the Netherlands (Geert Wilders’ PVV lost 4% points in comparison to 2009)?

Table 1: Presence of Eurosceptical Parties in the European Parliament 2009 and 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election for the European Parliament</th>
<th>Seats of European Conservatives and Reformists — ECR</th>
<th>Seats of Europe of Freedom and (Direct) Democracy — EF(D)D</th>
<th>Seats of Non-Inscrits</th>
<th>Total Number of Seats Not Belonging to Pro-European Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>51 (6.9%)</td>
<td>32 (4.3%)</td>
<td>27 (3.6%)</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>70 (9.1%)</td>
<td>48 (6.2%)</td>
<td>33 (4.3%)</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Parliament, August 2014
Why did some right-populist parties benefit so significantly from the controversial debates on the future of the European project, while others seem to have suffered such large defeats?

It seems as if passionate debates about European topics do not automatically lead to vote gains for right-populist parties. An assumption widely shared by various political analysts before the election — namely that right-populist parties clearly benefit from the current debates — does not seem to hold anymore. Therefore, this study scrutinizes the conditions under which right-populist parties benefit from debates about European integration, and the conditions under which they do not.

This study assumes that the way established, moderate parties debate European issues determines whether voters turn to right-populist parties or not. These hypotheses stem from studies that point out that the prime factor influencing right-populist parties’ electoral performance is the discussion of crucial political issues established by other political parties (Meguid 2005; Bornschier 2011; Fieschi, Morris et al. 2012). Media access and organizational capacities of right-populist parties are also important, but to a lesser extent (Ellinas 2010; Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen 2011).

The significance of the conduct of other parties in this respect is even further supported by research on voters’ preferences: 10 to 25% of the European electorate seems to consistently support right-populists’ agendas, regardless of time, country, or socio-economic factors (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Mudde 2010; Fieschi, Morris et al. 2012). But rather than manifest automatically in the rise of right-populist parties, these 10 to 25% seem bound by the actions of other parties.

One thus observes what initially appears to be a paradoxical situation: European affairs dominate political debates, and thus allegedly benefit right-populists’ programs, but right-populist parties still fare remarkably differently from country to country.

In some countries, established parties seem to have “communicated Europe” in a way that has kept voters away from right-populist parties. In others, the campaigning strategies of other parties seem to rather have benefitted right-populists’ advances. With the aim of elucidating this presumed connection, this study scrutinizes how established parties’ communication of crucial European matters, such as the future of the European project, affects right-populist parties’ chances at the ballot box.
3 Why European Voters Turn to Right-Populists: In Defense of the Nation

The hypothesized pivotal influence of established political parties means that right-populist parties are only able to gather electoral support when established political actors leave — and offer — them a programmatic niche (Ellinas 2010). Conversely, if established political parties cater to voters’ demands sufficiently, the demand for new political players remains low. This raises the question: which program are European voters after? What, in other words, is the “winning formula” for right-populists?

Studies have identified two components that make right-populists’ programs appealing to voters: they offer an agenda of neo-nationalism combined with an opportunity to cast a protest vote expressing general dissatisfaction with the political establishment. Their programs combine “neo-nationalism” with “anti-elitism”: for the nation, against the political establishment.

In doing so, they blame the established, moderate parties for any alleged social change — primarily caused by globalization — brought upon the alleged homogenous community of the nation. The prime threats are generally symbolized by immigration and multiculturalism as much as the influence of the European Union on daily life (Ivarsflaten 2008; Arzheimer 2009; Ellinas 2010; Yilmaz 2012).

While Europe’s right-populist parties have originated in countries with vastly different historical experiences, each frames external influences as a threat to the alleged defining national narrative of its respective country: the Scandinavian right-populists portray immigration and the European Union as a threat to their high level of social security; Geert Wilders campaigns against the alleged religiosity of migrants, which threatens “Dutch tolerance”; Marine Le Pen follows a similar path in framing immigration from Muslim countries as presumably threatening the French “Laïcité,” the separation between church and state. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) — the new party that has emerged in Germany in recent years, presumably capturing conservative voters — derides financial support for troubled southern European economies, portraying this as running counter to the narrative of the industrious, hard-working Germans, who suffered plenty of hardship to address economic challenges themselves.

Meanwhile, the second key component of right-populist agendas — a general critique of the established political parties — is achieved by portraying the established political forces as being united against the common man in “selling out” the nation’s cultural core (e.g. the generous welfare state in Scandinavia, strict Laïcité in France, hard-won economic productivity in Germany) to an “external intrusion” (migrants, or the European Union as a whole).

These two “uniting narratives” (neo-nationalism and anti-elitism) explain why voters with previously mainstream party preferences join ranks with the new parties. As right-populist voters’ political agendas were previously at odds due to differing socio-economic interests, they opted in the past for established parties with differing socio-economic profiles. Blue and white collar workers, for example, tended toward mid-left parties, while small business owners and bourgeoisie leaned toward mid-right parties. However, these new narratives cut across individual economic interests. They unite these voters on the so-called cultural dimension of political competition, and in a mutual distrust toward the established political forces — “the elite” (Ivarsflaten 2005).

3 The nationalism of right-populist parties is based on defending the “alleged” nation, less on attacking another country's achievements. This is a crucial departure from prominent nationalist movements of the 20th century. Thus, the term “neo-nationalism” is used consciously.
Following this reasoning, the right populists’ self-ascribed winning formula becomes clear: Only right-populist parties offer a neo-nationalist agenda, thereby framing themselves as the only ones protecting the nation’s cultural core. Only the right-populist party stands in stark contrast to the “multicultural and pro-European elite consensus” and is perceived as protecting the interest of the “common man”.

Right-populist parties are especially adept at wielding a neo-nationalist agenda if migration and the European Union are prominently discussed amongst established parties and none of them offers — in the eye of the voters — compelling ideas on how to defend the perceived cultural core of the nation (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Arzheimer 2009a; Arzheimer 2009b; Van der Brug and Spanje 2009). Recent research, though, shows that right-populist parties can only campaign successfully as defenders of the nation when an established, moderate party puts such an agenda forward itself beforehand. In other words, the program of right-populist parties needs to be “legitimized” and “white-washed” by other parties first (Ellinas 2010; Muis 2012). For instance, if an established party campaigns on tightening asylum legislation, but eventually supports a more liberal asylum regime, the asylum topic offers a legitimized niche for a right-populist party.

Recalling the research question — how and why right-populists benefit from political debates over Europe — three political backdrops seem to precede right-populist parties’ electoral advances in recent years.

1. Voters are made aware that the European topic is a prime issue for established, moderate parties, as they are when moderate political parties repeatedly talk about the European Commission or another European country in national media.

2. An established, moderate party introduces a position that is skeptical of the current state of the European project — criticizing, for example, the country’s financial contribution to the EU budget, or how another EU member state deals with financial support from Brussels.

3. An established, moderate party withdraws from one of its skeptical positions and takes a more pro-European stance. To stick with the outlined examples, this established, moderate party now supports the course of the European Commission or its country’s financial commitment to the European budget.

The result of these three steps is the opening of a legitimized programmatic niche for a right-populist party — namely in campaigning on the positions that the established, moderate party introduced in the first place.
In its analysis of the means through which established parties influence the electoral advances of right-populist parties, this study concentrates on the way established parties discuss European affairs in Germany, the U.K., the Netherlands, and Sweden. These countries were chosen in order to account for two factors that might impinge on right-populist parties’ advances in recent years. First, the debates about Europe in the euro area are most likely different from those in countries still using national currencies. Choosing two countries in the center (Germany and the Netherlands) and two at the fringes (the U.K. and Sweden) of the EU thus allows scrutiny of both kinds of European debates. Second, comparative party studies hint at differences between the operating styles of established right-populist parties and those of newly-formed parties without parliamentary representation (Bornschier 2010; Bornschier 2011). The longer a party is established, the wider its media access, the more sophisticated its organizational capacities, and the more substantial its party funding. Thus, in accounting for these differences, two countries with established right-populist parties and two without were selected (Table 2).

In order to capture the discourse of established political parties on European matters, this study analyzes pivotal party statements as reported in a national newspaper of record. The data is coded and analyzed according to established data-gathering techniques in comparative party politics that ensure both a high validity and a high reliability. Thus, the data captures the discourse as it is affecting the voter, as much as the data’s interpretation is not dependent on “subjective” political preferences.

The data gathering of this study follows established methodological approaches in use in comparative studies (Koopmans and Statham et al. 2005). For example, one leading national newspaper for each country was searched for articles that concern European matters. In order to compare the results across various countries, all articles in the politics section of the newspapers showing EU* or europ* in their headline or first paragraph and the country-specific party names/abbreviations were scrutinized. Limiting to the politics section – usually the first pages – of the newspaper ensures to scrutinize the part of the newspaper which receives the greatest attention by the readers. Limiting the study to one newspaper for each country was deemed acceptable, as comparative studies show that salience and reported party positions hardly varies amongst newspapers of record (Koopmans and Statham et al. 2005). Newspapers chosen were NRC Handelsblad, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Svenska Dagbladet and The Daily Telegraph. Political claims out of the selected articles — when they could clearly be traced back to a political party — were coded according to a scheme measuring the extent to which they were pro-European or eurosceptical statements. A typical statement would read, for instance, “Liberal Nick Clegg wants Britain to join the Euro.”

