

Master Thesis

Contagious Euroscepticism: Examining the impact of far-right parties on mainstream party positioning towards European integration in Germany, France and the UK

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Number of words: 13,182

Submitted on 12 July 2018

Y3850523

Abstract

This thesis examines if and how the rise of far-right parties has influenced the salience and positions of mainstream parties on the issue of European integration. Have they accommodated the far-right's Eurosceptic positions, or have they reinforced their support for European integration? A content and a textual analysis of German, French and British party manifestos from 2005 to 2017 is conducted to answer this question. The findings suggest that although all mainstream parties have increased the salience of European integration, the direction and intensity of positional shifts varies considerably between them. German parties are the most Europhile and have either shifted towards a more pro-European position or reinforced it over time. French parties are more critical of EU economic integration and have shown very different responses to EU political integration. A clear Eurosceptic shift is visible for British parties only with both mainstream-right and left parties being affected. The results highlight the role of domestic factors for understanding political contestation on the European integration issue. In addition, the thesis contributes to a better theoretical understanding of EU party competition by developing and applying a new model of party-based Euroscepticism.

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1 Introduction

European leaders breathed a sigh of relief when Emmanuel Macron won a landslide victory against his contender Marine le Pen in the second round of the French Presidential elections in May 2017. The result was widely interpreted as a proof that mainstream parties can still win with a pro-European policy stance, despite the increasing electoral pressure from far-right parties. This pressure was most evident in the national elections in Poland (2015), Austria (2017) and Italy (2018), where mainstream parties suffered a significant loss of votes to far-right parties. Their defeat is not only explained by people's increased dissatisfaction with politics and their growing resentments against immigrants per se, but also by the fact that radical right parties have successfully combined these issues with their opposition to European integration. Blaming the European Union (EU) for its failure in handling the Euro and the refugee crisis, far-right parties have deliberately taken an opposite stance to the pro-EU discourses of established parties. As a consequence, mainstream parties are increasingly under pressure to find the right response.

This Master thesis looks at these responses by investigating how mainstream parties have reacted to the anti-European sentiments of the far-right. Have they reinforced their pro-European position, or have they adopted a more Eurosceptic stance? The latter would be an indication of what has been termed 'contagion effect' in the literature, which is the strategic co-optation of far-right policies by a mainstream party for electoral gains. While recent scholarly work has given evidence for contagion effects on policy areas such as immigration and multiculturalism, only little research has been conducted on Euroscepticism. This is remarkable since the extent to which Eurosceptic opposition parties can affect mainstream governing parties' EU position has a direct effect on the selection of public policies towards European integration. A creeping Eurosceptic opposition by even a few member states could significantly alter and slow down future institutional reforms at EU level or undermine the overall

construction of the Union as a whole. This thesis aims to shed light on the topic with the following research question: How has the growing support for far-right parties affected the positioning of mainstream parties towards European integration?

In order to confirm or disconfirm the presence of contagion effects, the thesis explores a set of relationships. On the one hand, it investigates whether mainstream parties have changed the position and salience of their EU policy stances over time. On the other hand, it analyses whether these shifts have been caused by the strength of far-right parties. To capture positional shifts, the thesis relies on a newly developed model of party-based Euroscepticism which distinguishes between four different degrees of EU support, ranging from hard Europhile to hard Eurosceptic. They are applied on two distinct dimensions of EU policy: Economic and political integration. A mixed-methods design, combining a quantitative content analysis with a qualitative textual analysis, is used to analyse party manifestos of national Parliamentary elections from 2005 to 2017. While a content analysis allows to gather reliable and replicable data on party positions, a textual analysis enables to link these changes to far-right parties through process-tracing techniques. The paper focuses on three countries in which mainstream parties have become increasingly under pressure from far-right parties recently: Germany, France and the United Kingdom (UK).

The thesis' findings suggest that mainstream party positional changes can indeed be attributed to the far-right threat to a considerable extent. All mainstream parties did increase the salience of European integration in their manifestos but differed significantly in the direction and intensity of positional shifts. In Germany, all parties kept and even reinforced their support for European political and economic integration, and clearly opposed the Alternative for Germany's (AFD) Eurosceptic claims in their 2017 manifestos. In contrast, French parties shared the economic criticism of the National Front (FN) of a too neoliberal EU but varied in their positions on political integration, with the centre-right showing signs of contagion effects.

The most overt Eurosceptic shifts were displayed by British parties which unanimously accommodated some of the United Kingdom Independence Party's (UKIP) claims on sovereignty and immigration issues. Given these highly different outcomes across countries, the paper highlights the importance of domestic factors when analysing Euroscepticism, in particular the framing of European integration.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: The literature review first links the rise of far-right parties to the rise of Euroscepticism (2.1), then expands on the concept of Eurosceptic contagion to outline previous findings (2.2), and finally discusses other factors of party positional shifts (2.3). This is followed by a methodology section which establishes a new model of party-based Euroscepticism (3.1), sets up a theory on mainstream party competition (3.2) and proposes hypotheses (3.3). The fourth section expounds on the methodology and case selection (4.1) as well as the operationalization and coding procedure (4.2). In the fifth section, the findings are first presented by countries (5.1) and subsequently discussed together (5.2). The thesis closes with a conclusion (6).

2 Literature review

2.1 Euroscepticism as a dominant policy stance of the radical right

In the last 10 to 15 years, European political systems have undergone two important transformations: On the structural side, the rise of far-right parties has ended the electoral dominance of centrist mainstream parties. On the ideological side, the rise of party-based Euroscepticism has ended the pro-European political consensus. As is shown in this section, these two developments are inherently linked with each other as Euroscepticism has become a dominant part of the radical right's party ideology.

The rise of far-right parties is best captured by looking at their electoral gains in the last decade. Table 1 depicts the vote share of the major far-right parties in national Parliamentary elections in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. An upward trend in all three countries is clearly

visible with the AFD, the FN and the UKIP having received over 12 percent of the votes in recent elections¹. This right-turn has profoundly altered the balance of power within national political systems, considering that the extreme-right has become the strongest (Germany) and second-strongest (France) opposition party, and even member of a government coalition (Austria and Italy). Mudde (2013, p. 1) even goes as far as to claim that the far-right has become “the most successful new party family in postwar Western Europe”.

Table 1: Vote share of far-right parties in national Parliamentary elections, 2005-2017.

Germany	<i>Year</i>	2005	2009	2013	2017
AFD	<i>% of votes</i>	-	-	4.7	12.6
France	<i>Year</i>		2007	2012	2017
FN	<i>% of votes</i>		4.3	13.6	13.2
United Kingdom	<i>Year</i>	2005	2010	2015	2017
UKIP	<i>% of votes</i>	2.2	3.1	12.6	1.8

Source: Nordsieck (2018).

The rise of Euroscepticism has equally been a defining feature of contemporary political systems. Not only has European integration grown in salience, but it has also become an issue of controversy since the Maastricht Treaty. What was used to be known as a ‘permissive consensus’ between party elites and the general public in the pre-Maastricht era has become what Hooghe and Marks (2009) famously coined a ‘constraining dissensus’ nowadays. Citizens have become increasingly sceptical about the functioning of the EU, questioning not only specific policy outcomes but the general value of EU membership as such. Their distrust towards the EU has been fuelled by (and resulted in) the fact that extreme-right parties have become vocal opponents of European integration. While established radical-right parties such as the FN have always taken a hard Eurosceptic position, other more recently founded single-issue parties have primarily focused on leaving the Eurozone only, such as the AFD.

¹ Prior to the 2007 Parliamentary election in France, the FN already received a high vote share in the elections of 1997 (14.9%) and 2002 (11.3%). Taking these into account, it can be argued that the FN could maintain its already high vote share.

There are two complementary explanations used in the literature to account for the Eurosceptic positions of the far-right. The first one revolves around ideological differences suggesting that radical right parties voice their resistance to the EU on the basis of identity and sovereignty concerns (Mudde, 2007). Their nativist, anti-immigration and anti-elite stance is fundamentally opposed to the neofunctionalist principle of achieving an ever-closer Union through international integration (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson, 2004), thus leading them to reject European integration “in all its aspects” (Helbing, Hoeglenger, and Wüest, 2010, p. 504). The second explanation takes strategic considerations into account stating that far-right parties have discovered European integration as an advantageous area of political contestation. This is because mainstream parties are generally considered as being supportive of European integration, regardless of their ideological orientations (Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson, 2002). Moreover, mainstream parties also tend to avoid campaigning on European issues which Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004, p. 48) argued constitute a ‘sleeping giant’. Because far-right parties hold the issue-ownership on Euroscepticism (Hobolt and De Vries, 2012; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004), they can capture the votes of all people dissatisfied with the EU, referred to as EU issue voting (De Vries, 2007).

In short, the fact that radical-right parties have made Euroscepticism a central tenet of their ideology is an important reason for their electoral success. The question that this thesis focuses on is how mainstream parties have reacted.

2.2 The response of mainstream parties: Towards a programmatic repositioning?

Given the fact that far-right parties are increasingly threatening the electoral success of established parties, the commonly held view that “Euroscepticism is still a distinctly marginal phenomenon, rarely encountered in the political mainstream” (Ray, 2007, p. 170) could be questioned, however. After all, established parties could have the incentive to adopt some of

the policy positions of the extreme-right into their own programmes to boost their election results.

This programmatic repositioning of mainstream parties on certain policy issues has been termed ‘contagion effect’. While originally used to indicate shifts in party membership structure (‘contagion from the left’, see Duverger, 1954) and in party campaign strategy (‘contagion from the right’, see Epstein, 1967), its current notion is based on the ‘contagion of the right’ thesis by Norris (2005). In her influential work, Norris argued that mainstream-right parties have made a right-shift by co-opting the restrictive immigration policies of the far-right. Her findings provided the starting point of a growing amount of research that investigated a shift in mainstream party positioning on issues typically owned by the radical right. Most empirical studies found evidence for contagion effects on areas such as immigration (Van Spanje, 2010), welfare and multiculturalism (Westlake, 2018; Schumacher and Van Kersbergen, 2016), and liberal-authoritarian issues more generally (Wagner and Meyer, 2017). Other studies, however, came to mixed results depending on the country (Bale et al., 2010, on immigration) or found no contagion effects at all (Rooduijn, De Lange, and Van der Brug, 2014, on populism).

While there is growing evidence for the existence of far-right contagion on several different policy areas, scholars have shifted their attention to Euroscepticism only in the last couple of years. Most research hitherto focused on saliency shifts primarily, suggesting that electoral gains of fringe parties can lead mainstream parties to put more emphasis on European issues (Van de Wardt, 2015). As regards mainstream positional shifts, there are only three interesting studies which are worth a more in-depth review. Meijers (2017) conducted a time-series cross-sectional regression analysis using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey from 1999 to 2010 and an older dataset by Ray (1999). He demonstrated that electoral gains of Eurosceptic fringe parties, both far-right and far-left, can lead mainstream parties to shift their EU integration positions. The intensity of this shift is dependent on the salience that these fringe parties allocate to

European issues. Interestingly, Meijers finds that whereas centre-left parties are affected by far-right and far-left contagion equally, centre-right parties are only susceptible to far-right contagion. Thus, his findings support the contagion thesis but leave open possible positional shifts after 2010.

As a direct response, Williams and Ishiyama (2018) conducted a similar time-series cross-sectional regression analysis, albeit with data from the Comparative Manifestos Project covering 25 EU member states from 1958 to 2015. Focusing on contagion effects from far-left parties exclusively, the two found no support that far-left Euroscepticism influences mainstream parties' EU positions. They could, however, confirm their hypothesis that when communist parties put more weight on state control of the economy, mainstream parties are more likely to be Eurosceptic. This, the authors argue, is because far-left parties only possess the issue ownership of state control of the economy, but not of Euroscepticism. While Williams and Ishiyama's results strengthen the assumption that only far-right parties can directly influence mainstream parties' EU position, they leave the theoretical link between state control of the economy and Euroscepticism somewhat open. Moreover, their operationalization of Euroscepticism as 'positive versus negative statements towards the EU' does not allow any insights on what kind of EU areas mainstream parties have become more Eurosceptic.

The third noteworthy study was done by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2018) who take a different approach. Although not focusing on contagion effects specifically, they analysed and compared the current level of party-based Euroscepticism within and between European member-states by evaluating the answers of an open-ended survey sent out to leading country-experts in 2015 and 2017. Their results clearly suggest that Euroscepticism has become an almost universal component of European politics. With the exception of social democratic and liberal parties, they argue that Euroscepticism spans along the whole ideological range and has "the capacity to enter the political mainstream and to become a position adopted by parties of government"

(Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2018, p. 1203). What is noteworthy about their study is that they reveal three different frames through which Euroscepticism is articulated: An economic frame based on economic considerations, a migration frame based on identity considerations, and a democracy and sovereignty frame based on sovereignty concerns. Although these frames are not mutually exclusive, Taggart and Szczerbiak suggest that they distinctively shape the way in which Euroscepticism is expressed within a country.