Regarding the campaigning positions of the established, moderate parties, the data shows that the established political forces do not stick to their positions, but have altered them very often over the course of the last five years. Moreover, the reports of positional shifts seem to have a significant impact on the electoral fortunes of the right-populist parties in the respective countries.

### Table 2: Country Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrenched right-populist party</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Integrated European Centre</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Periphery</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The applied data gathering method ensures a high validity (mirroring the discourse as it most likely affects the voter), high reliability (reducing subjective interpretation of the data as much as possible), and a high level of generalizability (revealing political mechanisms applying to all countries under scrutiny).

This does not imply that these shifts have the same “quality,” though. The coding of political statements (which taken together display the party’s position) is based on how the respective statements refer to the status quo of European affairs as discussed in their national contexts. The less a politician wants his or her country to be integrated within the European legal framework, the more negatively the statement is coded. The more European integration and international cooperation beyond the current state of affairs are called for, the more positive the statement. A claim that affirms the status quo in the given national context is coded with a zero.

If, for instance, a Dutch politician makes the case for the reintroduction of the guilder, this statement gets a -10 since it indicates that the Netherlands should to leave the euro area. If, however, a British politician makes the case for the pound, this statement is coded with a 0 because this is basically a reaffirmation of the status quo. Conversely, if a German politician supports the euro, this receives a 0, while a Swedish politician would get a clear +10 for the same statement since Sweden still uses the krona, and so forth.

This is a scientifically sound way to reflect the national debates in their own right and to show developments within the national discursive realm, instead of working with a more static assessment. Otherwise, the high level of European integration in the Netherlands and Germany would automatically lead to a far more pro-European discourse in comparison to that of England or Sweden, neglecting the context of the different stages of European integration in which the respective national parties operate. Thus the data does not measure positions on political issues that are the same across all countries, but how the party statements within particular countries differ from time to time in the specific national context.

A detailed account of the data gathering and analysis is provided in the Annex “Data and Methods”.

According to the hypothesized three political mechanisms (see chapter 3), three indicators were critical for this study:

1. How often and how intensely do national media report on established political parties debating European affairs? How high is the salience of European topics in the political discourse?

2. What political positions do established political actors embrace? Are they campaigning on positions calling for more or less European integration?

3. How do the salience of European affairs and party positions regarding European matters affect voter support of right-populist parties?

These three considerations affect how the data was obtained. The applied data gathering method ensures high validity (mirroring the discourse as it most likely affects the voter), high reliability (reducing subjective interpretation of the data as much as possible), and a high level of generalizability (revealing political mechanisms applying to all countries under scrutiny). In order to balance all three concerns at the same time, known trade-offs of comparative research were unfortunately unavoidable:

1. The national discourse was captured by the newspaper articles assumed to function best as snapshots of the political climate (thus leaving out various articles other searches would list, and therefore not describing "the debate" as such).

2. Statements made by politicians were coded based using the same coding scheme for all countries and for the sake of answering the research
question (thus not capturing all country-specific
details of particular national debates).

3. For the final analysis, the national discourse
was coded and analyzed “relative” to previous
national debates, as opposed to debates in other
countries (thus positions of the German CDU/
CSU were not compared with those of the British
Tories, but with other positions of the German
CDU/CSU).
Before analyzing the data, the following section provides a brief summary of the national debates from 2009 to 2014, as derived from the articles published in the newspapers analyzed for this study. Again, this is not “the debate” in all its detailed accounts, but how the debate was reported in the politics section of the newspapers scrutinized. This analysis does not reflect “the national debate” in all its detailed accounts, but merely how the debate was reported in the politics section of the newspapers of record examined.

The data search for Sweden found too few political claims\(^4\) to retrace the political debates how it presumably affected the voters. Consequently, only the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands can be discussed in broader detail.

### The United Kingdom

In autumn 2009, the party leader of the British Conservatives (and soon to be prime minister), David Cameron, marked the clear euro-sceptical position of his party by “maintaining the Tory position that they will plan for a referendum if the Lisbon treaty has not been ratified when they come to power, and not let ‘matters rest’" if it has been.\(^5\) In other words, the British Conservatives promised to renegotiate the very basics of the British relationship with the EU and open this for a referendum if they won the national election in 2010 (which they did). In October 2009, The Daily Telegraph reported that the Tories threatened “Europe’s leaders that they face a ‘five-year war’ with Britain if they installed Tony Blair as new European president.”\(^6\)

Cameron maintained the Tories’ clear-cut positions on the EU after becoming prime minister. In July 2010, he announced that no extra pound out of the pockets of British tax payers would be spent to address the financial challenges in Southern Europe.\(^7\) Over the course of that year, he affirmed his highly euro-sceptical position, culminating on October 30 with the declaration: “I’m a Euroskeptic.”\(^8\)

Over the course of 2011, the prime minister faced strong internal resistance from the conservative wing of his party when he denounced a popular vote that would enable Britain to leave the EU. “I don’t want Britain to leave the EU,” the prime minister said. “I think it’s the wrong answer for Britain. People in rooms up and down Britain aren’t thinking, gosh, if only we could have a treaty change in Europe.”\(^9\) Despite these rather nuanced statements, Cameron still kept the Tories on a clear anti-EU position in winter 2011 by publicly accusing “France and Germany of orchestrating ‘constant attacks’ on the City of London through new EU red tape on the financial sector.”\(^10\) The prime minister was in good company here, as a group of 81 Tory MPs formed an anti-EU group in Westminster with the goal of repatriating powers from Brussels, as EU regulations were seen as hampering the British economy.\(^11\) Cameron insisted that this repatriation of powers must wait, as the prime challenge at the time was the rescue of the euro.\(^12\) In the summer of 2012, The Daily Telegraph reported Cameron’s change of course:

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4. Compare Figure 1, page 17.
he refused to call for a referendum on Britain’s relations with the EU in June 2012.13 A month later, he once again stressed that he personally thinks Britain should stay in the EU.14 However, he tried to pacify the strong anti-EU wing of his conservative party in emphasizing his rejection of further steps of European integration, even as his Europe minister, David Lidington, was clear in underlying the “new” position of Cameron’s cabinet: “Britain must not ‘walk away’ from the European Union and Conservatives should not be ‘emotional’ about the issue.”15 At the beginning of December 2012, however, Cameron became the first British prime minister to veto a new EU treaty since the early 1990s (aiming at a far stronger integration of the fiscal sector of European countries to counter the financial crises).16

The end of 2012 was the first time the United Kingdom Independence Party’s (UKIP) share in the polls grew since 2009. The party increased from a 3% national average from 2009 to 2011 to 5% at the end of 2012. UKIP gathered even more voter support in 2013, polling a remarkable 12% national average as Cameron made clear that he wants Britain to stay in a reformed EU.17 In January 2013, conservative MPs spread the rumor that the prime minister would campaign on a pro-EU position regardless of how a possible renegotiation between London and Brussels about a repatriation of powers turned out.18 The British prime minister responded by offering to schedule a referendum on such a renegotiated relationship for 2017 if the

Conservatives win the national election in 2015,19 (a proposal that was admittedly similar to his undelivered promise to hold a popular vote on the Lisbon Treaty after winning the 2010 election).

Two camps defined the Tory position on the EU at the end of 2013: the clear anti-EU faction centered around a few MP backbenchers, and a camp lead by Cameron that wanted Britain to stay in a reformed EU. The prime minister tried to cater to the anti-EU faction of his own party by accompanying his admittedly clear pro-EU standpoints with a plan to limit welfare benefits to migrants from Eastern Europe.20 At this point, UKIP climbed to unprecedented heights in polls for the next national election, and meanwhile fared at around 12-14% from the end of 2013 and is still polling at these levels in the weeks of the release of this study. In the election for the European parliament in May 2014, UKIP finished as the strongest British party, receiving 27.5% of the votes (an increase of 11% from 2009).

Germany

Since 1949, the German conservatives have been comprised of two parties that are deeply entwined and do not compete against each other in elections: the CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands) and its sister party the CSU (Christlich-Soziale Union). The CSU only stands for election in Bavaria. Despite a major dispute between the two parties in the 1980s, there are no CSU branches in any other political region of Germany, just as the CDU never stood for election in Bavaria. In the German Bundestag — the federal parliament of Germany — both parties belong to the same faction.

In the years 2010 and 2011, reports on the two established conservative parties in Germany convey

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19 The Daily Telegraph, October 9, 2013, page 20.
The positions of the CDU/CSU in 2010 and 2011 stem less from an openly anti-EU campaign of the party as such, but more from the outspoken claims of the CSU party secretary, Alexander Dobrindt, which were widely reported in the newspaper analyzed.

This certainly was a curious development for observers accustomed to the clear-cut pro-European stance of the CDU/CSU over the last decades. The parties eventually supported the highest financial commitment ever offered by post-war German taxpayers to another political entity when it supported all European rescue packages. Germany has backed up the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) with €211 billion (France: €158 billion) and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) with €190 billion (France: €143 billion), thus, accounting for around 27% of each.

The positions of the CDU/CSU in 2010 and 2011 stem less from an openly anti-EU campaign of the faction as such, but more from the outspoken claims of the CSU party secretary, Alexander Dobrindt, which were widely reported in the newspaper analyzed. The CDU/CSU as a whole did not necessarily express skepticism toward the current state of European affairs — as other conservative politicians failed to join ranks with Dobrindt — but rather did not openly contest his statements in public.

When the FAZ reported on February 5, 2010 the CSU’s insistence on Greek accountability for “cheating with their statistics” in order to enter the euro area, the political solution offered for Greece could only be fierce austerity measures supervised by European — not Greek — institutions. Financial support from Northern Europe was clearly rejected: “We must be very thorough in controlling what Greece is doing,” said Dobrindt. For reasons that can only be speculated on at this point, neither Chancellor Angela Merkel nor any other prominent CDU/CSU politician was reported to have stepped up to Dobrindt’s claims. Despite eventually committing to substantial financial aid for Southern Europe, no CDU/CSU politician has publicly made the case for European solidarity or the European project. Instead, the FAZ reports the CSU continuously criticizing financial support for Southern European economies. The only clear-cut pro-European CDU/CSU positions the FAZ search lists for 2010 stem from Merkel’s speech at the German Bundestag in May 2010 in which she defended the financial rescue package for Greece: “If the euro fails, Europe will fail.”

Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl — who is not considered a spokesman for the CDU/CSU’s position — commented on this situation in October 2010. He expressed his concern that the CDU/CSU could hardly be conceived as a pro-European party in 2010. The FAZ writes, “Kohl used this opportunity to admonish his own party: Following the debate about Greece and the euro crisis, I get the impression some politicians have forgotten how crucial a united Europe is for all of us.”


22 The Financial Times (FT) argues that during certain meetings in 2010 and 2011, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) felt blackmailed by U.S. and European partners. The FT reports that Western leaders were trying to push Merkel to significantly increase Germany’s financial commitment to the safeguarding the euro area without hardly any guarantees from Southern European economies in return. These experiences might have led Merkel to refrain from devoting substantial political energy to communicating Germany’s commitment to European solidarity. Financial Times Series “How the Euro was saved”: www.ft.com/indepth/how-euro-was-saved

Consequently, the CDU/CSU must remain a pro-European political force and must continue heading for European unity.\textsuperscript{24}

In saying this, the former chancellor might indeed have been referring to the debate in the media and not to actual policies. The CDU/CSU supported all rescue packages for the euro area with a clear majority, along with the Freie Demokratische Partei FDP, its coalition partner. Still, Kohl’s statement reflects the FAZ’s reports: the former chancellor does not see the CDU/CSU passionately vindicating European solidarity, even though its policies emphasize it.

In summer 2011, while Dobrindt pondered the end of European integration,\textsuperscript{25} the CDU/CSU discussed how to handle these hitherto unknown nationalistic tones within the party. “More Europe eventually translates into less national power,” Dobrindt wrote. “In doing so, he made the case against purported plans from Brussels to claim more competences from the nation states. Only CDU/CSU politicians from the European parliament rejected his stance. Angela Merkel (CDU), along with Horst Seehofer, chairperson of the CSU, remained quiet. Parts of the CSU interpret this as support for Dobrindt’s position. Other politicians from the CDU and CSU are instead concerned about eurosceptical populism within the party.”\textsuperscript{26}

Again, one can only speculate about the reasons for the rather unassertive conduct of the party leaders of the hitherto pro-European CDU/CSU.\textsuperscript{27}

Only in October 2011 — a year-and-a-half after the FAZ reported Dobrindt’s first eurosceptical positions — did reports appear in the FAZ of

\textsuperscript{24} Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 10, 2010, FAZ online.

\textsuperscript{25} Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 6, 2011, page 4.

\textsuperscript{26} Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, July 21, 2011, page 10.

\textsuperscript{27} See Footnote 22, page 12.

the CDU/CSU again making a clear case for further European integration. The final draft of a CDU party convention program in November 2011 called for further European integration on various levels, along with the strengthening of EU institutions: “Therefore, the CDU is considering the transfer of national competencies to European institutions within the framework of ‘subsidiarity’ as appropriate way to safeguard our interests.”\textsuperscript{28}

By end of 2011, the CDU/CSU had withdrawn all publicly visible Eurosceptic statements.

CDU/CSU’s retreat from their once-prominent skepticism toward the state of European affairs opened an electoral niche for a right-populist contender running on a eurosceptical platform. This was the perfect springboard for the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). The political space for its program opened in the winter of 2011/2012, with the party itself forming in February 2013.

From 2013, the AfD has been running on a party platform that addresses concerns very similar to those voiced by Alexander Dobrindt (CSU) two years before. His statements seem — for lack of other publicly visible CDU/CSU statements at that time — to have framed public perception of the CDU/CSU’s position on European matters in 2010-11. Like Dobrindt, the AfD is not campaigning against the EU or European integration per se, but against Germany’s financial commitments over the past few years and the transfer of national powers to European institutions.

The AfD has been quite successful: The party has been polling at around 5-7% nationally since autumn 2013, and received 7.1% in the European Parliament election of May 2014. This is the very first time since the early 1990s that another conservative party besides the CDU/CSU could count on more than one or two percent of the vote.

\textsuperscript{28} Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 5, 2011, page 2.
The Netherlands

The Dutch case differs from the British and German examples for two crucial reasons:

1. The results of the European election in May 2014 in the Netherlands are the only ones in which an established right-populist party lost significantly. Geert Wilders’ Partij voor de Vrijheid PVV received 13.3%, and thus lost nearly 4 percentage points from results it achieved in the 2009 election for the European Parliament. The established Dutch moderate political forces have thus been far more successful in blocking right-populist parties’ advances than their counterparts in the U.K. or Germany. The only exception to this was the second half of 2010, wherein the PVV rose substantially in the polls.

2. The fluidity of the Dutch political party scene led to a shift in the most important mid-right party in the Netherlands in 2010. The moderate CDA (Christen Democratisch Appèl) won the national election in 2006 with 26.5% of the vote (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD: 14.7%) and led the national coalition with Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) until 2010. The right-liberal VVD took the lead among Dutch mid-right parties in the election in June 2010, however, winning 20.5% of the vote (CDA: 13.6%). Since then, the VVD has governed the country as the strongest mid-right party, led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte (VVD), and actually increased its vote share further in the election in 2012, to 26.6% (CDA: 8.5%).

In March 2010, the CDA campaigned on very tight measures of the economics of Southern Europe in preparation for the national election in the Netherlands in June, saying that Greece should fix its financial problems itself without any support from Northern Europe. Minister of Finance Jan Kees de Jager (CDA) said that the Greeks had to sort out their financial problems on their own and should ask the International Monetary Fund for help. Balkenende clearly supported this government line. The VVD campaigned on a very similar eurosceptical position; the party wanted to reduce Dutch financial contributions to the EU budget by half and emphasized that in the eyes of the VVD, every EU member state ought to lose its national sovereignty if violating the criteria of the EU financial stability package. “Countries that do not comply to [sic] these rules have to give up their national sovereignty,” said the Member of Parliament from the VVD, Frans Weekers, very openly.

After the election of 2010, both parties struggled to keep their eurosceptical promises. In December 2010, both parties agreed to financial support for Ireland; in February 2011, the moderate CDA supported a permanent EU stability mechanism to which all EU member states would have to adhere and rejected any limitations to the freedom of movement within the European Union. Curiously, this remarkable shift of the CDA led to a 5% increase of voter support for the right-populist PVV in the second half of 2010 (Figure 6 and 9).