The three scholarly works already indicate that the so-called ‘inverted U-curve’ relationship (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson, 2002), according to which Euroscepticism is limited to the radical-left and radical-right only, might not hold true anymore. In order to corroborate or refute the ‘contagion of the right’ thesis, though, more evidence is needed which specifically looks at party positional shifts over the last decade. An up-to-date analysis is particularly important given that Europe has been shattered by elemental crises from 2008 onwards: The Euro crisis, where the economic cleavages between northern and southern Europe became evident, the refugee crisis, where European leaders failed to act collectively and the Brexit, which reinforced nationalist mobilization. Put differently, European integration has become a highly salient and controversial area of political contestation in which mainstream parties are forced to position themselves clearly.

For public policy, the question whether mainstream parties have equally increased the salience of European politics and if yes, whether they have moved towards a more Eurosceptic or Europhile position is crucial. If a contagion effect can be demonstrated, it would imply that extreme-right parties can, even without being in government, significantly influence public policy outcomes within the EU. In the Council of Ministers, a creeping Eurosceptic opposition by even a few member states could lead to the abandonment of the unofficial consensus rule (Novak, 2013), and potentially cause its paralysis through a blocking coalition. In the European Parliament (EP), a creeping Eurosceptic opposition within transnational party groups could

open up a cleavage between Europhile and Eurosceptic national parties, and potentially lead to their reconfiguration. Alternatively, if mainstream parties are found to be immune against Eurosceptic contagion, the prospects of a deepening of the European project are more promising.

This thesis aims to fill this research gap and to contribute to the current debate by posing the following research question:

How has the growing support for far-right parties affected the positioning of mainstream parties towards European integration?

The next section discusses other factors of positional shifts by taking into account different causal relationships.

2.3 The direction of causality and other factors of positional shifts

The goal of this thesis is twofold: On the one hand, it strives to investigate whether mainstream parties have shifted their positions towards European integration or not. On the other hand, it aims to demonstrate that these positional shifts (the dependent variable) can be seen as a direct response to the electoral strength of the extreme-right (the main independent variable). Nevertheless, it is evident that there are other external and internal factors that can cause mainstream party positional shifts. Four different factors are being looked at in this section: Public opinion, external events, intra-party divisions and the distinction between government and opposition parties.

A central question of Euroscepticism is whether it is elite or mass-driven. As De Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell (2017, p. 53) pointed out, the answer leads to a different methodological choice for studying either party politics (elite) or public opinion (mass). Public opinion is certainly a driver of party positional change as parties must be responsive to their electorate if they want to maximize their vote share. Williams and Spoon (2015) have shown that larger parties are

more likely to respond to public Euroscepticism than smaller parties. Nevertheless, while acknowledging that the relationship between party politics and public opinion is bidirectional (Steenbergen, Edwards, and De Vries, 2007), the strategic behaviour of political elites is still seen as being primarily conditional for rather than consequential of public Euroscepticism in this analysis. By choosing to make EU politics a prominent part of the political discourse, political elites can massively influence voters' EU attitudes in either direction.

Another factor are external events, and in this case particularly the three EU crises mentioned above, which can affect both parties and public opinion. However, the causal relationship between the three variables is yet weak. Do crises have a direct influence on party ideology and positions (e.g. Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2018) or do they primarily change the attitudes and party preferences of voters (e.g. Hobolt and De Vries, 2016)? Furthermore, the question whether EU crises benefit Eurosceptic parties or not remains ambiguous: While Hobolt and De Vries' (2016) findings suggest that the Euro crisis has strengthened the electoral support of Eurosceptic parties, De Vries (2017) results give evidence that the Brexit has actually strengthened people's positive attitudes about the EU. Given these highly different outcomes, external events are treated as a relevant, yet subordinate independent variable which can be temporally controlled for to a certain degree.

Apart from external factors, there are also internal factors of party competition that need to be taken into account. First, intra-party divisions could provoke positional shifts. There is empirical evidence that when a party is internally divided on its EU programme in a country with a high level of Euroscepticism, it becomes more Eurosceptic (Spoon and Williams, 2017). Second, a party could also become more Eurosceptic when it is in opposition, rather than in government. Government parties are likely to be more Europhile in general since they can be directly made accountable for EU policy outcomes (De Wilde, Teney, and Lacewell, 2018).

While these factors are not exhaustive, they are considered as the most relevant that can induce mainstream parties to change positions directly or indirectly. As is shown in section 4.1, qualitative process-tracing techniques can be utilised to single out the main effect of far-right party positions. The following methodology section now establishes a new model of party-based Euroscepticism, sets up a theoretical framework of mainstream party competition and develops three main hypotheses.

3 Theory and hypotheses

3.1 A new model of party-based Euroscepticism

An analysis of party positional shifts on European integration requires the set-up of a theoretically sound model that conceptualizes party-based Euroscepticism. This section argues that the two most common classifications of Euroscepticism suffer from conceptual weaknesses. Therefore, it proposes a new model which is based on one EU support continuum which is applied onto two EU policy fields.

Probably the most common conceptualization of party-based Euroscepticism was developed by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) who distinguished between hard and soft forms. Hard Euroscepticism is described as a principled opposition to the EU and European integration which is displayed in the claim to withdraw from EU membership. A soft Eurosceptic position does not comprise a principled objection to European integration but rather a qualified opposition to specific EU policies (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). While this binary distinction is a useful starting point, it has been criticized as too broad with the sorting criteria for each category remaining unclear (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002, p. 300). The category of soft Euroscepticism, for example, incorporates those parties that are in favour of further European integration but oppose its current functioning *and* those that want to limit further European integration without leaving the EU as such.

Kopecky and Mudde (2002) attempted to resolve this shortcoming by distinguishing between two kinds of EU support: Support for the general idea of European integration (diffuse support) and support for the general practice of European integration (specific support). In doing so, they developed a two-by-two matrix of four possible EU party positions which they labelled Euroenthusiasts, Eurorejects, Eurosceptics and Europragmatists. While this categorization is more fine-grained and distinguishes between different types of Euroscepticism, it equally suffers from conceptual ambiguities. The Europragmatists category, for instance, defined as opposing the EU as a supranational organization but supporting the practice of European integration in general, is very unlikely to exist empirically (Vasilopoulou, 2009, p. 5). In addition, a two-dimensional measure of EU support raises difficulties when analysing party positional shifts as they could appear on either dimension, making classifications difficult.

In light of the shortcomings of these two conceptualizations, a new model of party-based Euroscepticism has been developed which aims to combine the advantages of each model. It comprises one EU support continuum which is applied onto two different dimensions of EU politics – economic and political integration. Together, they form a 4x2 matrix which is illustrated in Table 2. Without going into too much detail, the model is shortly explained in the following two paragraphs.

The EU support continuum² displays a party's general policy stance towards the EU. It has four main categories, ranging from hard Europhile over reformist Europhile and reformist Eurosceptic to hard Eurosceptic. The distinction between Europhile and Eurosceptic denotes whether a party is generally in favour of European integration or not, it is thus analogous to Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) concept of diffuse support. The further left a party is positioned, the more supportive it is of European integration. The distinction between hard and reformist

² It has been labelled continuum because, as is shown later, EU party positions can be allocated between the four main categories on a continuous scale.

denotes whether a party supports the current functioning of the EU (hard Europhile) or whether it disagrees with it and seeks fundamental reforms, either at the supranational level (reformist Europhile) or through a downward transfer of power to the national level (reformist Eurosceptic). A hard Eurosceptic position indicates that a party opposes the EU completely and is in favour of the country's withdrawal. As can be seen, the hard Europhile-reformist Europhile/Eurosceptic distinction is analogous to Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) concept of specific support, whereas the reformist Europhile-reformist Eurosceptic categories correspond to the soft Eurosceptic category of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001). The EU support continuum³ displays a party's general policy stance towards the EU. It has four main categories, ranging from hard Europhile over reformist Europhile and reformist Eurosceptic to hard Eurosceptic. The distinction between Europhile and Eurosceptic denotes whether a party is generally in favour of European integration or not, it is thus analogous to Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) concept of diffuse support. The further left a party is positioned, the more supportive it is of European integration. The distinction between hard and reformist denotes whether a party supports the current functioning of the EU (hard Europhile) or whether it disagrees with it and seeks fundamental reforms, either at the supranational level (reformist Europhile) or through a downward transfer of power to the national level (reformist Eurosceptic). A hard Eurosceptic position indicates that a party opposes the EU completely and is in favour of the country's withdrawal. As can be seen, the hard Europhile-reformist Europhile/Eurosceptic distinction is analogous to Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) concept of specific support, whereas the reformist Europhile-reformist Eurosceptic categories correspond to the soft Eurosceptic category of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001).

This EU support continuum is applied onto the two EU dimensions of economic and political integration. Their distinction is based on the work of Kriesi et al. (2012) who argued that

³ It has been labelled continuum because, as is shown later, EU party positions can be allocated between the four main categories on a continuous scale.

attitudes to globalization are a combination of two distinct types of considerations: Economic considerations, which are based on utilitarian cost-benefit calculations, and cultural considerations, which are based on sovereignty and identity concerns. The European Union, it can be argued, embodies many of the features of globalization and is, therefore, supported or opposed for the same reasons. Economic Euroscepticism stems from the fact that the EU is perceived by most parties and citizens as an inherently neoliberal project (Williams and Ishiyama, 2018; Halikiopoulou, 2014; for a contrasting view see Van Apeldoorn, 2009), which has fostered open markets, liberalized key national sectors, concluded free trade agreements and introduced a common currency. Hence, opposition to EU economic integration is mostly shown by the losers of liberalization (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). On the other hand, political Euroscepticism is the fear that the further upward transfer of power to seemingly undemocratic and unaccountable supranational actors will deteriorate national political control and identity. In this sense, the political integration dimension is equivalent to the national-cosmopolitan cleavage, whereas the economic integration dimension is resembling the state-market cleavage. The two integration dimensions are also very similar to the three frames of Euroscepticism by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2018).

In a nutshell, the new model of party-based Euroscepticism offers two main benefits. On the one hand, it allows to allocate parties' EU positions on a single continuum much more detailed than before. By distinguishing between their overall stance on European integration and their evaluation of the current functioning of the Union, the model is sensitive to the status quo of EU integration. On the other hand, it goes beyond previous classifications by distinguishing between two specific types of Euroscepticism that have different underlying causes. As can be seen in the analysis section later, parties' EU positions differed significantly between the two dimensions. The next section takes this model as a basis to develop a theory on mainstream party competition.

Table 2: A new conceptualization of party-based Euroscepticism.

	Hard Europhile pursue further European integration in the same way as before	Reformist Europhile pursue further European integration through fundamental reforms	Reformist Eurosceptic limit European integration through fundamental reforms	Hard Eurosceptic withdraw from European integration
Economic dimension state vs. market	<p><i>Positive achievements of EU economic integration</i> (e.g. economic growth, national prosperity, high competitiveness, high social standards)</p> <p><i>Further gradual (neoliberal) economic integration</i> (e.g. market liberalization, free trade, inflation control, currency stability, harmonization measures)</p>	<p><i>Mixed achievements of EU economic integration</i> (e.g. economic growth, national prosperity, but also growing imbalances between member states, high unemployment, low accountability)</p> <p><i>Further economic integration through substantial policy and/or institutional reforms</i> (e.g. a large-scale investment programme, an economic government for the Eurozone)</p>	<p><i>Mixed achievements of EU economic integration</i> (e.g. economic growth, national prosperity, but also growing imbalances between member states, high unemployment, low accountability)</p> <p><i>Less economic integration and greater national control through substantial policy and/or institutional reforms</i> (e.g. greater national Parliamentary control, unilateral opt-outs, protectionist trade policy)</p>	<p><i>Negative achievements of EU economic integration</i> (e.g. growing imbalances between member states, high unemployment, low accountability, tax-payers saving banks)</p> <p><i>Withdrawal from economic integration and return to full national economic sovereignty</i> (e.g. leaving the Eurozone, reintroducing national currencies and protective trade barriers)</p>
Political dimension nationalist vs. cosmopolitan	<p><i>Positive achievements of EU political integration</i> (e.g. peace, friendship, security, global power)</p> <p><i>Further gradual political integration</i> (e.g. upward transfer of competences if needed, harmonization measures, further enlargement)</p>	<p><i>Mixed achievements of EU political integration</i> (e.g. peace, friendship, security, but institutional design too complex, bureaucratic, unaccountable with stalemate)</p> <p><i>Further political integration through substantial policy and/or institutional reforms</i> (e.g. upward transfer of competences that were previously shared, empowering the EP to fully control the EC, only selective further enlargement)</p>	<p><i>Mixed achievements of EU political integration</i> (e.g. peace, friendship, security, but institutional design too complex, bureaucratic, unaccountable with stalemate)</p> <p><i>Less political integration and greater national control through substantial policy and/or institutional reforms</i> (e.g. keeping or limiting EU policy areas, ensuring subsidiarity, greater Parliamentary control, no further enlargement)</p>	<p><i>Negative achievements of EU political integration</i> (e.g. EU a failed political project, no national Parliamentary control, institutional design unaccountable)</p> <p><i>Withdrawal from political integration and return to full national political sovereignty</i> (e.g. leaving the EU, giving back power to national governments and Parliaments)</p>

Source: Own compilation.

3.2 A theory on mainstream party competition

To show if and how mainstream parties shift along the two policy dimensions, this thesis applies a singular model of party competition that combines insights from spatial theory and issue-evolution theory.

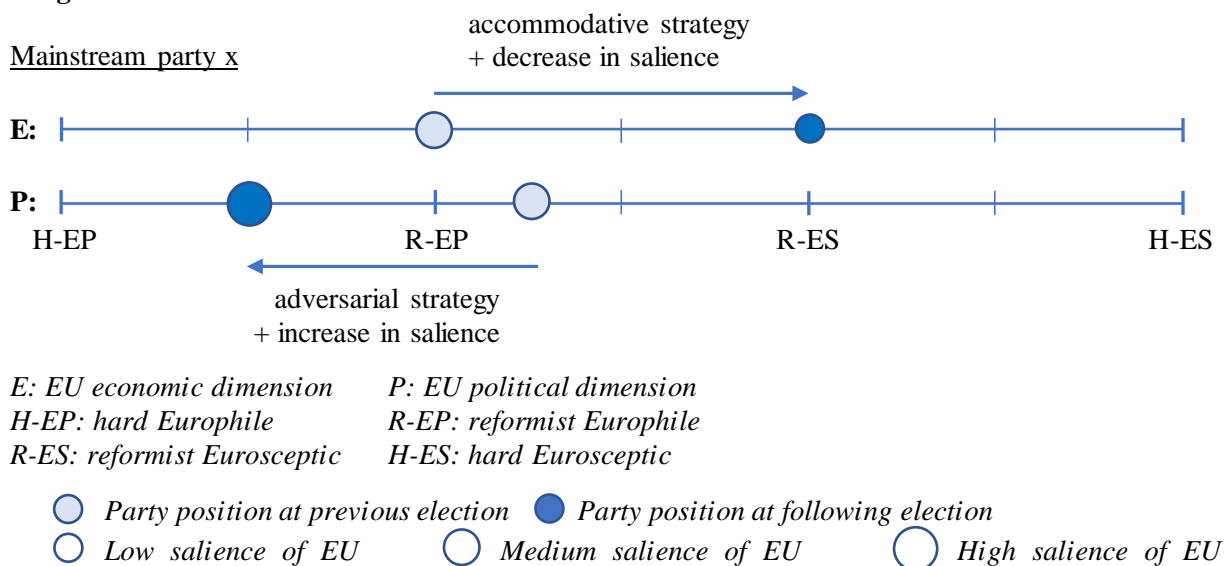
The principle theoretical foundation is Downs (1957) classical spatial model of two-party competition. The model assumes that parties are rational actors which are competing for votes along a one-dimensional spatial continuum. Voter preferences are distributed along this dimension as well. When deciding how to position themselves, parties can pursue two possible strategies: Moving towards their competitor (policy convergence) or moving away from it (policy divergence). If a particular competitor performs well in the previous elections, it is rational for the party to expect many voters to be close to the competitor's position, thus moving towards it. However, as issue evolution theory has shown (Schattschneider, 1960), parties cannot only change their position to gain votes, but also alter the salience of a topic. As has been argued before, one important reason why far-right parties are deliberately competing on European integration is because mainstream parties used to avoid the issue of European integration during election campaigns.

In order to account for these saliency shifts as well, this paper applies the modified spatial theory of Meguid (2005). When confronted with an emerging niche party, Meguid shows that mainstream parties can pursue three distinct strategies. The first decision a mainstream party takes is whether it wants to compete on the issue presented by the far-right party or not. If it chooses not to, it takes what Meguid terms a 'dismissive strategy'. By reducing the salience of the topic, the mainstream party hopes to downplay the issue's merit and decrease its policy-based appeal. If other mainstream parties do the same and voters do not see this issue as important, the model predicts that the radical right will not benefit electorally. For European integration, though, this strategy is rather unlikely. After all, far-right parties hold the issue

ownership on Euroscepticism forcing mainstream parties to position themselves clearly. In addition, the recent crises are affecting Europe as a whole and require European solutions. What is possible, however, is that parties reduce the salience of particular EU issues which have become unpopular.

If a mainstream party decides to compete with the far-right, it must choose whether to adopt the far-right's policy position or whether to oppose it. If it chooses to adopt it, it pursues an 'accommodative strategy'. In doing so, the party tries to contest the issue ownership of the radical right by offering the same or similar positions and siphon off as many votes as possible; a "if you can't beat them, join them" strategy (Bale et al., 2010, p. 410). Given that mainstream parties have traditionally been in favour of European integration, this right-shift would resemble a classical contagion effect. It incurs the risk, however, that the mainstream party loses its credibility because the new position is either contrary to its previous position or not coherent to its positions on other issues.

Figure 1: Example of a mainstream party positional and saliency change on the two EU integration dimensions.



At the same time, a mainstream party can decide to compete with the far-right through an 'adversarial strategy'. By shifting towards a more pro-European position, the mainstream party tries to convince voters that the competitor's position is wrong and unjustified. It thereby leaves

the far-right's issue ownership uncontested and gives voters the choice between two opposite political alternatives. If a mainstream party has already taken a hard Europhile position before, an adversarial strategy could be equally realized through a stronger emphasis on Europe, in other words, a saliency increase. While this strategy ensures the credibility and coherence of the party's programmatic position, it carries the risk to lose votes to the competitor at the same time. This is an equally plausible strategy since mainstream parties are often convinced by the political and economic benefits of a viable European cooperation, independent of electoral pressures.

Figure 1 illustrates how the positional and saliency shifts can be mapped on the two policy dimensions. As can be seen, positional shifts can occur from various starting points and have a different intensity.

3.3 Hypotheses

On the basis of the two previous sections, three main hypotheses can be developed of how mainstream parties have reacted to the growing electoral strength of far-right parties.

The first hypothesis relates to the saliency that mainstream parties attribute to European integration. As has been argued, it can be expected that all mainstream parties have emphasized European issues stronger than before.

Hypothesis 1: European economic and political integration has become a more salient issue for mainstream parties.

Furthermore, it is likely that mainstream parties have also moved along the two EU integration dimensions.

Hypothesis 2: Mainstream parties have shifted their positions on the two European integration dimensions (accommodative or adversarial strategy).

While this hypothesis leaves the direction of shifts open, two additional sub-hypotheses are stipulated that make predictions about which of the two strategies is pursued. The starting point is the assumption that far-right parties are hard Eurosceptic on both dimensions. Although it can be argued that their core ideology centres around sovereignty and identity issues (Williams and Ishiyama, 2018), it is equally likely that they also oppose European economic integration⁴. Being confronted with both political and economic Euroscepticism by far-right parties, the assumption is that mainstream parties shift right (converge) on that dimension on which they are ideologically closer to the far-right, while shift left (diverge) on that dimension on which they are more distant to it. Conservative and right-wing liberal parties are generally in favour of market integration but more sceptical towards the transfer of authority to supranational actors. Socialist and left-wing liberal parties are generally in favour of further political integration but oppose the EUs neoliberal character. Hence, the two additional hypotheses suggest the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Mainstream-right parties have become more critical of political integration (accommodative strategy) and/or have reinforced their support for more market integration (adversarial strategy).

Hypothesis 2b: Mainstream-left parties have become more critical of market integration (accommodative strategy) and/or have reinforced their support for more political integration (adversarial strategy).

Finally, this thesis also aims to demonstrate that these shifts are at least partially caused by the strength of far-right parties.

⁴ A good example is the AFD in this case, which was originally founded to press for Germany's exit from the Eurozone area (see section 4.1). The United Kingdom is a somewhat deviant case in this analysis as the EU is seen as regulating too much in the Single Market, thus being not liberal enough.

Hypothesis 3: The saliency and positional changes of mainstream parties on European integration can be partially attributed to the electoral strength of far-right parties.

The following section presents the research design of the paper, focusing on the methodology and case selection first and then moving on to the sampling and coding procedure.

4 Research design

4.1 Methodology and case selection

The two main goals of the thesis – to demonstrate a shift in mainstream party positioning and to link this shift to far-right parties – can be achieved through either quantitative or qualitative methods. This thesis combines both methods through a mixed-methods design: A quantitative content analysis and a qualitative textual analysis.

Both methods are applied to party manifestos of national Parliamentary elections as the main unit of analysis. Party manifestos are authoritative statements that give a profound insight into parties' positions, their ideological orientation as well as the issues they emphasize at a certain point in time. Although being criticized for their non-relevance in electoral campaigns, it can be suggested that they are the “best-known time-series data on party positions” we have (Klemmensen, Hobolt and Hansen, 2007, p. 747). Moreover, they are appropriate documents to conduct a comparative content and textual analysis due to their comparability between countries and over time (Rooduijn, De Lange, and Van der Brug, 2014). The focus on national Parliamentary elections is justified because national politics are regarded as having a greater impact on EU policy-making (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2018, p. 4) than EP elections which are still considered as being second-order elections (Schmitt, 2005; Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

In the first step, a quantitative content analysis is being conducted to gain an understanding of how overall party positions and the salience of issues have changed over time. In contrast to most research papers which quantitatively analyse secondary data from the Comparative

Manifestos Project (CMP), this content analysis is relying on primary data by coding the manifestos manually. This is done for the simple reason that the CMP only comprises two party positional variables on the EU, which do not allow any inferences on a party's actual EU position⁵. The codebook is based on this thesis' classification of Euroscepticism (Table 2) and is further discussed in the subsequent section. To ensure a high content validity, the results are cross-checked with the CMP and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES).

In the second step, a qualitative textual analysis is being conducted to reveal the specific issues mainstream parties have emphasized and changed their positions upon. This is done through an in-depth reading of the manifestos to discover their tone and wording, in other words, their framing. The other great benefit of a textual analysis is that it allows to establish a strong association between the claims of far-right parties and those of mainstream parties through process-tracing techniques. An adversarial strategy can be confirmed when mainstream parties express their disagreement with extreme-right positions directly or indirectly. An accommodative strategy can be corroborated when mainstream parties start using the populist slogans of the far-right themselves, or even adopt positions that have only been taken by far-right parties previously.

Due to time and space restraints, this thesis focuses on analysing three major EU countries comparatively: Germany, France and the United Kingdom. All three are well-suited for a comparative study as they all comprise strong far-right Eurosceptic parties which have experienced significant electoral gains at different points in the last decade (as was shown in Table 1). Moreover, because these countries have considerable influence over the direction and speed of European integration, it can be expected that European politics is emphasized sufficiently in all manifestos to determine positional and saliency shifts. Importantly, though,

⁵ One variable measures the percentage of positive and the other the percentage of negative party statements towards the EU.

the limited number of countries inhibits a generalization of the findings to other EU member states. With regard to the timeframe, this paper analyses party positional shifts from elections between 2005 and 2017. The year 2005 has been chosen as the starting point of this analysis because the Constitutional Treaty was rejected in that year which marked a significant backlash to EU integration. As was previously suggested, the rise of far-right parties and the rise of Euroscepticism both occurred within the last decade. If the hypotheses hold and mainstream party positional shifts can be linked to the electoral success of far-right parties, then this timeframe allows an ex-ante-ex-post analysis. Four elections in Germany and in the UK, and three elections in France fall in this period, with the most recent ones all occurring in 2017 (see Table 1).

4.2 Sampling and coding procedure

The empirical distinction between mainstream and far-right parties is made according to their party ideology using a variable from the CHES dataset (Polk et al., 2017; Bakker et al., 2015). Ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right), the mean value of this variable from the waves of 2006, 2010 and 2014 is calculated (see Table 3 in Appendix). A party is considered extreme-right if its mean value is higher than eight, and extreme-left if its mean value is lower than two. All extreme-left parties are dropped from the analysis, and all parties ranging in-between the values of two and eight are considered mainstream parties. The criterium of an average vote share of at least five percent is added to consider only relevant parties, leading to a sample size of ten mainstream parties and three far-right parties (see Table 3 in Appendix). The resulting 44 party manifestos were downloaded from the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al., 2017)⁶ and copied into a neutral Word document. In the majority of cases, the Europe section of the manifestos was used exclusively for both analyses. Only when this section

⁶ In France, the manifestos of the Presidential elections have been used which generally take place around a month prior to the Parliamentary elections. The reason is that there are no specific manifestos for the Parliamentary elections. The FN manifesto from the 2007 French Presidential election was not included, so it has been downloaded from: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/073001250.html>

did not exist or proved too little, parts of other chapters were added which explicitly referred to EU topics. The coded manifestos and the codebook can be found online⁷.

The manual coding procedure followed a multi-step process in line with the rules stipulated by the CMP (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens, 2014). In the first step, the sentences were divided into quasi-sentences, each of them corresponding to one specific statement. Chapter and section headings were not considered. In the second step, each quasi-sentence was attributed a code from one of the two dimensions according to the codebook. After the coding, the share of quasi-sentences in the respective category was calculated as a fraction of the overall number of allocated codes per document. To give an example, if a party manifesto contained 80 quasi-sentences in total and 10 of them were coded as reformist Europhile, political, then this category was assigned a share of 13% (rounded off). Based on the distribution of codes among the different categories, the party's overall position on each of the two dimensions was determined in a final step. The lower the dispersion of codes on a dimension, the higher is the explanatory power of a party's overall position.