The PVV has dropped remarkably in voter support since. Now the right-liberal VVD governs the country, having campaigned on very clear-cut positions. In stark contrast to the CDA, the VVD did not substantially alter its eurosceptical profile, which it has been campaigning on since spring 2010. In February 2011, the Minister of Social Affairs, Henk Kamp (VVD), proposed to force

34 NRC Handelsblad, February 18, 2011, page 11.
35 NRC Handelsblad, April 23, 2011, NRC online.
unemployed workers from Eastern Europe back to their home countries; in April, the government tried to persuade all EU member states to alter their immigration- and asylum-regimes according to the very strict Dutch regulations. As the September 2012 national elections approached, the PVV set up a “help-line” where Dutch voters could call in order to complain about migrants from Eastern Europe. Even though the prime minister and his VVD were urged to comment various times, Rutte refused to make a statement on the matter throughout 2012. Instead, the VVD continued to campaign on very sober positions. In May 2012, a VVD Member of Parliament, Klaas Dijkhoff, explained that the EU should be seen as an administrative entity, rather than either as an evil machine or as a dream come true. In a meeting with Merkel, Rutte made clear that he was not supporting her ideas of “more Europe.” Instead, he called for the repatriation of powers to the national state. In the same week, he rejected any further financial aid for Greece: “Rutte said he firmly stands against any relaxations of the conditions Greece needs to fulfill in order to receive financial aid.” In a TV debate in August 2012, VVD politicians were close to positions of right-populist PVV politicians, warning about the negative effects that EU regulations could potentially have on the Dutch economy and pointing out that migrants from Eastern Europe could endanger the social peace in the Netherlands.

With these positions, expressed during a period of very high visibility of European issues in the political discourse, Rutte’s right-liberal VVD even managed to increase its vote share to 26.6% in the national election in September 2012. This marked the highest result ever reached by the VVD in Dutch history. In turn, the right-populist PVV lost one-third of its votes — 5.3% — in comparison to the election in 2010, ending up with 10.1%

Since winter 2012-13, the PVV did not benefit from the continuing relevance of European affairs, while Mark Rutte’s right-liberal VVD kept its eurosceptical profile.
an extremely low voter turnout of 37% (national election 2012: 74.6%).
Comparative Results: Measuring Debates on Europe

As the previous chapter has shown, the major political statements — highlighted by the referenced newspapers of record — reflect actual policymaking to a rather limited extent, but effectively summarize how voters have most likely perceived the discourse. In order to scrutinize whether European voters were exposed to the same perceptions of European affairs, the next chapter will compare the newspaper reports across national borders. The comparative data shows how country-dependent the degree and intensity of debates on European issues amongst established parties are as reflected in the selected media. Even though the established, moderate parties in all countries under scrutiny seem to be exposed to the same European topics, they talk about them very differently. Figure 1 shows how often the respective newspapers of record report about party statements on European affairs.47

Comparing these salience values, three findings appear worth highlighting. Firstly, after the European election in summer 2009, European affairs — as captured by the coding scheme in national newspapers of record — were hardly a political issue until the second half of 2011, well into the sovereign debt crisis, which broke in 2010. Secondly, despite the fact that both Sweden and the U.K. are situated on the European periphery, Swedish parties hardly ever talk about European issues and British parties score by far the highest marks for their focus on Europe. No other European parties debated Europe so often and so passionately over the last five years as those in the U.K. Conversely, and finally, despite the fact that both Germany and the Netherlands are at the center of the European Union, only the second half of 2011 and 2014 show high salience values for Germany, while European issues have been highly contested in the Netherlands nearly constantly during the last few years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Reported Salience of EU Issues Amongst Established Political Parties in Newspapers of Record

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author

47 This graph uses the number of political statements from 2004-14 as point of reference and thus allows an embedding of the values from 2009-14 from a broader perspective.
These results may be especially surprising for Germany, where an intense debate on the euro area and the need and costs for financial rescue packages played a strong role in the domestic debate since early 2010. Coverage of the FAZ, however, is comparatively low, which could be explained by the fact that the search focused on political statements appearing in prominent positions within the respective national newspapers. Thus, it might be that the searches omitted certain topics that were of concern for German policymakers at that time.\(^48\)

Still, this study is only tangentially concerned with policy debates; the real focus is how these debates have affected the voters. And here, comparing the media data with when and how German voters were concerned about European issues, the study’s data seem to function very well as snapshots of the national discourse: the German Politbarometer (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen) finds that German voters started to worry substantially about European issues only in the second half of 2011. This matches the salience data in Figure 1 perfectly. Since then, as the salience decreases, the concerns of the German voters do as well. The election campaign for the European Parliament in May 2014 seems not to have altered this trend. Still, nearly 10% of German voters were still very concerned about the current state of European affairs in the first half of 2014 (Figure 2). Thus, we find a very high correlation between newspaper reports on political statements regarding European affairs and the concerns of German voters.

While the database analysis found too few claims to describe Swedish debates validly, the British

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\(^48\) Please see the Annex: “Methods and Data” for further details on the data gathering.
and the German cases illustrate how the media reports established Conservatives’ (The Tories and the CDU/CSU) initial embrace of a skeptical tone toward the current state of European affairs, and their subsequent move to a more pro-European position. The positional changes of the Tories and the CDU/CSU reported in the newspapers were followed by vote gains for the right-populist UKIP and the AfD. This is the first time since the early 1990s that conservative parties aside from the CDU/CSU won more than a few percentage points of support in Germany — as the German Republikaner (REP) did over the last years.

Figures 3 and 4 show the reports of political statements in newspapers of record in the U.K. and Germany and the polling data for UKIP and AfD. The black line shows the party position of the conservative parties (Tories and CDU/CSU) as reflected in the newspaper reporting, while the blue bars mark the polling of the respective right-populist parties at the national level. The red lines indicate the position of the social democratic parties (Labour and SPD) and the yellow lines track the position of the liberal parties (Liberals and FDP). While The Daily Telegraph reported enough political statements to enable an assessment of the position of the British Liberals in the first half of 2010, the FAZ only listed enough statements to define the FDP position validly in the first half of 2011. As outlined previously and explained in detail in the methodology chapter, the more positive a position of a party (on a scale of 0-10), the more pro-European; in contrast, the more negative a party position (0 to -10), the more the party is calling for renationalization.

The purely descriptive data shows that the electoral advances of the right-populist parties in both countries were preceded by a reported positional shift of the British Tories and the German CDU/CSU.

Figure 3: Debating Europe in the U.K. and the Polling of UKIP

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author and Ipsos MORI (polling UKIP), August 2014
CSU. It seems that when the Conservatives publicly shift position to a more pro-European position (here, moving upwards), the right-populist parties increase its voter support. This assumption is supported by the fact that neither the stable position of the German Social Democrats (SPD) nor the zigzagging of British Labor (red lines) seem to affect either UKIP’s or AfD’s public support. The same holds for the German and the British Liberals (yellow lines); their reported positions seem irrelevant in this respect.

The positional shifts of the British and German parties appear to have opened an electoral niche for their right-populist contenders. In turn, the Dutch parties seem to have kept the PVV at bay in sticking with their eurosceptical campaigns since 2011. The only time Geert Wilders gathered more public support than in 2009 (before European topics were discussed in depth in the Netherlands) was the second half of 2010. Exactly at this point in time, the then-governing moderate Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA — yellow lines) was noticeably retreating from its eurosceptical positions from the preceding months. Beginning in 2011, the right-liberal VVD (black lines) campaigned with a eurosceptical tone, one it only moderately altered as elections in 2014 approached (Figure 5). Thus the electoral niche for the PVV and its anti-EU campaigns seems to have been closed. After 2011, the PVV could never gather more voter support than in 2009. In fact, it lost substantially in the parliamentary election of 2012 (-5.3 percentage points in comparison to 2010) and the election for the European Parliament in 2014 (-3.5 percentage points in comparison to 2009).

As seen in the British and German debates, the zigzagging of the Social Democratic party of the Netherlands (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA — red lines) seem not to have a clear effect on the public support of the right-populist PVV.

**Figure 4: Debating Europe in Germany and the Polling of the AfD**

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author and Politbarometer (Polling AfD/REP), August 2014
Figure 5: Debating Europe in the Netherlands and the Polling of the PVV

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study's author and Politbarometer (Polling AfD/REP), August 2014

The Unstoppable Far Right?
While these graphics offer a descriptive take on how political debates on European affairs might have affected the chances of right-populist parties, statistical analysis can test whether we are indeed observing a political mechanism here. In order to rule out the possibility that factors other than established political parties’ reported positions — or pure chance — account for variation with right-populist parties’ public support, the data was analyzed under the auspices of a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).

This program checks whether a combination of various conditions is necessary and/or sufficient for the varying polling figures of right-populist parties in the years under examination (Ragin 2008; Schneider and Wagemann 2010; Wagemann and Schneider 2010; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). Comparative studies often refer to the cultural and economic threats perceived by European voters as prime explanations for right-populist parties’ electoral advances (Lucassen and Lubbers 2011). Consequently, this study incorporates survey data measuring perceived economic and cultural threats in addition to the scores already described on the salience of European questions and party positions concerning them.

In doing so, the QCA program dissects which concerns European voters had and which forms of debates on Europe they were exposed to from 2010-14. The program then calculates which factors were present in the periods in which right-populist parties rose and fell in voter support. Thus, the software checks whether the rise and fall of right-populist parties’ voter support follows similar, and thus generalizable, patterns across all countries. For instance, do right-populist parties always drop if the population is very concerned about economics, or rise if moderate, established parties discuss European matters openly?49

The QCA results offer a very clear-cut and straight-forward narrative. They show one pivotal combination of sufficient and necessary conditions: right-populist parties rise if European topics are debated in depth and the mid-right parties have abandoned rather eurosceptical positions to adopt more pro-European stances.50

In order to illustrate this political mechanism further, a detailed case study of the English Tories’ shift away from their 2010-11 anti-EU stances will illustrate this theorized causality that is reinforced by the statistical analysis.

Though this might have passed unnoticed for observers from the continent, the Tories dropped a large part of their eurosceptical rhetoric in 2012, and changed position significantly in the first half of 2013. This does not imply that the Tories were a pro-European party in 2013; they were merely campaigning on far more pro-European positions than in the years before. For instance, while Cameron said in a widely publicized statement in 2010 “I am a euroskeptic!” he announced in 2012 that he personally thinks Britain should stay in the EU. In addition, while up until 2011 conservative politicians uttered hardly any pro-European sentiment, prominent members of the cabinet — like conservative Europe Minister Lidington — did so from 2012 onwards.

This positional shift was strongest in the first half of 2013. Cameron repeatedly made clear that he wants Britain to stay in a reformed EU, and various Tory politicians now support the prime minister in this stance. This corresponds with the first

49 For a detailed description of how the QCA software operates and is used, please check the method chapter.

50 The QCA masterfile and the values of coverage and consistency are listed in the method chapter.
The surge in UKIP’s voter support from 2012 to 2013 goes hand-in-hand with the reported positional shift of the Tories over the very same time period.

The German case offers a comparable though slightly different picture. Though it may be surprising for German readers, the profile of the CDU/CSU as reflected in newspapers of record was a rather negative one as measured by the techniques of this study. The CDU/CSU’s profile, however, changed remarkably at the end of 2011, when its campaigning on a very pro-European platform started to be reflected in the media data. In 2010, CSU General Secretary Dobrindt’s statements were almost the only views on Europe taken into account in prominent positions by the FAZ. Given the very few statements of CDU politicians, Dobrindt’s claims largely defined the CDU/CSU’s position in 2010-11. Based on FAZ reports, the CDU/CSU thus communicated the message that a definite end of European integration might have been reached, and that Germany would not guarantee any credit lines for the periphery of the euro area. These statements of course did not reflect the policy the German government prepared during this period and implemented over the years to come. Consequently, the CDU/CSU communicated a very different message to the German voters in the second half of 2011. Germany would live up to its European responsibility, playing the most substantial role in the shared management of the sovereign debt crisis and continuing to be the motor of European integration.

Figure 6: The Reported Positional Shift of the British Tories and the Rise of UKIP’s Electoral Support

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author and Ipsos MORI (polling UKIP), August 2014
This clear positional shift in political statements in newspapers of record does not imply that the CDU/CSU’s positions in 2010 were anti-EU or as eurosceptical as the position of the British Tories. Instead, the data reflects the fact that the reported CDU/CSU position of 2010 differs remarkably from the positions embraced since 2011. Based on FAZ reports, the party is far more pro-European, and far less eurosceptical from 2011 onwards than it was in 2010. Again, this does not imply that the CDU/CSU was campaigning against Europe in 2010, but rather that the party clearly criticized the current state of European affairs as they stood and has dropped this program since.

Similar to the U.K., this reported positional shift correlates with the rise of a right-populist contender — the German AfD. Unlike in the U.K., the reported positional shift of the CDU/CSU from 2010-11 did not automatically result in a surge of voter support for the AfD. The reason is simple: the AfD was only founded in February 2013. In 2012 — the time during which the FAZ reported the ebb of CDU/CSU’s eurosceptical platform — there was no widely known democratic eurosceptical party. When the AfD stood for election in 2013, it was German voters’ first chance to indicate their preferences for the AfD’s program.

As the data illustrates (Figure 7), the AfD has slowly but consistently risen in voter support since its foundation in 2013. It shows — for the very first time since the early 1990s — that another conservative party aside from the CDU/CSU can attract more than 1 or 2% of the vote in Germany (as Die Republikaner (REP) usually do in national polls). The AfD’s support is still fairly low at around 5-7%, but the party’s potential should not be underestimated: the party was founded in February 2013, and almost entered the Bundestag following the federal election in September 2013, just seven months later. (The AfD received 4.7%.) Since then,
However, the party gathered 7.1% of the vote for the European parliament in May 2014, and polled between 5 to 7% on the national level in summer 2014.

The cases of the U.K. and Germany illustrate how the reporting of a strategic shift on the part of the established conservative party paved the way for a surge of right-populist support. In turn, the Dutch case shows how publicized adherence to a euro-sceptical position by established parties of the mid-right spectrum closes the electoral niche for a right-populist contender. Since 2009, Geert Wilders’ PVV has struggled to increase its vote share, and in fact only in the second half of 2010 did Dutch right-populists gather more voter support than in the year 2009. This was the only period during which an established mid-right Dutch party (here the moderate CDA), which was governing the Netherlands at that time, was reported to alter its position to a clearly more pro-European profile. Since then, the right-liberal VVD has been polling as the strongest established mid-right party in the Netherlands. The VVD, which has been governing the Netherlands since 2010, hardly altered its euro-sceptical position on European affairs over the last four years — at least not based on media reports. If a positional shift was reported, it never led the VVDs’ position to be more pro-European than in the election campaign of 2010.

The fact that Dutch voters find a consistent euro-sceptical profile within an established, moderate party — the right-liberal VVD — has a strong negative effect on the electoral fortunes of the PVV. The PVV has hardly been able rise in public support since 2009 (the only exception being the second half 2010), and, in fact, is losing voters’ support (Figure 8). It also has lost pivotal elections. The Dutch right-populists went down 5.3 percentage points in the national election in 2012, hitting 10.1% in total, and suffered their next defeat when they lost 3.5 percentage points in the election for the European parliament in May 2014 to win only 13.3%. The reports of a steady euro-sceptical

Figure 8: The Reported Steadiness of the Dutch VVD and PVV’s Electoral Struggle

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author and peil.nl (Polling PVV), August 2014
position of the governing VVD correlates with these periods during which the Dutch right-populists dropped in voter support.

These results from the U.K., Germany, and the Netherlands taken together lead to the following conclusions. The mere introduction of a eurosceptical position by established mid-right parties (Tories, CDU/CSU, VVD) alone has no impact on the fortunes of the electoral advances of right-populist parties. The “quality” or the topics of this eurosceptical position likewise do not affect right-populist parties’ advances. Instead, the crucial mechanism enabling vote gains of right-populist parties while European topics are discussed seems to be that this very position is withdrawn in a publicly visible way.

The electoral niche for a right-populist party opens when an established, moderate political actor has legitimized its program of criticizing the state of European affairs beforehand. How and when — under the auspices of which topics, rhetoric and issues, and at what point in time — the mid-right parties have criticized European affairs thus presupposes how and when right-populist parties can rally for their cause of renationalization. This mechanism is nicely illustrated with the British and German cases; they illustrate why the UKIP and the AfD took off in the polls in the years 2012-13 after the Tories and the CDU/CSU dropped their — admittedly very different — eurosceptical positions. The reason why the reported positional of the CDU/CSU did not result in immediate vote gains of the AfD — while the positional change of the Tories almost immediately lead to vote gains for UKIP — can be explained by the fact that Germany was lacking a publicly visible right-populist party until the AfD was founded in February 2013.

In turn, the Dutch case shows how the introduction of a eurosceptical position by an established party — the VVD — even led to vote losses for the right-populist PVV. Key in this respect is that the Dutch VVD not only introduced these positions, but stuck with them for years and never took a more pro-European position than the ones they had introduced themselves in 2010. This strategy seems to be one of the prime causes leading to the continuous decline in voter support for the PVV, despite a rather high penetration of European issues in the Dutch debate.

Following this logic, and especially contrasting the European debates in the U.K. and Germany with that in the Netherlands, one is left with a clear message: If established mid-right parties have decided to present a eurosceptical program to their electoral constituency, the mid-right parties ought to keep this program in salient European debates if they do not want right-populist parties to profit. (Figure 9).

As outlined with the descriptive findings and supported by the QCA-analysis, the reported positional of the Social Democrats and the Liberals do not seem to directly affect right-populist parties. Still, as comparative studies have shown, mid-right parties are of course inclined to follow the positions of parties that are expected to win majorities at the ballot (Schumacher, De Vries et al. 2013). Thus, the positions of other parties on European issues can have an indirect effect on the electoral fortunes of right-populist parties, if the positions of the Social Democrats and Liberals affect the established mid-right parties’ positions. For instance, if the mid-right parties are inclined to follow the clearly pro-European positions of a very successful social democratic or liberal party, this will hamper the mid-right party’s chance to oust a right-populist contender. In turn, if the Social Democrats and/or the Liberals campaign on ambivalent or even eurosceptical positions, the incentives for the mid-

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51 As explained, a detailed description of the Swedish debate was not feasible due to too few political statements on European matters found.
right party to open a programmatic niche for a right-populist contender are lower.