The codebook used was closely derived from the theoretical distinction of the different dimensions (Table 2); it allocates different party positions on European integration into one of the eight categories. Concerning the vertical distinction between the two policy dimensions, all positions related to the Single Market and the common currency (e.g. the Eurozone crisis, liberalization, free trade agreements, but also workers' rights and an EU finance minister) were coded as economic. All other positions, including those related to other EU policy fields (e.g. foreign affairs, migration, energy, enlargement) and to questions of sovereignty, membership and institutional setup (e.g. EU competences, budgetary questions, Brexit, Commission reform), were coded as political. Although a few policy issues covered both dimensions, such

⁷ The link to the online repository has been sent via email.

as the claim for the creation of an EU finance minister, they did not cause any major empirical bias because the manifestos were coded consistently across countries.

Concerning the horizontal distinction between the different degrees of EU support, all claims that emphasized the general need for and benefit of the European Union, or proposed further integration in a neofunctionalist way, were coded hard Europhile. In contrast, reformist Europhile positions criticized the current functioning of the EU and aimed for fundamental reforms on a European scale. The question of what a ‘fundamental reform’ constitutes is subject to debate, but this thesis holds that it is one that entails substantial changes to the overall policies and/or institutional architecture of the Union. To give an example, the claim for an Energy Union can be considered as neofunctionalist in nature as it does not necessitate major policy changes and is relatively uncontroversial. By contrast, the claim for an economic government for the Eurozone is highly controversial as it would break the dominance of the European Council in economic governance (Puetter, 2012). Crucially, having a reformist Europhile position does not indicate that a party is less in favour of European integration. It could instead be striving for an even deeper integration than a hard Europhile party but in a more radical fashion than the current speed of integration allows. Reformist Eurosceptic claims equally criticize the current form of integration but oppose any further integration or even advocate the return of competences to the national level. Positions that are associated with a fundamental EU opposition are coded as hard Eurosceptic.

The next section now presents and discusses the findings of both analyses.

5 Analyses

5.1 Country-specific results

Figure 2: Mainstream-party positional and saliency changes from 2005-2017 based on content analysis.

E: economic dimension

P: political dimension

H-EP: hard Europhile

R-EP: reformist Europhile

R-ES: reformist Eurosceptic

H-ES: hard Eurosceptic

○ Election year: 2005 (Germany, UK)

○ Election year: 2007 (France); 2009 (Germany); 2010 (UK)

● Election year: 2012 (France); 2013 (Germany); 2015 (UK)

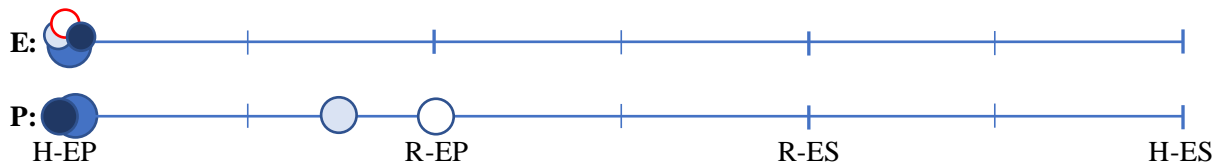
● Election year: 2017 (Germany, France, UK)

○ Low salience, 5-19 codes; ○ Medium salience, 20-59 codes; ○ High salience, ≥ 60 codes;

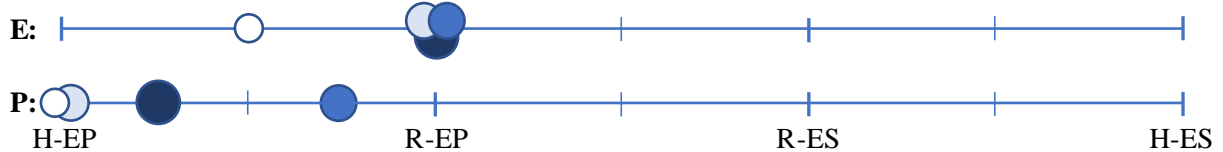
○ No salience, ≤ 5 codes – no sound party positioning possible

Germany

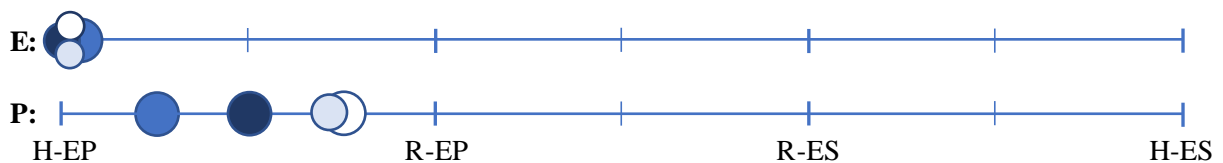
CDU – Christian Democratic Union (centre-right)



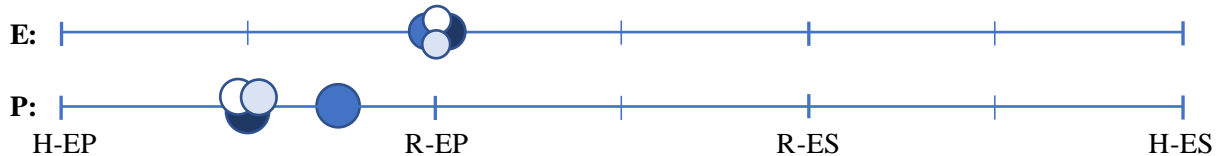
SPD – Social Democratic Party (centre-left)



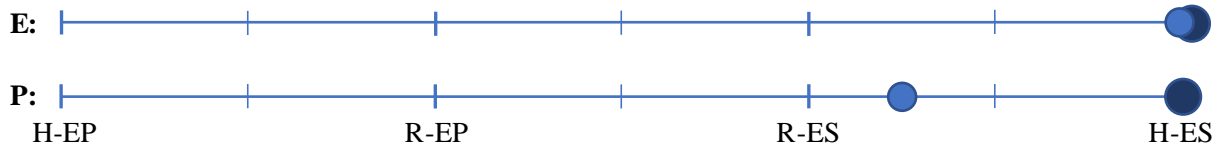
FDP – Free Democratic Party (centre-right)



B90/Grüne – Green Party (centre-left)

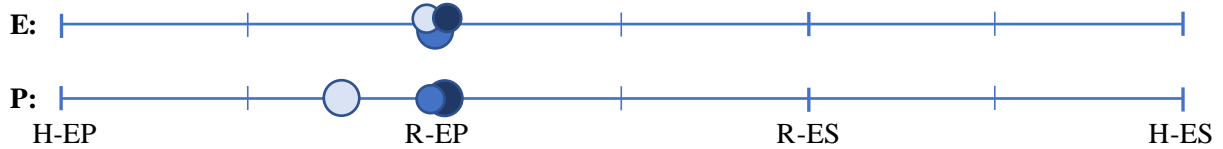


AFD – Alternative for Germany (far-right)

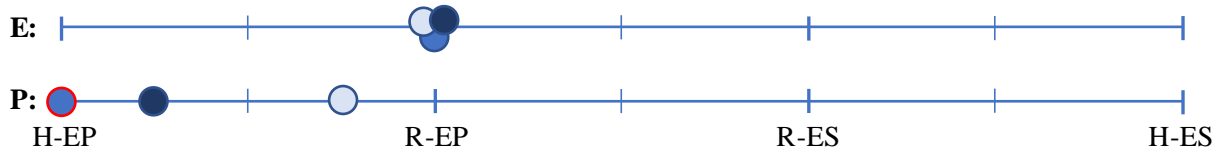


France

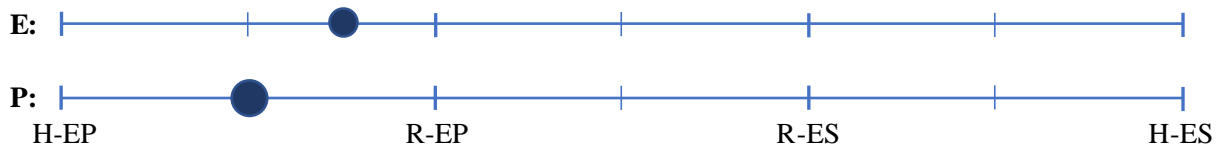
UMP – Union for a Popular Movement (centre-right)



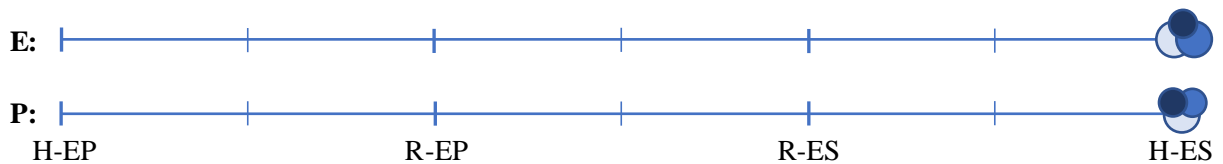
PS – Socialist Party (centre-left)



En Marche – Republic Onwards (centrist)

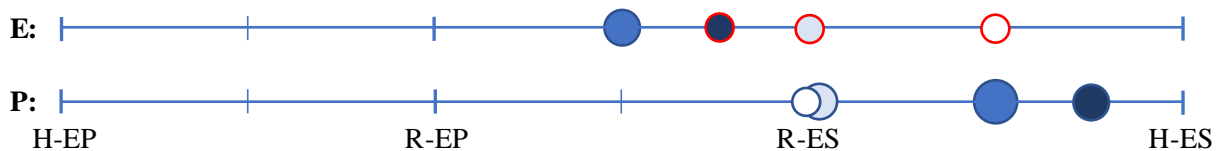


FN – National Front (far-right)

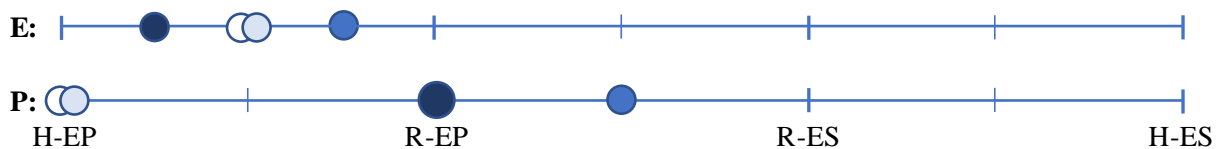


United Kingdom

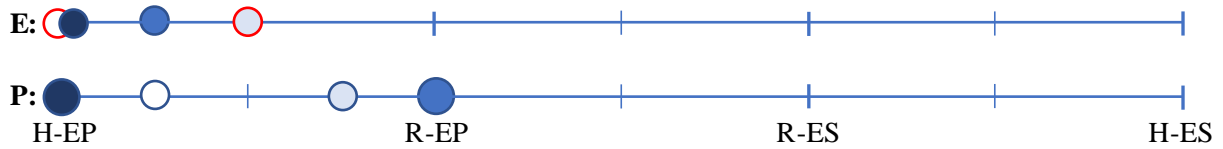
Conservative Party (centre-right)



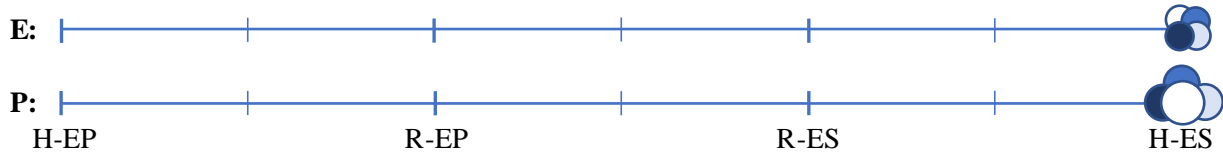
Labour Party (centre-left)



Liberal Democrats (centrist)



UKIP – United Kingdom Independence Party (far-right)



5.1.1 Germany

The Alternative for Germany is the country's main far-right party which was founded in 2013 in response to the Euro crisis. In its first years, the AFD's issue ownership was limited to its opposition to the Greek rescue programmes and to Germany's Eurozone membership. Although it also criticized the EU on sovereignty issues, the party still remained in favour of EU membership. This changed during the refugee crisis in 2015, when new leaders gave the AFD a much more nationalist and anti-immigrationist orientation. Questions of sovereignty now took centre stage, with the AFD arguing for the complete dissolution of the EU into a confederation of sovereign and independent states in 2017. Their strategy turned out to be very successful and made it become the third largest party in the Bundestag. Therefore, the theory would predict that mainstream party positional changes occur during the last elections mainly.

A look at Figure 2 shows, however, that this is not the case. From 2005 to 2017, all German mainstream parties stayed in-between hard and reformist Europhile on both dimensions. Shifts did not occur at all on the economic dimension and were rather small on the political one. This continuous strong support for European integration is illustrated by the fact that all parties claimed to be *the* party that cares about Europe. The CDU and SPD (in 2013) as well as the Greens (in 2005) called themselves the 'Europe party of Germany', while the FDP demanded a federal Europe (2005, 2009) and a political Union (2013, 2017). In addition, a clear upward

trend in the salience that parties attached to EU integration is visible which manifests the growing importance of European politics for German politics: While the Europe section only covered around 600 words in 2005, it increased to over 2,000 words for all parties from 2013 on with the Greens even exceeding 4,000 words.

Nevertheless, there are substantial differences when it comes to the priorities that the parties set for the EU, in particular with regard to economic policy. The two mainstream-right parties CDU and FDP put emphasis on a competitive Europe with sound finances, a strong and stable Eurozone and a strict adherence to the Stability and Growth Pact. In contrast to SPD and Greens, they refuse a debt and transfer Union by arguing that the German taxpayer would end up paying the main share. These very consistent economic positions are typical hard Europhile ones in that they support the current form of economic integration but refuse any fundamental reforms that would change its general orientation. An extreme example is the claim by the FDP in 2017 to set-up a new mechanism which allows heavily indebted member states to leave the Eurozone. The two mainstream-left parties SPD and Greens are more critical of the current form of economic integration with the former proposing to set up a multi-billion Euro investment programme to create jobs and growth (from '05) and an economic government for the Eurozone (from '13), and the latter demanding a common European tax and asylum system and a greater focus on ecological growth (from '05). Although coded reformist Europhile, SPD and Greens are in favour of a deeper, yet different form of economic integration.

On the political dimension, the differences between the party families are less articulated. All parties continuously stressed the benefits of European cooperation and the need for further political integration, including the creation of a European Defence Union, a common asylum system, a stronger foreign and security policy, and a close partnership with France. Moreover, all parties were in favour of further enlargement (with the exception of Turkey for the CDU) and remarked that the EU needs to become more democratic and efficient, proposing a

strengthening of the EP (all), a European constitution (SPD, '17), and a multi-speed Europe (Greens, '17). Shifts, if they occurred, were rather small without a specific direction. Only the CDU became clearly more Europhile throughout time, considering that they promised to “take back competences” as an opposition party in 2005.

Even though no clear positional shifts can be detected on either of the dimensions, all parties did react to the AFD in their 2017 manifestos by opposing their claims directly or indirectly. The statements “We are the political force that defends Europe against right nationalism” (Greens), “Europe is not a loss of sovereignty, it is an increase in sovereignty” (SPD), “History has shown in which ends aggressive nationalism leads” (FDP) and “Thousands of people went on the streets for Pulse of Europe” (CDU) are a clear indication that the Euroscepticism of the AFD was not simply ignored but deliberately contested through an adversarial strategy. All mainstream parties tried to convince voters that the far-right's positions are wrong. In that, German parties clearly stand out as being the most Europhile in this analysis.

5.1.2 France

In France, it is the far-right National Front which has successfully presented itself as an alternative to mainstream parties since 1972. It takes a hard Eurosceptic position on both dimensions. Economically, the FN criticizes the EU of pursuing a radical neoliberal policy, leaving the country exposed to the detrimental forces of globalization. To protect the economy, the FN favours an exit of the Eurozone and the reintroduction of its former currency the Franc. Politically, the party advocates a withdrawal of France from the EU through public referendum and the creation of a Europe of sovereign nation-states. Like the AFD, the FN embodies a strong anti-immigrant stance and wants to reintroduce national border controls. Given its growing vote-share in the last two elections, mainstream party positional shifts could be expected to have occurred in 2012 and 2017.

Looking at the content analysis alone, it could be suggested that great positional shifts have not taken place as French mainstream parties have equally taken a Europhile position on the two dimensions. Both the UMP and the PS have stayed reformist Europhile economically while the PS has shifted towards a hard Europhile stance politically. Nevertheless, this is only half of the story as the textual analysis revealed two relevant additional aspects. Concerning the framing of EU integration, French parties differ from German ones in that they view the EU primarily in terms of a faulty neoliberal economic integration. Concerning positional shifts, the UMP manifesto of 2017 displayed signs of Eurosceptic contagion, despite the fact that it was coded reformist Europhile.

The way French parties view European economic integration is best demonstrated by referring to two quotes from both party manifestos in 2007. The UMP claimed that “In contrast to its founding principles, it [Europe] has taken the image of a trojan horse in which globalization is reduced to trade liberalization and the free movement of capital”, while the PS argued that “The liberal course imprinted in the European construction has masked an integration focused on solidarity”. This wording is quite remarkable as it closely corresponds to the criticism of the FN, with the only difference being that the far-right advocates national solutions (a ‘buy France Act’) while both mainstream parties aim for European solutions (a ‘buy European Act’). Accordingly, the economic policy propositions of the UMP and the PS are almost identical. Both are in favour of fiscal and social harmonization, a monetary policy focused on growth and not inflation and an EU economic government for the Eurozone. Both also oppose EU free trade agreements and demand a higher reciprocity in international trade negotiations. The newly founded En Marche party is less critical, but similarly proposes an EU finance minister and a budget for the Eurozone. In this sense, all French parties have taken a very ‘leftist’ reformist Europhile position.

The ideological differences between the two mainstream parties on the political dimension became more discernible throughout the years. Until 2012, the UMP and PS shared a number of positions, including the creation of an Energy Union and of a multi-speed Europe. This changed in the 2017 election, when the UMP became more Eurosceptic while the PS became more Europhile. The UMP's claim to "end the permanent enlargements of the EU" stands in sharp contrast to the party's pro-enlargement position before, and the slogans to "expel systematically those refugees that are culpable of a crime" and to "end the normative inflation of the European Commission" appear to be copied literally from the FN. Evidently, the UMP tried to appeal to Conservative FN voters by subtly accommodating the party's populist, anti-elite and nativist stances. A positional shift on the content analysis could not be demonstrated because these statements were only scattered with the overall manifesto taking a less Eurosceptic tone. The PS, in contrast, pursued an adversarial strategy by claiming that "Europe is in danger. The solution can neither be a return to divided nation-states, nor the pursue of economic austerity". The En Marche similarly accused the far-right of making unrealistic promises but went further with its suggestion to introduce citizen conventions to talk about Europe's future.

In summary, it can be concluded that the FN predominantly affected the salience and positioning of French mainstream parties on the political dimension. In line with hypotheses 2a and 2b, the Socialists decided to reinforce their Europhile positions, while the Conservatives attempted to lure FN voters by accommodating their positions. The fact that all parties have a negative attitude towards the current form of EU economic integration is a reflection of a different political culture, which is centred around a strong and protective nation-state, rather than a sign of contagion effects.

5.1.3 United Kingdom

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union has always been a tense one since the country's EU accession in 1973. Both major UK parties have taken a strong Eurosceptic position over time, with Labour taking the lead in the 1970s and 80s and the Conservatives from the 1990s onwards. Nowadays, the level of public and party Euroscepticism is so pronounced that it led a majority to vote in favour of the country's withdrawal from the EU in the 2016 referendum. An important role in channelling people's Eurosceptic attitudes is played by the far-right UKIP, which was founded in 1993 to lead the UK out of the EU. Economically, it strongly supports free trade but opposes the EU's exclusive competence over parts of the Single Market while politically, it portrays the Union as "undemocratic, corrupt and un-reformable" ('05). A Brexit is seen as an act of liberation allowing the country to make its own laws, control the influx of immigrants and save billions of pounds. In light of these circumstances, it is interesting to see how British mainstream parties have reacted.

Figure 2 reveals that there are significant variations within and between the parties' EU positions over time. As expected, the Conservatives are the most Eurosceptic party occupying positions from reformist to hard Eurosceptic. Labour and the Liberal Democrats are more in favour of Europe taking predominantly hard and reformist Europhile positions. The political dimension is interesting for a number of reasons. First, all parties emphasized it much more than the economic one, especially in the 2015 and 2017 manifestos. This is because questions of national sovereignty form the core of British Euroscepticism and became most debated before and after the Brexit referendum. Second, it is the dimension on which all parties have become more Eurosceptic until 2015. The largest shift between two elections was made by Labour in 2015 switching from a hard Europhile to an almost reformist Eurosceptic position. In 2017, however, Labour and the Liberal Democrats became more Europhile again. These right-shifts require explanations which can be given with the textual analysis.

The economic dimension is little emphasized by mainstream parties because it is a largely uncontested policy area. The benefits of the Single Market and free trade were highlighted by all parties, with Labour additionally stressing the acquired social rights and workplace protections through EU regulations. The only area of disagreement between the parties was whether the UK should join the Euro. The Conservatives spoke against it since the beginning, while Labour and the Liberal Democrats were more favourable until 2015. The Euro crisis and the bailout packages appear to be the main reason for their subsequent shifts. After the 2016 referendum, the Conservatives favoured a hard Brexit by leaving the Single Market and the Customs Union, replacing it with a “a deep and special partnership including a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement”. The underlying reason for this apparent positional shift is because membership in these institutions would include the freedom of movement as well which the Conservatives wanted to control by all means. By contrast, Labour and the Liberal Democrats remained in favour of staying in both institutions. In this sense, no clear positional shifts can be demonstrated for these parties on the economic dimension.

Positions on the political dimension are characterized by large Eurosceptic shifts for all parties, in particular at the 2015 election. The Conservatives were always the biggest competitor to UKIP’s Eurosceptic positions in that they opposed a federal Europe, claimed to bring back competences over migration and employment legislation, and argued to give national Parliaments the power to block unwanted legislation (all ‘05/’10). However, until 2010, they still acknowledged the EU’s achievements and the benefits of membership and were therefore coded reformist Eurosceptic. This changed in 2015 when UKIP-inspired populist statements became dominant such as “the EU is too big, too bossy and too bureaucratic” or “we want to see power flowing away from Brussels, not to it”. In a similar vein, the Conservatives accommodated UKIP’s anti-immigrant positions by promising to ban job-seeking benefits for EU migrants and to expel them after six months of unemployment. The fact that the manifesto did not take any clear position on whether to stay in or leave the EU gives evidence for the high

level of division within the party. As is well-known, the 'Brexiters' prevailed after the referendum leading the Conservatives to adopt a hard Eurosceptic stance in 2017.

Whereas the fact that the Conservatives pursued an accommodative strategy is not utterly surprising, the fact that Labour and the Liberal Democrats also did so is indeed. After all, Labour boasted itself in 2005 and 2010 to be the party that made Britain an important player in European politics again. It explicitly voiced its support for a stronger foreign and security policy as well as for further enlargement, and was, therefore, coded hard Europhile. Just like the Conservatives, however, these Europhile statements gave way to reformist Eurosceptic ones in 2015. Although remaining in favour of EU membership as such, Labour refused any further transfers of power and proposed to empower member state Parliaments to block unwanted EU legislation. On the issue of immigration, Labour equally promised to restrict the flow of workers from newly-joined member states. The 2017 manifesto accepted the referendum result but took a much friendlier tone, arguing in favour of a soft Brexit and a close relationship with the EU⁸. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, have been the most supportive party of EU integration throughout the years. Nevertheless, although they campaigned to stay in the EU, their 2015 manifesto incorporated the same Eurosceptic propositions (national Parliaments blocking EU legislation, the abolition of child benefits for immigrants) as their competitors. This changed in 2017 when the Liberal Democrats took a hard Europhile position again by arguing for another referendum over EU membership when a 'divorce agreement' has been reached. What is interesting in this regard is that they already proposed a public referendum over EU membership in 2010, supposedly to end the ongoing discussions once and for all.

Having outlined the characteristics of positional changes, the question arises to what extent these contagion effects were actually caused by UKIP itself. What can be said with reasonable

⁸ It is obviously debatable whether this constitutes a more Europhile stance. In contrast to 2015, however, the 2017 Labour manifesto highlighted the benefits of EU membership much more overtly and therefore has been coded as reformist Europhile.

certainty is that the Conservative Party shifted because of the electoral strength of UKIP in combination with a growing pressure from Eurosceptic party elites. In order to regain an absolute Parliamentary majority again in the 2015 elections, party leader David Cameron deliberately placed the question over the country's EU membership at the centre of its election campaign. As regards Labour and the Liberal Democrats, however, it seems more likely that they accommodated some Eurosceptic claims in response to the shift of the Conservative party, a two-stage contagion effect so to say. By incorporating Europhile and Eurosceptic positions, both parties aimed to increase their vote-share by appealing to EU supporters and soft EU sceptics alike. The fact that Labour and the Liberal Democrats took a more Europhile stance in 2017 is a further indication that their Eurosceptic shift in 2015 was more of strategic nature, 'cheap talk' so to say. The refugee crisis of 2015 as a possible intersecting external event can be ruled out because it mainly occurred in autumn after the elections.

5.2 Discussion

Having presented the country-specific outcomes, what results can be drawn? Before turning to the hypotheses, it is important to mention that the findings of this content analysis are corresponding to observable changes in the CMP manifesto data and the CHES expert data (see Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix). The only deviation is that the Eurosceptic shifts of Labour and the Liberal Democrats were not visible in either of the two datasets.

With regard to the salience of EU integration issues, hypothesis 1 can be confirmed for Germany and the UK. In both countries, parties did increase the breadth and depth of their EU policy positions over time. This shift was particularly pronounced in Germany, but also in the 2015 and 2017 UK manifestos on the political dimension. France is somewhat of an outlier because the length of the Europe section there did not increase but stayed the same between 600 and 1,000 words. One explanation for that is that French party manifestos are generally shorter and often arranged in bullet points. What can be stated for all three parties is that they

chose to compete with the radical right on the European dimension. A dismissive strategy was not pursued.