The reported positional as such of the Tories and the CDU/CSU to more pro-European positions prepared the electoral playing field for the right-populist UKIP and AfD. The Dutch VVD stayed true to its eurosceptical positions throughout all debates since the year 2011, which would seem to be the main reason why the PVV has faced a series of electoral losses over the past few years. Again, this does not imply that the topics or positions of the British, German and Dutch mid-right parties were similar. Instead, the leap between publicly visible positions of conservative politicians in the Netherlands from 2010 to 2014 is very small (if not absent), while it is substantial in the U.K. and Germany. This triggered inroads benefitting right-populist parties.

Consequently, the best option for moderate, established political forces to prevent eurosceptical right-populist parties from gaining votes seems to be to only campaign on clear-cut pro-European positions in the first place.

In doing so, anti-EU arguments are deprived of

The reported positional of the Social Democrats and the Liberals do not seem to directly affect right-populist parties.

Figure 9: Comparing the Reported Party Positions of mid-right Parties with the Electoral Advances of Right-Populist Parties in Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands

Source: Media data, retrieved by the study’s author and various polling institutes, August 2014
political legitimacy and do not thrive among the electorate.

This political mechanism is nicely illustrated by the way the CDU/CSU could have been the motor for European integration for decades without ever facing a serious threat by an anti-EU party until the recent rise of the AfD. The CDU/CSU devoted substantial political energy to permanently communicating a very clear pro-European to its electorate and could rely on newspapers of record to report these pro-European CDU/CSU positions regularly. In doing so, the most conservative party in Germany could convince its electorate of an unquestioned course of further European integration. Granted, this strategy was departing from the rationale of the first chancellor in post-war Germany, Konrad Adenauer (CDU), to relegate Germany on the international and European political landscape. However, this conscious political decision framed the publicly visible pro-European stance of the CDU/CSU from 1949 until 2009 and deprived anti-EU messages in Germany of political legitimacy.

This mechanism came to a halt in 2010, however. At this point, the CDU/CSU did not devote enough political energy to publicly countering the statements of the CSU in 2010-11. Respectively, the German newspaper of record did not report on these pro-European positions. Consequently, the CDU/CSU was seen as a party sceptical toward the current state of European affairs for two years. As the CDU/CSU returned to its clear-cut pro-European position end of 2011, it opened a niche for the right-populist AfD. Thus, the option of campaigning on clear-cut pro-European positions does not lead to vote loses for right-populist parties that have already gathered substantial voter support. Still, this strategy will most likely continue to prove highly successful in the political contexts of Ireland, Luxembourg, and Spain. Here, right-populist parties are still absent as substantial political actors on the national level, and need to legitimize their anti-EU arguments through established, moderate parties first.

In Ireland, Luxembourg, and Spain right-populist parties still need to legitimize their anti-EU arguments through established, moderate parties first.
The study finds that how established political parties communicate European affairs to the public and how this is reflected in the media is an important factor in explaining the electoral advances of right-populist parties. The following section assesses three options for pro-European politicians in all European countries in which right populist parties have already gathered substantial voter support.

**Option 1: A Pro-European Pyrrhic Victory**

The first option for policymakers is to return to campaigning on clear-cut pro-European positions (assuming that they embraced a rather euro sceptical profile in the first place). This will benefit right-populist parties, as they will then be alone in portraying themselves as a) the defenders of alleged national interests, and b) the only parties that remain true to their promises. If the mid-right parties do not reclaim the eurosceptical positions that they introduced in the first place, they create opportunities for the right-populist winning formula to thrive: the right-populists can publicize an agenda of neo-nationalism against the pro-European elite, a group that will be accused of forsaking its promises and selling out the “nation’s interest.”

While this option may seem to be beneficial for the European project in the short term as it might create political dynamics toward European integration, national political parties would then breed very successful right-populist contenders. Given how successfully right-populist parties already lead established, moderate parties to accept their very tight immigration and integration policies, it is to be expected that moderate political actors will buy into right-populists’ anti-EU rhetoric sooner or later in an attempt to regain lost voters. Thus, this would be a pyrrhic victory for pro-European parties in the medium and long haul. The current debates in France and the Netherlands seem witness to this political mechanism.

**Option 2: One Step Back in Order to Dare a Substantial Leap Forward in the Future**

The second option for policymakers is to reclaim the positions that criticized the state of European affairs as they were originally introduced. This would imply holding an opt-out referendum in the U.K. to hold the promise of a citizens’ vote – which yet needs to be won – and communicating limited openness for conditional financial solidarity for Southern European countries to the German electorate. In turn, the Dutch mid-right parties would maintain their very sober rhetoric on European affairs. These campaigning strategies will most likely reduce voter support for right-populist parties in the countries under scrutiny. Mid-right parties with this agenda in European affairs would work against both aspects of the right-populist winning formula: they would defend the alleged cultural core of the nation (which they defined as under siege in the first place) and would stick to their promises (and in turn counter the argument of the “corrupt, aloof political elite”).

Whether this strategy would directly translate into actual policies is a different question. As emphasized throughout this paper, it is the perceptions of the electorate that matter in this respect. Actual policies have a far less significant impact on these political mechanisms. Still, sticking with the countries under scrutiny, further support for austerity measures in Southern Europe from British, Dutch, and German politicians will affect Spain and Greece, regardless of the actual policies demanded from them. Thus, the short-term repercussions for European integration are obvious.

The short-term weakening of right-populist parties might, however, enable a substantial leap toward European integration in the medium and long
term. Freed of the concern that they might lose conservative voters to a right-populist contender after having ousted them successfully, established moderate parties could be the motor of European integration again.

**Option 3: Communicating European Integration as Protecting the National Interest**

The third option blends the two above. As underscored, it is the perceptions of the communication of European affairs by established parties that matter, the actual policies much less. Policymakers thus have the option to frame calls for further European integration in terms of defense of the national interest. In doing so, they could weaken right-populist parties while propelling the European project forward.

This would be by far the most complicated strategy. The British Conservatives could communicate European integration as the best way to defend the City of London and protect British sovereignty. The Dutch and German mid-right parties in turn could portray a leap forward in the integration of European fiscal and economic policies as the very best way to safeguard their taxpayers’ savings. In order for this strategy to “work,” far more political energy would be needed from Europe’s mid-right parties than they have devoted to the European project in recent years. This political energy should to be used for conscious and constant political explanations and argumentations to publicly revise previously introduced eurosceptical positions and to “reframe” them as a blending of national and European interests instead.

In addition, this reclaiming and reframing would require various “symbolic victories” the respective national mid-right parties could present to their conservative electorate. For instance, the British Conservatives need to be able to communicate how they “withstand the evil bureaucracy in Brussels” (e.g. as they did in trying to resist Jean Claude Juncker from becoming the first president of the European Commission to be elected directly by the people.)

In turn, the Dutch and German politicians would need to communicate to their national electorates that Northern European approaches to handling the sovereign debt crisis and encouraging transitions in Europe’s South have proven successful and will be pursued further.

In the same vein, the communication of defending the alleged national interest in European matters can also be achieved under the auspices of campaigns focusing on the domestic arena. For instance, the Tories could communicate the implementation of national laws safeguarding the British financial sector. In turn, the Dutch and German parties could focus on guarantees protecting the savings of Northern European taxpayers. Eventually, voters sympathizing with right-populist parties might conceive of their savings as being endangered by the substantial financial commitments of their governments to the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism.

If the mid-right parties succeeded in framing the respective national debates on European issues in such a light, substantial European integration could be implemented in parallel without benefitting right-populist parties. If the mid-right parties fail in this undertaking, this would offer the perfect blueprint for right-populist parties to portray established political players as selling out the national interest and as breaking their promises — the infamous right-populist winning formula.
Data Collection: Political Claims as Reported in Newspapers of Record

This study relies on one conservative newspaper of record as a data source for each country: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for Germany, NRC Handelsblad for the Netherlands, Svenska Dagbladet for Sweden, and The Daily Telegraph for the U.K. Articles were searched using a keyword search in the electronic databases Atekst, FAZ Archiv, and Lexis Nexis, which function as online archives of the newspapers. Articles that were selected were searched for political claims on European positions and coded according to a scheme enabling the comparability of statements across party families and countries.

This approach stems from research trying to assess how the salience and positions devoted to political topics influence voting behavior. These studies have, to date, relied on two data sources: the Comparative Party Manifesto Program (CMP) and data obtained via media analysis before pivotal federal election campaigns (e.g. Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008). Both data sources are rather poorly suited to explaining how party-positioning affects the voter though. The CMP data (used for e.g. by Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008; Alonso and Claro da Fonseca 2011) is based on the evaluation of party programs. As it relies on party manifesto publications, however, it is less useful when campaign diverge substantially from official platforms. Therefore, the validity of the data is rather low, if not absent. This leads Marc Helbling and Anke Tresch to conclude that instead of relying on CMP-data, party-voter linkages are best studied with information on the party discourse stemming from media data (Helbling and Tresch 2011, 181).