When it comes to the question of whether party positional shifts have occurred (hypothesis 2) and if yes, in which direction (hypotheses 2a and 2b), the results are highly divergent. What can be generally concluded is that there is no common Eurosceptic shift by mainstream parties as the findings of Meijers (2017) and Williams and Ishiyama (2018) suggest. In fact, the overall location of party positions and the direction and intensity of positional changes are found to be more alike within a country than across countries or party families. The fact that German mainstream parties are strongly supporting EU integration might not come unexpected, but it is still remarkable that there is *such* a broad overall consensus on the need for and benefit of European political integration. All parties have moved towards (CDU) or reinforced (SPD, FDP, Greens) their hard Europhile positions over time. Ideological differences between mainstream-left and right parties are more pronounced on European economic integration, but no positional shifts have occurred. French parties, on the other hand, are also supportive of European political integration, but not nearly as enthusiastic about it as their German counterparts. Besides sovereignty questions and the concerns of a democratic deficit, the perception that EU economic integration is placing liberalization over social protection is the dominant narrative in France. Accordingly, even the mainstream-right UMP holds a steady reformist Europhile position. The only true contagion effect could be found for British parties, which have all become more Eurosceptic on EU political integration over time. Whereas Labour has approximated a reformist Eurosceptic position, the Conservatives have shifted towards a hard Eurosceptic position. What is intriguing in this regard is that all three parties did not only emphasize the same issue areas in their 2015 manifestos but made Eurosceptic claims that were almost identical in wording.

Therefore, in contrast to what hypothesis 2 suggests, only about half of the investigated mainstream parties – all British parties, the German CDU and the French UMP – have made discernible positional shifts in the first place. No common positional shifts of mainstream-right parties can be detected, and contrary to the expectations, the German CDU and FDP have become more in favour of political integration while the French UMP has kept its critical position vis-à-vis economic integration. Common positional shifts of mainstream-left parties can be confirmed for the German SPD and Greens as well as the French PS, which have reinforced their critical stance on economic integration but strengthened their supporting position on EU political integration. As regards hypothesis 3, it can be concluded that the positional and saliency changes of mainstream parties are indeed a response to the strength of far-right parties. Even though the research design did not allow to establish a true causal relationship between the variables, process-tracing techniques helped to set-up a very strong association nonetheless. German parties and the French PS pursued an adversarial strategy as they all referred to and opposed the far-right claims in their 2017 manifestos. British parties and the French UMP pursued an accommodative strategy as they all shifted emphasis to sovereignty and immigration issues and changed their previous positions on these topics.

What are the implications of these results for European party competition and the prospects of further EU integration? Even though they cannot be generalized to other European countries, what can be stated is that the presence of strong far-right parties does not necessarily lead to Eurosceptic shifts of mainstream parties. Parties do pursue different strategies with some moving towards the far-right and others moving away from it, while still others reinforce their original positions. Whatever strategy, their decisions appear to be more similar within a country than across countries or party families. The German case has shown that far-right Euroscepticism can be successfully opposed by mainstream parties. By emphasizing the benefits of European cooperation, mainstream parties can isolate the far-right claims. On the other hand, the British case evinces that extreme-right Euroscepticism can be contagious

nonetheless, especially if mainstream parties already have a critical opinion on the EU. The same appears to be true for the Austrian ÖVP and the Hungarian Fidesz. What will be interesting to see is whether parties that pursue an adversarial strategy today will continue to do so in the future. While the UMP already demonstrated signs of contagion in 2017, there are growing rumours within the CDU, and in particular within its sister party the CSU, about the party's right EU positioning.

As long as mainstream parties in other European countries can successfully resist far-right contagion and minimize their public influence, the prospects for further European integration are there. However, the current political developments with far-right and populist parties forming part of government coalitions raise doubts to whether this is still feasible. In any case, their growing influence shows that the EU is now facing a more and more powerful and overt resistance, instead of a mere creeping Eurosceptic opposition. Time will tell whether the European construction can withstand these pressures.

6 Conclusion

This thesis has empirically investigated how mainstream party positioning towards European integration is affected by the growing electoral strength of far-right parties. Combining a content and a textual analysis, the paper comparatively analysed saliency and positional shifts of German, French and British mainstream parties from 2005 to 2017 by looking at their manifesto programmes. The findings suggest that although far-right parties lead mainstream parties to put more emphasis on EU issues generally, the way their EU positions change follows very different paths. German parties are the most Europhile, having either reinforced or shifted towards a more supportive EU policy stance. French parties are united in their criticism of the functioning of EU economic integration, but show different responses to EU political integration, with the centre-left becoming more Europhile and the centre-right becoming more Eurosceptic. British parties are the most Eurosceptic by far with all of them having

accommodated the populist and anti-immigrant statements of the far-right throughout time, albeit to different degrees. Therefore, it can be concluded that mainly British parties were affected by far-right contagion, both the mainstream-left and the mainstream-right.

The thesis contributes to a better conceptual, methodological and empirical understanding of Euroscepticism. Conceptually, it proposes a new model of party-based Euroscepticism that makes two important steps forward. On the one hand, the model goes beyond the common but rough distinction of soft vs. hard Euroscepticism by differentiating between parties' general EU support (Europhile vs. Eurosceptic) and their evaluation of the current functioning (hard vs. reformist). This allows scholars to gain a more fine-grained understanding of the different degrees of party-based Euroscepticism. On the other hand, the model's incorporation of an economic and a political dimension recognizes that there are different frames of Euroscepticism. Whereas economic Euroscepticism is based on parties' opposition to the orthodox liberal nature of the EU as is the case in France, political Euroscepticism is grounded in parties' resistance towards the transfer of further authority to the EU level as is the case in the UK.

Methodologically, the applied mixed-methods design is equally innovative. It goes beyond most studies of party competition that rely on either quantitative or qualitative methods by integrating these two. The quantitative content analysis allows one to gather reliable data on parties' EU positional changes over time, while the qualitative textual analysis adds a higher validity to these shifts by accounting for the issues which parties highlight. This enables to establish a strong link between the policy positions of far-right and mainstream parties. In addition, the content analysis stands out for itself in that the party manifestos were all coded by hand. Although very time-consuming, only the manual coding allowed the portrayal of party positional changes according to the theoretical model proposed. The often insufficient categorization of secondary data was overcome.

Empirically, the analysis is insightful because it offers an up-to-date examination of mainstream party positional changes that takes the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis and the Brexit into account. The paper's main finding that mainstream parties have reacted very differently to the electoral threat of the far-right effectively means that a Eurosceptic turn is neither illusory nor unavoidable. In this sense, the thesis only conditionally supports Norris' (2005) claim of a 'contagion of the right' vis-à-vis European integration. The presence of a strong Eurosceptic far-right party within a political system alone does not appear to be sufficient to cause mainstream party shifts. What seems to be important in this regard is the role of domestic factors, in particular how Euroscepticism is framed within a country.

Further research should look into these different frames of Euroscepticism (and EU support) in more detail. The differentiation between economic and political Euroscepticism is a good starting point, but further conceptual clarification is necessary. In order to gain a more holistic understanding of whether a creeping Eurosceptic opposition is underway in Europe or not, more qualitative case study evidence on mainstream party positional shifts in other European countries is needed. This should also include the impact of far-left parties on which evidence is rather scarce. Finally, the exact causal link of contagion effects necessitates further attention: Are mainstream-right parties more vulnerable to it than mainstream-left parties? If so, do mainstream-left parties only become more Eurosceptic if mainstream-right parties have already shifted; a two-step contagion effect as the British case suggests? Considering that Eurosceptic parties are experiencing an electoral boost at the moment, it can certainly be suggested that Euroscepticism will remain a fruitful field of scholarly research in the future.

Appendices

Table 3: List of included parties with overall ideological scores.

Germany	France	United Kingdom
CDU: 6.1	UMP: 7.4	Conservatives: 6.9
SPD: 3.7	PS: 3.2	Labour: 4.2
FDP: 6.6	En Marche: N/A	Liberal Democrats: 4.7
B90/Grüne: 3.5		
AFD: 8.9	FN: 9.8	UKIP: 8.8

Note: Average value of a party's overall ideological stance (item 'LRGEN') from the CHES waves of 2006, 2010 and 2014; score from 0 – extreme left to 10 – extreme right; only those mainstream parties were selected with a value between 2 and 8 and an average Parliamentary seat share of at least 5%.

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 1999-2014 trendfile (Polk et al., 2017; Bakker et al., 2015), own compilation.

Table 4: Secondary data on party Euroscepticism, Comparative Manifesto Project.

Germany	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	B90/Grüne	AFD
2005	2.44/2.44	2.38/0.45	4.09/1.27	3.21/0.32	-
2009	3.09/1.10	3.31/0.14	3.65/0.76	2.64/0.17	-
2013	2.02/0.66	2.62/0.41	1.59/0.97	2.65/0.15	-
2017	1.64/0.00	4.46/0.00	6.60/0.00	4.16/0.03	0.00/5.88
France	UMP	PS	En Marche		FN
2007	4.73/0.11	3.99/0.00	-		0.00/5.88
2012	9.75/0.21	2.34/0.00	-		0.00/5.05
2017	2.34/0.39	5.26/0.00	4.70/0.00		0.00/0.78
United Kingdom	Conservatives	Labour	Lib Dem		UKIP
2005	1.16/2.91	2.34/0.19	2.04/0.15		-
2010	0.99/1.44	1.50/0.26	2.21/0.49		-
2015	0.57/4.59	2.87/0.10	2.66/0.78		0.67/16.53
2017	-	-	-		-

Note: The first values indicate the percentage share of parties' positive mentions of the EU (item 'per108'), the second values indicate the percentage share of parties' negative mentions of the EU (item 'per110'); calculated as a fraction of the overall number of allocated codes per document.

Source: Volkens et al. (2017), own compilation.

Table 5: Secondary data on party Euroscepticism, Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

Germany	CDU	SPD	FDP	B90/Grüne	AFD
2006	6.36	6	6.27	5.82	-
2010	6	5.88	6	6	-
2014	6.38	6.38	5.69	6.23	1.62
France	UMP	PS	En Marche		FN
2006	5.67	5	-		1
2010	6	6.13	-		1.22
2014	5.43	5.79	-		1.23
United Kingdom	Conservatives	Labour	Lib Dem		UKIP
2006	2.56	5.22	6.22		1
2010	2.27	4.80	6		1
2014	3.14	5.57	6.71		1.14

Note: Values display parties' overall orientation towards European integration (item 'EU_POSITION'); score from 1 – strongly opposed to 10 – strongly in favour; CSU not included here.

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 1999-2014 trendfile (Polk et al., 2017; Bakker et al., 2015), own compilation.

Abbreviations

AFD:	Alternative for Germany [Alternative für Deutschland] <i>German populist party, far-right</i>
B90/Grüne:	Alliance 90/The Greens [Bündnis 90/Die Grünen] <i>German Green party, centre-left</i>
CDU:	Christian Democratic Union [Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands] <i>German Conservative party, centre-right</i>
CSU:	Christian Social Union [Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern] <i>German Conservative party, sister party of the CDU, centre-right</i>
En Marche:	Republic Onwards <i>French Liberal party, centre to centre-right</i>
EP:	European Parliament
EU:	European Union
FDP:	Free Democratic Party [Freie Demokratische Partei] <i>German Liberal party, centre to centre-right</i>
Fidesz:	Hungarian Civil Alliance [Fidesz - Magyar Polgári Szövetség] <i>Hungarian populist party, centre-right to far-right</i>
FN:	National Front [Front Nationale] <i>French populist party, far-right; since June 2018 called 'National Rally'</i>
Lib Dem:	Liberal Democrats
ÖVP:	Austrian People's Party [Österreichische Volkspartei] <i>Austrian Conservative Party, centre-right</i>
PS:	Socialist Party [Parti socialiste] <i>French Social-Democratic party, centre-left</i>
SPD:	Social Democratic Party [Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands] <i>German Social Democratic party, centre-left</i>
UK:	United Kingdom
UMP:	Union for a Popular Movement [Union pour un mouvement populaire] <i>French Conservative party, centre-right; since May 2015 called 'The Republicans'</i>

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Special annex: Thesis report

Thesis Report

Central European University / University of York

Contagious Euroscepticism: Examining the impact of far-right parties on mainstream party positioning towards European integration in Germany, France and the UK

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Number of words (including Appendix): 6.689

Submitted on July 15th, 2017

Y3850523

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1. Introduction

Throughout the last two decades, European integration has become a highly contested issue. What was used to be known as a ‘permissive consensus’ between party elites and the general public has now been replaced by a ‘constraining dissensus’ (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Not only are citizens increasingly skeptical about the functioning and policy outcomes of the European Union (EU), but mainstream European parties face growing difficulties to reach an internally-agreed position on the topic. They are confronted with a rising electoral support for far-right parties which have made Euroscepticism a central tenet of their ideology (Mudde 2007). In contrast to most mainstream parties, radical right parties have taken a clear oppositional stance on European integration, either calling for a complete withdrawal of their country’s membership from the EU (UKIP⁹, FN¹⁰) or demanding fundamental internal reforms of the Union such as a break-up of the common currency (AFD¹¹).

Given that European integration is now a salient area of political contestation with the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis and the Brexit serving as key events, the question arises how mainstream parties have reacted to the anti-European sentiments of the far-right. Have they reinforced their pro-European position or have they adapted a more Eurosceptic stance? The latter would be an indication of what has been termed ‘contagion effect’ in the literature, which is the strategic co-optation of far-right policies by a mainstream party for electoral gains. While there has been some evidence of contagion effects in the policy areas of immigration and multiculturalism, only little research has been conducted on Euroscepticism. This is remarkable since the extent to which Eurosceptic opposition parties can affect mainstream governing parties’ EU position has a direct effect on the selection of public policies towards European integration. The thesis aims at filling this research gap with the following research question: How has the growing support for far-right parties affected the positioning of mainstream parties towards European integration?

This thesis report covers the theoretical ground for the thesis itself and is divided into five sections. The literature review will first embed the thesis into the current body of research on contagion effects and Euroscepticism by pointing out the gap in the literature. The subsequent section will present the theoretical framework of mainstream party competition, state hypotheses on mainstream party positioning and set forth a conceptualization of two distinct dimensions of Euroscepticism. This is followed by an overview of the research design which

⁹ United Kingdom Independence Party, hereafter referred to as UKIP

¹⁰ Front National (National Front), hereafter referred to as FN

¹¹ Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), hereafter referred to as AFD

will comprise a content analysis of mainstream party manifestos and a text analysis of parliamentary debates in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The report closes with a conclusion. A work plan detailing deadlines that are observed for writing up the different parts of the thesis will be attached.

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of contagion

The rise of far-right parties is now a well-established fact. Table 1 depicts the vote-share of the dominating extreme right parties in Germany, France and the United Kingdom from 2005 to 2017. An upward trend in all three countries is clearly visible with the FN and the UKIP having reached over 12 percent in recent elections. This has led researchers to raise the question whether established parties would be tempted by the far-right's electoral success and adopt some of their policy positions into their own programmes to boost their election results. This programmatic repositioning of mainstream parties on certain policy issues has been termed 'contagion effect'. While originally used to indicate shifts in party membership structure ('contagion from the left', see Duverger 1954) and in party campaign strategy ('contagion from the right', see Epstein 1967), its current notion is based on the 'contagion of the right' thesis by Norris (2005). In her influential work, she argued that mainstream right parties have made a right-shift by co-opting the restrictive immigration policies of the far-right.

Table 1: Vote-share of far-right parties in national parliamentary elections, 2005-2017

Germany AFD	<i>Year</i>	2005	2009	2013	2017
	<i>% of votes</i>	-	-	4.7	?
France FN	<i>Year</i>		2007	2012	2017
	<i>% of votes</i>		4.3	13.6	13.2
United Kingdom UKIP	<i>Year</i>	2005	2010	2015	2017
	<i>% of votes</i>	2.2	3.1	12.6	1.8

Source: *Parties and Elections in Europe* (<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/>)

2.2. From contagion effects on immigration to Euroscepticism

The work of Norris can be regarded as the starting point of a growing amount of research that investigated a shift in mainstream party positioning on issues typically owned by the radical right including immigration, multiculturalism, welfare and, to some extent, Euroscepticism. While most studies confirmed contagion effects on mainstream right parties and in some cases also on mainstream left parties, a few studies found no support for Norris' argument.

On the issue of immigration policies, Van Spanje (2010) statistically found support for contagion affecting both the mainstream left and right equally with the exception for parties in

government. Bale et al. (2010) came to a different conclusion: Using process-tracing to analyse changes of immigration positions of Social Democratic parties in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Austria over time, they found divergent responses with some parties moving towards a tougher stance while others taking a more open position. Evidence that there are no contagion effects come from Rooduijn et al. (2014) who quantitatively analysed the degree of populist statements in mainstream party manifestos and concluded that they have not become more populist in the last two decades.

Other studies broadened the scope to policies on welfare and multiculturalism and confirmed contagion of mainstream right parties in these areas (Schumacher and Van Kersbergen 2016, Westlake 2016). Furthermore, there is also evidence that not only mainstream parties have shifted, but also far-right parties themselves: Wagner and Mayer's (2016) findings suggest that although mainstream parties have shifted to the right on liberal-authoritarian issues, radical right parties have done so even more thereby further increasing the gap between the two. With regard to the proximity in issue positions of mainstream parties to the far-right, the research done by Immerzeel et al. (2016) shows that the mainstream left is closer on a style dimension (anti-establishment, populism), whereas the mainstream right is closer on an ideological dimension (immigration, nationalism).

While there is some evidence for the existence of far-right contagion effects to mainstream parties on 'traditional' topics of the far-right, only little research has been devoted to the issue of Euroscepticism. The most rigorous attempt to systematically capture a shift in mainstream parties' EU position was done by Meijers (2017). Using time-series cross-sectional regression models with data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, he demonstrated that electoral gains of Eurosceptic fringe parties – both left and right – can lead to mainstream party positional shifts on European integration. This shift is dependent on the salience that these fringe parties allocate to EU issues. Interestingly, Meijers' analysis suggests that centre-left parties are affected by far-right and far-left contagion equally, whereas centre-right parties are only susceptible to far-right contagion. His focus on positional shifts goes beyond previous studies that only looked at the impact that Eurosceptic parties have on the salience of European issues. Van de Wardt (2015), for instance, showed that electoral gains of fringe parties can lead mainstream parties to put more emphasis on European issues; this confirmed previous case-studies from the UK (Baker et al. 2008) and Italy (Quaglia 2008).

2.3. Euroscepticism as a dominant issue of the radical right

Given the growing body of research on contagion effects by parties on the ideological fringes, it is thus quite surprising that only a few studies have been focusing on contagious Euroscepticism. After all, the fact that mainstream parties generally hold pro-EU positions while parties on the radical left and the radical right are less supportive of European integration is now well-established¹² (March 2011, Mudde 2007). Scholars have termed this an ‘inverted U-curve’ relationship (Hooghe et al. 2002).

There are arguably a variety of reasons why fringe parties deliberately possess anti-European attitudes. Some scholars argued that Euroscepticism is a strategic tool to delineate these parties from the political mainstream, either in terms of positions (Taggart 1998) or in terms of issue ownership (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Others emphasized ideological reasons for their opposition: While radical right parties voice their resistance to the EU on the basis of identity and sovereignty concerns (Mudde 2007), radical left parties oppose the EU on the basis of its ‘neoliberal’ character (March 2011). Moreover, it is evident that fringe parties also strategically responded to the more critical view of the general public towards European integration. Eurobarometer data reveals that there has been a significant decline in trust in European institutions from the mid-2000s onwards, but in particular after the breakout of the Euro crisis in 2008 (Roth et al. 2013). According to Werts et al. (2013), Eurosceptic attitudes were the third strongest driver of a radical right vote in 18 European countries between 2002 and 2008, beyond perceived ethnic threat and political distrust.

2.4. Mainstream party response

The success of far-right parties in emphasizing opposition to European integration also stems from the fact that mainstream parties used to largely ignore European issues. The term ‘sleeping giant’ created by Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004, 48) captures well the fact that mainstream parties had no interest in campaigning on European issues. European Parliament Elections were considered as ‘second-order’ elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Schmitt 2005) with an overall ‘permissive consensus’ between the electorate and the party elites (Hooghe and Marks 2009). However, it can be argued that the sleeping giant has awakened. The Euro crisis, where the economic cleavages between Northern and Southern Europe became evident, the refugee crisis, where European leaders failed to act collectively and the Brexit, which reinforced nationalist mobilization – all these events have made European integration a highly salient area of political

¹² A notable exception are mainstream parties in the UK which have traditionally taken a rather Eurosceptic stance.

contestation. Radical right parties such as the UKIP in the UK and the FN in France successfully captured the votes of those people who were dissatisfied with European politics which De Vries (2007) referred to as EU issue voting.

The rising electoral success of the radical right is forcing mainstream parties to respond and position themselves clearly. But in what way have they responded? Scholars have emphasized that mainstream parties tend to be internally divided over the issue of European integration (Van de Wardt et al. 2014), mainly because this dimension does not neatly align with the traditional left-right dimension of party ideology (Hix 1999, Hooghe and Marks 2001). Therefore, the question arises if mainstream parties have equally increased the salience of the issue and if yes, whether they have moved towards a more Eurosceptic stance or a more pro-European position. As shown above, there have only been a few empirical investigations about contagious Euroscepticism with some of them focusing on a single country only. This is unsatisfactory and necessitates further research. After all, a contagion-effect implies that right-wing Eurosceptic parties can, even without being in government, significantly influence public policy outcomes on EU matters. If mainstream parties are found to be ‘immune’ against Eurosceptic contagion, there might be the prospect of a deeper European integration. The thesis tries to fill this research gap by posing the following research question:

How has the growing support for far-right parties affected the positioning of mainstream parties towards European integration?

The following section presents the theoretical framework of mainstream party competition, states hypotheses and sets forth a preliminary conceptualization of different dimensions of Euroscepticism.

3. Theory and hypotheses

3.1. A theory on mainstream party competition

In line with the research question, the goal of the upcoming thesis is twofold: On the one hand, it strives to demonstrate that mainstream parties have shifted in their positioning towards European integration. On the other hand, it intends to show that this shift has been partially a direct response to the electoral strength of the extreme right. Thus, these suppositions require the set-up of a theory on mainstream party competition.

The theoretical baseline is Downs (1957) classical spatial model of two-party competition. The model assumes that parties are rational actors which are competing for votes along a one-dimensional spatial continuum. Voter preferences are distributed along this dimension as well.

When deciding how to position themselves, parties have two possible strategies: Moving towards their competitor (policy convergence) or moving away from it (policy divergence). If a particular competitor performs well in the previous elections, it is rational for the party to expect many voters to be close to the competitor's position, thus moving towards it. In effect, the model would predict that mainstream parties which are close to the far-right party on an EU integration dimension would move closer and adapt its position. However, this framework has several shortcomings (see Meguid 2005). It assumes that parties can only affect the electoral support of neighboring parties through a change in positioning, but neglects the fact that parties can also manipulate the perceived salience of issues. In other words, also non-proximal parties can affect the areas of competition by reducing its salience, as mainstream parties have continuously done for European integration. Moreover, it implicitly posits that voters whose positions are in-between two equally distant parties are indifferent in their vote choice. Here, the model underestimates the issue ownership that parties have, especially that of far-right parties in their persistent and sharp criticism to European integration.

In light of these shortcomings, the thesis will be built upon the modified spatial theory developed by Meguid (2005). He effectively remedies the problem by including the insights of issue evolution theory (e.g. Schattschneider 1960) into the spatial model. When confronted with an emerging niche party (in this case, a far-right party), Meguid demonstrates that mainstream parties can employ three distinct strategies. The first decision a mainstream party takes is whether it wants to compete on the issue presented by the far-right party or not. If it chooses not to, it takes what he calls a 'dismissive strategy'. By reducing the salience of the topic, the mainstream party hopes to downplay the issue's merit and decrease its policy-based appeal. If other mainstream parties do the same and voters can be convinced, the model predicts that the radical right will not benefit electorally. With regard to European integration, however, this strategy is rather unlikely as mainstream parties cannot easily withdraw from European issues without losing votes.

If a mainstream party decides to compete with the far-right, it has to choose whether to adapt to the far-right's policy position or whether to oppose it. If it chooses to adapt to it, it employs an 'accommodative strategy' which Bale et al. (2010, 410) called "if you can't beat them, join them". The party tries to contest the issue ownership of the radical right by offering the same or similar positions and siphon off as many votes as possible; it is thus affected by far-right contagion. This strategy is associated with the risk that the mainstream party loses its credibility, either because its position is ideologically contrary to its other positions or because it has previously advocated a contrary position. Nevertheless, Meguid argues that this can be a

promising strategy for mainstream parties to increase their vote-share; it is therefore likely that it is also employed with regard to European issues.

At the same time, a mainstream party can decide to compete with the far-right by taking up a radically different position. With an ‘adversarial strategy’, the party declares its opposition to the policy stance of the far-right party and tries to convince voters that the competitor’s position is wrong and unjustified. It thereby reinforces the far-right party’s issue ownership and leaves voters the choice between two opposite alternatives. An adversarial strategy could equally mean that a mainstream party just holds on to its prior position but increases its salience. While this strategy ensures the credibility of the party’s policy position, it carries the risk to lose votes to the competitor at the same time. For European integration, this strategy is equally plausible since mainstream parties are often convinced by the political and economic benefit of a viable European cooperation, independent of electoral pressure.

3.2. General hypotheses

Based on the spatial model by Meguid, three general hypotheses can be derived. The first one relates to the saliency of European integration in mainstream party positioning. As previously noted, it can be expected that all mainstream parties have emphasized European issues stronger than before. This can be mainly attributed to the growing importance of European topics to the electorate which was triggered through the recent crises and the campaign activities of the far-right. The hypothesis is thus contradictory to the findings by Van de Wardt et al. (2014) according to which mainstream parties do not campaign on European issues.

Hypothesis 1: European integration has become a more salient issue for mainstream parties.

Furthermore, it can be expected that mainstream parties have also shifted their positions on the European integration issue. The direction of this shift remains open for now as an accommodative as well as an adversarial strategy are generally both possible.

Hypothesis 2: Mainstream parties have shifted their positions on European integration (accommodative or adversarial strategy).