Studies working with media data limit themselves to one newspaper of record because comparative studies have shown that neither the salience nor the reported party positions (save the evaluation of editors) vary significantly between various newspapers of record — or even tabloids (Koopmans, Statham et al. 2005, 261/2). A search comparing right-liberal (see below) and left-liberal newspapers in the countries under scrutiny showed a correlation of above 0.75 for the search outcomes. Thus, various national newspapers report strikingly similar news — at least in terms of salience, not content or evaluation — when reporting on European affairs. Consequently, data derived from one newspaper of record can function as a proxy, mirroring party positions on EU-related issues and the salience of issues in party discourse, as long as only claims of politicians themselves are listed and coded.

This study is concerned with how the established, moderate parties’ communication of European matters can affect voters’ intention to vote for a right-populist party. Therefore, articles were selected in which political statements on these matters are expected. The headlines and the first paragraphs were searched for a combination of EU* and europ* plus the known names and abbreviations of the three most important parties in each country. The term “euro” was consciously not added to the key word search, as this could bias the outcome search between member states of the euro area (Germany and the Netherlands) and England and Sweden. It was further expected that an article concerned with the European project as a whole would refer to either EU* or europ* in its paragraph as well (see Table 3).

To mirror the discourse as closely as possible, this study obtains the salience and the position

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A keyword search for the German case adding the term “euro” showed a correlation of the results of 0.73. Thus, the trade-off to not include “euro” in the search engine in order to ensure a high comparability of the results across countries does not affect the reliability and validity of the data.
of the three most influential parties in each country: the mid-right parties (CDU/CSU, VVD, M, and Tories), the social democrats (SPD, PvdA, SAP, and Labour), and the liberals (even though here national particularities prevent speaking of a “liberal party family”; FDP, CDA, FP, and Liberals). While it is clear that the German FDP might not be the third ranking party in the polls between 2009 and 2014, the party was a pivotal actor in the foreign policy of Germany at that time since its chairperson led the Foreign Ministry until the end of 2013. Thus, the FDP — and not the Greens, who did better in the polls at the time — are considered the third most important party regarding European matters in Germany.

Claims from these articles were coded using the method of “core sentences”. It is an inductive approach that captures the relationship between the political actor and a political issue that appears in the newspaper article (also used by Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008). Each statement is reduced to its core structure, namely the subject (political actor), the object (political issue), and the evaluation. The evaluation uses a five-point scale, ranging from -10 (clearly europhobe) to +10 (clearly europhile). If an understated evaluation is given, -5 and +5 are given e.g. if she/he considers support, or support under certain circumstances. Zero (0) is set for an ambivalent position — see codebook (Table 4) and examples (Table 5) below; this coding technique is close to approaches used in media analysis (Helbling 2012).

This ensures a high comparability and reliability of the data, but has some noteworthy consequences. It implies that statements from politicians over other politicians’ statements are omitted as much as evaluations’ of newspapers editors, as well as statements that cannot be directly linked to a party affiliation. For instance, the very few articles in which a Dutch “Kamerlid” (member of the Parliament) is referred to without the name of a party are left out, as well as the very few articles where German Chancellor Merkel is not referred to as a CDU politician, and so forth.

It is crucial to stress that how a political statement is coded is based on how this statement refers to the status quo of European affairs. If, for instance, a Dutch politician makes a case for the gulden, this statement gets a -10 since it indicates that the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Search-Strings for Online Search Engines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>German Case, FAZ Archiv</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutch Case, Lexis Nexis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Swedish Case, Atekst</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Case, Lexis Nexi</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Netherlands must drop out of the euro area. If a British politician instead makes the case for the pound, this statement is coded with 0 because this it is basically a reaffirmation of the status quo. Conversely, if a German politician supports the euro, this is a 0, while a Swedish politician would get a +10 since Sweden is still using the krona, and so forth.

This is an elegant way to mirror the national debates in their own right and to show developments within the national discursive realm instead of working with a rather static assessment. Otherwise, the high level of European integration in the Netherlands and Germany would automatically lead to a very pro-European discourse in comparison to England and Sweden.

### Table 4: Codebook of Political Claim Analysis
(Needs to be Read Contingent on the National Level of European Integration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clearly europhobe (-10)</th>
<th>Nuanced europhobe (-5)</th>
<th>Ambivalent (0)</th>
<th>Nuanced europhile (+5)</th>
<th>Clearly europhile (+10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enlargement</strong></td>
<td>Party rejects enlargement and means pertaining to it</td>
<td>Party rejects enlargement and means pertaining to it — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party neither supports, nor rejects enlargement</td>
<td>Party supports enlargement and means pertaining to it — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party supports enlargement and means pertaining to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration Supranational</strong></td>
<td>Party rejects an increase of influence of EU institutions and means pertaining to them</td>
<td>Party rejects an increase of influence of EU institutions and means pertaining to them — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party neither supports nor rejects an increase of influence of EU institutions and means pertaining to them</td>
<td>Party supports an increase of influence of EU institutions and means pertaining to them — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party supports an increase of influence of EU institutions and means pertaining to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration Intergovernmental (Relationships to other states)</strong></td>
<td>Party rejects further cooperation with and stronger support for EU countries and means pertaining to them</td>
<td>Party rejects further cooperation with and stronger support for EU countries and means pertaining to them — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party neither supports nor rejects any further cooperation with and stronger support for EU countries and means pertaining to them</td>
<td>Party supports further cooperation with and stronger support for EU countries and means pertaining to them — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party supports further cooperation with and stronger support for EU countries and means pertaining to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Euro Crisis</strong></td>
<td>Party conceives ongoing struggle as responsibility of each nation separately and not as a supranational issue</td>
<td>Party conceives ongoing struggle as responsibility of each nation separately and not as a supranational issue — save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party neither conceives ongoing struggle as responsibility of each nation separately, nor as supranational issue</td>
<td>Party conceives ongoing struggle as supranational issue, save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party conceives ongoing struggle as supranational issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This, though, would hardly show how the discourse developed within the given national context.

Consequently, the respective party position consists of the average of combined individual claims in a period scrutinized. Here a question of validity arises: how many claims are necessary to validly define the party position for each period under scrutiny? The adequate sample size can be determined using the split-half method (Krippendorff 2004, 124). Applying this technique to the countries under examination and relying on the coding methods previously outlined, around 20 claims per scrutinized period appear necessary. Thus, the party position in all periods with fewer than around 20 observable claims would be coded according to the last period with more than around 20 claims.

For example, if during the second half of 2012 the CDU/CSU in Germany only produces six claims, while the first half of 2012 witnesses 42, the score of the first semester will be used for the second semester 2012 as well. This is for both methodological and logical reasons: first, because a valid assessment of a party position is not possible for periods with fewer than around 20 claims, and second, if a party wants to visibly change its public position, it will consciously make more claims on the issue so that voters will hear and understand the position change.

The salience score is calculated as follows: whether the European topic is salient in the party discourse can only be evaluated based on comparison with previous national debates in the same national newspapers, not across countries or newspapers. For instance, it seems reasonable that the Svenska Dagbladet uses a different layout or distribution of topics than the Dutch NRC Handelsblad. Thus, searches of these two newspapers with the same keywords would most likely result in different outcomes. These differences are, however, based on different newspapers styles, but would directly translate into different salience scores if this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 2009</td>
<td>Tories</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Cameron and most Conservatives are opposed to the Lisbon treaty, which they say would reduce British sovereignty.</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 2009</td>
<td>Tories</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Cameron and most Conservatives are opposed to the Lisbon treaty, which they say would reduce British sovereignty.</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29, 2010</td>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>Euro area</td>
<td>The Liberal Nick Clegg believes Britain should join the euro.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13, 2014</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Like Labour, Cameron wants to stay in the EU, even if some members of the Cabinet have indicated that they would prefer to leave.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13, 2014</td>
<td>Tories</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Like Labour, Cameron wants to stay in the EU, even if some members of the Cabinet have indicated that they would prefer to leave.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13, 2014</td>
<td>Tories</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Like Labour, Cameron wants to stay in the EU, even if some members of the Cabinet have indicated that they would prefer to leave.</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
salience were compared across countries and newspapers.

Bearing in mind these considerations, the national salience score is based on a comparison of the articles found with the same keyword search from 2004 until 2014. If, for instance, the English The Daily Telegraph lists 100 articles on a yearly average from 2004 to 2014, but 200 articles on yearly average from 2009 to 2014, then we have a valid indicator of a high salience period in the last five years in the U.K. Given that the article salience closely correlates with the statement salience (only exception: NRC Handelsblad with a rather lower correlation of 0.59 – all the others score near or above 0.75), then the comparative article salience scores can be used as a decent proxy to mirror the salience of European affairs amongst established political parties between 2009 and 2014.