Lastly, this thesis specifically takes the Eurosceptic positions of far-right parties as the main independent variable. The third hypothesis is therefore as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The change in positioning on European integration is partially due to the electoral strength of far-right parties.

3.3. Other factors of positional shifts

It is important to point out that there are certainly also other external and internal factors that can lead to shifts in issue emphasis and positioning. As mentioned before, changes in public opinion are strong drivers of party positional changes. Mudde (2013) even goes that far to doubt the general influence of far-right parties and argues that mainstream parties would have become more Eurosceptic in any case as a consequence of public opinion shifts. While the specific argument can be contested, his general assumption that the influence of extreme parties is often exaggerated in both the media and scholarly debate has some truth in it. Other internal factors are the differences in ideology between mainstream left and right parties towards European integration (this will be discussed below) as well as the party's organizational structure such as its power distribution and internal cohesion. Moreover, the nature of European integration itself has changed from a focus on market-based policies until the 1990s to a stronger inclusion of social policies in the last two decades which ultimately resulted in new lines of conflict.

Nevertheless, this analysis takes the view that the mobilization of mainstream party's Euroscepticism is at least partly conditional on the presence of extreme right parties (Bornschier 2010). After all, scholars have shown that electoral losses are among the most important causes of party positional change (Erikson et al. 2002). Since radical right parties have benefitted electorally and often possess the issue ownership on Eurosceptic positions, it is very likely that mainstream parties will be strongly influenced by their EU policy stance.

3.4. European integration as a multi-dimensional concept

One of the key concepts that needs to be further conceptualized is that of European integration, or put differently, Euroscepticism. This constitutes a challenge for researchers and this thesis alike. The general problem lies in the number and kind of dimensions that European integration is made of and their relationship to traditional ideological cleavages that structure national party competition. Some studies argued that European politics does integrate into the traditional left/right dimension with left parties generally favouring further integration and right parties generally favouring less integration (e.g. Tsebelis and Garrett 2000). Given the fact that Euroscepticism comes from both the extreme left and the extreme right as the inverted U-curve suggests, however, a full integration of the European dimension into the left/right dimension can be doubted. Other studies used two dimensions. Hix (1999) reasoned that although parties attempt to frame European politics according to the left-right dimension, they are internally divided on the question of national sovereignty. This would create an additional dimension surrounding questions of more integration versus more national independence. Similarly,

Hooghe and Marks (2001) brought forward the standard left/right dimension with social democracy on the left and market liberalism on the right while adding another integration dimension ranging from nationalism to supranationalism. Other studies, in contrast, considered European integration as fully independent of national politics: Using factor analysis to figure out the number and types of latent dimensions in European politics, Bakker et al. (2012) found the EU integration dimension to be independent of an economic left-right dimension and a social left-right dimension.

While the actual dimensionality of European integration might never be ascertained, this thesis follows the reasoning of Hix (1999) and Hooghe and Marks (2001) that parties position themselves on two dimensions. In line with the approach taken by Bornschier (2012), an economic and a political dimension are constituted. The economic dimension classifies conflicts over European integration that are grounded in market integration ranging from economic liberalism on the one side to social democracy and the protection of the national welfare state on the other side. This ‘economic Euroscepticism’ stems from the dissatisfaction with the EU’s too neoliberal policies and as such does not embody a principled opposition to the integration process¹³. It can be argued that this dimension reflects the traditional state/market dimension transferred on a supranational scale. It is especially relevant given that the Euro crisis resulted in increased electoral competition over European economic policy. The political dimension classifies conflicts over European integration that are grounded in the degree of integration ranging from nationalism on the one hand to cosmopolitanism on the other hand. This ‘political Euroscepticism’ stems from the opposition towards the transfer of further authority to supranational actors and reflects a much more fundamental resistance. It is similar to the traditional libertarian/authoritarian dimension and the distinct EU dimension by Bakker et al. (2012).

This two-dimensional conceptualization of European integration has the advantage that it goes beyond a simple ‘strong opposition-strong support’ scale which was used in previous studies (e.g. Meijers 2017). It allows to measure party (re)positioning more specifically through a two-dimensional spatial model in which mainstream left and right parties can be distinguished.

¹³ This is the case for most continental far-right parties. The British UKIP (and partly the Conservatives) embody an economic Euroscepticism which is based on the perception that the EU’s economic policies are not liberal enough.

3.5. Specific hypotheses

The previous hypotheses were of very general nature and did not make claims about the direction of positional shifts. With the two dimensions of European integration present, more specific hypotheses can be developed which take into account the fact that different party families tend to emphasize different aspects of European integration. Conservative and right-wing liberal parties on the one hand tend to be in favour of market integration but are sceptical towards the transfer of authority to supranational actors (Mudde 2007). Socialist and left-wing parties on the other hand tend to favour further political integration while opposing the EU's neoliberal character (March 2011). Taking these findings as a basis, the claim of the thesis is that mainstream parties have converged to the far-right on that dimension where they are ideologically closer to, while diverged on that dimension where they are ideologically more distant to. In other words, the expectation is that contagion effects are present for both the mainstream right and left, but that they occur on that dimension of European integration on which the party has already taken a Eurosceptic position. The underlying assumption is that far-right parties incorporate political Euroscepticism (Immerzeel et al. 2016) and/or economic Euroscepticism (Schmitt-Beck 2017).

Hypothesis 4: Mainstream right parties have shifted towards less political integration (accommodative strategy) but have reinforced their support for more market integration (adversarial strategy).

Hypothesis 5: Mainstream left parties have shifted towards less market integration (accommodative strategy) but have reinforced their support for more political integration (adversarial strategy).

Having established a theory with several hypotheses, the following chapter presents the proposed methodology and a conceptual operationalization.

4. Research design

4.1. Methodology

The two tasks of the thesis – to show a shift in positioning and to demonstrate that this shift can be attributed to far-right parties – can be achieved through either quantitative or qualitative research methods. The thesis will employ two complementary qualitative methods.

For analysing shifts in mainstream party positioning, a content analysis of election party manifestos of national parliamentary elections will be conducted. Party manifestos are authoritative statements that give a profound insight into parties' ideological stances, their

positions and problem emphases at a certain point in time. Although being criticized for their non-relevance in electoral campaigns, it can be argued that they are the “best-known time-series data on party positions” we have (Klemmensen et al. 2007, 747). Moreover, they are appropriate documents for a comparative content analysis due to their comparability between countries and over time (Rooduijn et al. 2014). The use of content analysis enables researchers to quantitatively filter the positioning of parties as well as the salience parties attach to certain issues through a reliable coding scheme. Even though most studies use secondary data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), this thesis attempts to manually code the manifestos for several reasons. On the one hand, the CMP does neither comprise items regarding the political and economic dimensions of European integration nor does it measure the salience parties attach to European integration. On the other hand, the CMP will not have covered the latest elections of 2017 by the time of writing which the thesis will make use of. The manual coding of the manifestos requires a valid and reliable codebook which can appropriately measure the two dimensions and determine the salience of them. It will need to be developed in the coming months. To ensure content validity, the results will be checked against the expert data of the CMP at the end.

The fact that party manifestos are not a fruitful source to establish the link between far-right positions and mainstream positional shifts in qualitative research requires the use of other data. It is therefore proposed to additionally conduct a text analysis of a representative sample of parliamentary speeches of mainstream party members to find out if they refer to far-right parties when justifying their positions. While acknowledging that it will be not possible to show that far-right parties *caused* mainstream party change (as this would require quantitative models with certain likelihood measures), the thesis can, however, demonstrate that far-right positioning is *associated with* mainstream positional change.

As regards the case selection, the study will analyse three major EU countries: Germany, France and the United Kingdom. These countries are well-suited for a comparative case-study for various reasons. First, they all comprise strong far-right Eurosceptic parties which have experienced significant electoral gains in the last decade. Second, they differ in their electoral and party system (majoritarian/two-party system in the UK, proportional/multi-party system in Germany and France) thus ruling out possible independent institutional effects on positioning. Third, these countries represent the most dominant ones in the EU with considerable influence over the way and speed of European integration. It can be expected that the salience of European integration is at least as high (if not higher) as in other European countries making contagion

effects more likely. The limited number of cases, however prevents the thesis to make any substantiated inferences to other countries.

To find out about changes in positioning, it is necessary to analyse changes over time. In contrast to many other studies which looked at periods of 20-30 years, the thesis will use a relatively short timeframe from 2005 to 2017. One aspect is that time and space constraints inhibit a more exhaustive analysis. The main reasoning behind, though, is the general assumption that the current form and degree of Euroscepticism arose during the last 12 years with the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis and the Brexit serving as key events. The year 2005 has been chosen because it is the year where the Constitutional Treaty was rejected which marked a significant European-wide backlash to EU integration. As is shown in Table 1 presented earlier, far-right parties either emerged (AFD) or got significantly stronger (FN, UKIP) in the following years. Using this timeframe allows to analyse four elections in Germany and the United Kingdom and three elections in France. This should be sufficient to capture positional shifts.

4.2. Operationalization

The paper's use of the terms 'far-right parties' and 'mainstream parties' requires a theoretical and an empirical distinction between the two. The theoretical classification of far-right parties is taken by Mudde (2007, chapter 1) who defines them as parties that share a core ideology that includes (at least) a combination of three factors: Nativism (i.e. a xenophobic form of nationalism in which a mono-cultural nation-state is the ideal), authoritarianism (i.e. a strict belief in order and its stringent enforcement) and populism (an ideology that divides society between the pure people and the corrupt elite). Mainstream parties, by implication, have not incorporated these three factors into their ideology. The empirical distinction and operationalization is taken from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES, Bakker et al. 2015). It contains a question item on overall party ideology on a scale from 0 – extreme left to 10 – extreme right. In order to account for possible ideological shifts over time, the mean value will be taken from the CHES waves of 2006, 2010 and 2014. A party is considered extreme right if its average score is 8 or higher. A party is considered extreme left if its average score is 2 or lower and will be dropped from the analysis. All parties ranging in between the scores of 2 to 8 will be considered mainstream parties. In order to only investigate relevant mainstream parties, the additional criterium of a parliamentary seat-share of at least 5% is set-up. Table 2 (see Annex) presents a list of relevant parties for the analysis.

5. Conclusion

This thesis report establishes the theoretical ground for the Master thesis which will be written in spring and summer 2018. The thesis will contribute to the growing body of literature on party-positional shifts and contagion effects by investigating whether mainstream parties have accommodated the Euroscepticism of far-right parties or not – a question that has largely remained unanswered. Based on the modified spatial model of party competition developed by Meguid (2005), the paper theorizes that mainstream parties can employ three distinct strategies: They can decide to not compete on EU issues (dismissive strategy), they can adapt to the Eurosceptic position of the far-right (accommodative strategy), or they can take-up a pro-European position (adversarial strategy). Generally, it is argued that mainstream parties do have shifted their EU position due to the electoral strength of the far-right, but that the direction of this shift is dependent on the parties' ideological stance. Using a two-dimensional model of EU integration, the thesis hypothesizes that parties of the mainstream right have become more Eurosceptic towards further political integration while those of the mainstream left have become more Eurosceptic towards further economic integration. The hypotheses will be evaluated through a content analysis of the election manifestos of mainstream parties in Germany, France and the United Kingdom in the period from 2005 to 2017. To demonstrate that this shift can be associated with the position of far-right parties, a text analysis of parliamentary debates on EU issues will be conducted that focuses on direct references to the extreme right.

Overall, the thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the effect of far-right parties on mainstream party positioning. In particular, it will provide valuable insights into the question whether right-wing Eurosceptic parties can, even without being in government, significantly influence public policy outcomes on EU matters.

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Appendix

Table 2: List of included parties with scores on overall ideological stance

Germany	France	United Kingdom
CDU (Conservatives): 6.1	UMP/LR (Conservatives): 7.4	Conservatives: 6.9
SPD (Social Democrats): 3.7	PS (Socialists): 3.2	Labour: 4.2
FDP (Liberals): 6.6		Liberal Democrats: 4.7
B90/Grüne (Greens): 3.5		
AFD (far-right): 8.9	FN (far-right): 9.8	UKIP (far-right): 8.8

Note: Average values of item 'LRGEN' from waves of 2006, 2010 and 2014; score from 0 – extreme left to 10 – extreme right; only those mainstream parties were selected with a value between 2 and 8 and a parliamentary seat share of at least 5%.

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 1999-2014 trend file (Bakker et al. 2015), own compilation.

Table 3: Work plan and timetable for completion of the Master thesis

Deadline	Work to be completed
June 19, 2017	First full draft of thesis report
July 16, 2017	Submission of thesis report
July 16, 2017	Collection of all relevant party manifestos (including party manifestos for German elections in September 2017)
December 20, 2017	Acquisition of skills regarding the use of content analysis + text analysis through attendance of classes
April 1, 2018	Completion of codebook for content analysis
May 31, 2018	Completion of analytical part (content analysis + text analysis)
June 15, 2018	First full draft of Master thesis
June 30, 2018	Submission of Master thesis
September 2018	Oral defense of Master thesis

Declaration of authorship

I, the undersigned Johannes Kröhnert hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis report. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis report contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language. This is a true copy of the thesis report, including final revisions.

Date: 15th July 2017

Name: Johannes Kröhnert

Signature: 