Finally, these considerations enable a detailed study of the discourse on European topics from the European election in May 2009 to the European election in May 2014 between the three major established political parties in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.K. The political discourse is represented in the search results of the online archives — on average — by 120-140 political claims each year, or around 40 claims for each party per year. This results in the coding of roughly 2,500 political claims. These figures allow one to speak of a highly valid assessment of party discourse on European matters, how it is affecting voters, and thus, finally, how it might affect voters’ choice of a right-populist party.

**Data Analysis Methodology: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**

The information on salience and party position was recoded for a QCA in order to assess the causal chain of mechanisms allegedly preceding right-populist parties’ advances. One can draw on the particular strength of QCA in checking whether a combination of various conditions is necessary and/or sufficient for the varying polling figures of right-populist parties in the years under scrutiny (Ragin 2008; Schneider and Wagemann 2010; Wagemann and Schneider 2010; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). QCA works according to Boolean logic and defines social phenomena in terms of set theory (Ragin 2008).

In doing so, its explanatory logic is rather deterministic and must not be confused with the probabilistic reasoning of classic algebra and quantitative research methods. Consequently, instead of measuring the strength of a relation between independent and dependent variables, set-theoretic approaches are concerned with revealing if and to what extent a set of conditions can be seen as a necessary and/or sufficient conditions for an outcome. It is crucial to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions; the differences between the two can be neatly illustrated using Venn diagrams (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Venn Diagrams on Necessary and Sufficient Conditions**

![Venn Diagrams on Necessary and Sufficient Conditions](image)

Source: Ragin (2008), p. 18
According to standard logic, the assumption that condition A is necessary for outcome B to occur is the same as stating that “B cannot be true unless A is true,” or “if A is false then B is false.” By contraposition, this is the same as saying that “whenever B is true, so is A.”

A good example is the age-constraint in electing the German bundespräsident: the candidate has to be at least 40 years old in order to become bundespräsident. Therefore, the person who is bundespräsident is at least 40 years old. Being at least 40 years old is a necessary condition for being elected German bundespräsident. Using the Venn diagrams, one can say that all bundespräsidents are part of the group of German citizens above 40. However, this is not a sufficient condition because being 40 years old does not lead you to become German bundespräsident. The group of above 40 year olds lists millions of German citizens with different jobs.

To say that C is a sufficient condition for D is to say that whenever D is present, C is also present. In contrast, D being absent does not imply the absence of C as well; D can be present despite the absence of C. I will stay with the German bundespräsident to provide an example. Given that the German bundespräsident must hold German citizenship and one acquires German citizenship by having German parents, having German parents is a sufficient condition for acquiring German citizenship, and thus, in turn, for running for office as bundespräsident. Therefore, all German bundespräsidents have German citizenship. To recall the Venn diagrams, the group of all people that can become German bundespräsident are part of the group with German citizenship. It is important to note that one can also obtain German citizenship without having German parents. Thus, having German parents is not a necessary condition for becoming bundespräsident, nor is being bundespräsident a sufficient condition for having German parents. The group of German bundespräsidents does not have to be part of the group of people with German parents (even though that has been the case up to now).

The stronger set relations between (sets of) conditions, because of their more restrictive nature, are those that are both necessary and sufficient conditions for an outcome. This means if A then B; conversely, if not A, then not B either.

Revisiting our example, it is both a necessary and sufficient condition to be the German bundespräsident to propose a new German chancellor after a federal election. Only the German bundespräsident can do so, therefore it is a necessary condition. If the federal election is cast, the bundespräsident will propose a German chancellor, a sufficient condition. Revisiting the Venn diagrams, the group of people who can and will propose a new German chancellor after a federal election is cast is (the very small group) of the (one) German Bundespräsident.

This leads to the question of how to assess the “usefulness” of an approximated sufficient or necessary condition. Charles Ragin proposes two central descriptive measures to evaluate set-theoretic relationships in this vein: consistency and coverage. Consistency shows the degree to which a subset relation has been approximated, coverage indicates the empirical relevance of the subset. Highly simplified, consistency could be defined simply as the sum of consistent membership scores in a causal condition divided by the sum of all membership scores in a cause or a causal combination; as the causal conditions in fuzzy sets usually do not embrace a value of 1, the consistency drops accordingly. For example, if three children who like to play football score completely correct answers on a math test — coded as 1 — but a fourth child who also likes to play football scores 60 percent — coded as 0.6 — the consistency of the set
relation between “like to play football” and “good in math” drops to \((3 \times 1 + 1 \times 0.6) / 4 = 0.9\). In turn, coverage indicates the degree to which a (set of) condition explains all cases under scrutiny.

For a detailed discussion of the calculation of scores of consistency and coverage, see Charles Ragin's detailed article (Ragin 2006). For this project, coverage values are only calculated for sufficient conditions scoring close to or above consistency values of \(=> .75\); necessary conditions are those with consistency values close to or above values of \(=> .90\), as this guarantees a desirable liability of the set-relation examined (Schneider and Wagemann 2010, 406).

QCA calls for recoding data according to binary logic. The data must be recoded according to membership in a fuzzy set, with 0 implying no membership and 1 implying full membership in the group or to the concept. For the concepts previously introduced, this requires recoding data, as, for example, voters report feeling economically threatened (yes/no), if party positions indicate a pro-European party position (yes/no), or whether established parties talk about Europe (yes/no).

The data is recoded according to an established procedure in comparative analysis: extreme outliers are excluded from the detailed recoding, given a 0 or a 1, respectively; I define extreme outliers as those that score higher or lower than one standard deviation from the mean, and code them accordingly — with the same value as one standard deviation from the mean. All other data points are recoded based on the formula proposed by Jay Verkuilen (Verkuilen 2005, 479-489):

\[
\text{Membership score} = \frac{\text{data point} - \text{goalpost low}}{\text{goalpost high} - \text{goalpost low}}
\]

Comparative studies define the cultural and economic threats perceived by European voters as a prime explanation for varying advances of right-populist parties (Lucassen and Lubbers 2011). Consequently, this study incorporates survey data measuring perceived economic and cultural threats in addition to the self-obtained scores on the salience and party positions on European matters (see Table 6).

While the data sources are, of course, based on national survey institutes, the survey questions are highly similar. Respondents were asked to list the two or three most important issues/problem facing their country. Cultural concerns aside from the EU almost only concern immigration and asylum seekers, while the economic threat is captured with concerns regarding the unemployment situation in the respective countries. Data sources for the British case come from the survey results from the archives of Ipsos Mori (www.ipsos-mori.com/researchspecialisms/socialresearch/specareas/politics/trends.aspx). For the Dutch case, the data stems from the Dutch election studies and thus lack data for the years 2013 and 2014 (www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/25), and the polling of political parties as reported by peil.nl by Maurice De Hond (www.allepeilingen.com/index.php/peilingen-politieke-partijen-maurice-de-hond.html). The German case is covered under the auspices of the Politbarometer of the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (www.forschungsgruppe.de/Startseite/). The Swedish data is retrieved from the Swedish Trends surveys provided by the SOM-Institutet (www.som.gu.se/).

Two important remarks on the coding of the most important variable/condition — the polling of the right-populist parties between 2009 and 2014. The public debate on right-populist parties tends to be dominated by the recent results of the European election in May 2014. However, these results are not suited to reflect upon the political climate in the respective countries. European elections fare as second-order elections and are thus prioritized...
lower by voters (also indicated by rather low voter turnout), while national survey institutes do not ask for vote-intentions in the next European election aside from a few months before the date the actual election takes place. Consequently, the public support for right-populist parties is measured by the monthly surveyed vote intentions regarding the next national election. This, for example, explains why the UKIP got 27.5% in the European elections in May 2014, while they “only” poll at 10-13% for the national elections in surveys from the same period.

Secondly, the polling figures are not listed as absolute numbers, but as to how they vary to the average polling of the respective right-populist party in the year 2009. This ensures that all national political climates are treated in their own right, considering that far more factors affect right-populist parties’ polling than European issues prior to their entrance to center stage of party politics in recent years. In addition, this enables us to see accurately how the salient European debates’ relatively isolated impact right-populists’ public support. For example, UKIP was polling at 3% on average in the years 2009, and at 10% on average in the year 2013. Thus, the polling change for 2013 is listed as 7%.

One final word on the recoding: the salience of the European topics is recoded in reference to the salience values dating back to the year 2004 in order to give some points of reference. All other figures are recoded only based on the data for the years 2010-14 (Table 6).
### Table 6: QCA Masterfile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>QCA</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>QCA</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>QCA</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>QCA</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>QCA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ger 2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger 2011</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>5</td>
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References


