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**Mainstreaming Euroscepticism?
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Abstract

(EN) The functional logic that had for so long guided European member states along the path towards 'ever closer union' has been challenged more and more strongly in recent years by a growing voice of popular dissent. Where previously, matters at the European table were kept out of the realms of domestic electoral politics, more recently they have come to the fore, as European integration has become ever more politicised in the light of a wave of radical right wing populist, single issue parties contesting the 'elite consensus' that more Europe is a good thing. This politicisation of Europe has left incumbents in an uncomfortable situation as they are forced to mobilise on an issue that they would rather see left off the agenda. This paper explores the framing strategies that centre-right parties deploy vis-à-vis Europe in domestic electoral campaigns, to decipher whether the heightened politicisation of European integration has provoked a Eurosceptic response among the erstwhile visionaries of the European project. Using an inductive textual analysis of manifesto data from three centre-right parties of the largest European Union (EU) member states, the present study finds that the politicisation of European integration follows party-systemic logics – but that there is nonetheless a remarkable tendency among the centre-right to frame Europe more and more in cultural-identitarian terms than in economic-utilitarian terms. Whether this alone can be equated to a tendency towards Euroscepticism remains an open question.

Key words: European integration; Euroscepticism; postfunctionalism; framing; centre-right; domestic elections; politicisation; France; Germany; UK

Résumé :

(FR) La logique fonctionnaliste qui avait pendant un long moment guidé les Etats Membres vers une 'union sans cesse plus étroite' s'est récemment vu contestée de plus en plus fortement dans l'opinion. Alors que les problématiques européennes restaient en dehors de la sphère de la politique domestique, elles sont récemment passées au premier plan. L'intégration européenne est devenue de plus en plus politisée dans le contexte d'une vague de populisme radical et de partis politiques spécialement focalisés sur ce thème. Cette politisation de l'Europe a forcé les partis au pouvoir à se positionner sur la question européenne qu'ils préféraient laisser de côté. Cette étude explore les stratégies de cadrage (framing strategies) adoptées par les partis du centre-droit vis-à-vis la question européenne dans les campagnes électorales domestiques. Elle cherche à déchiffrer si la politisation grandissante de l'intégration européenne a provoqué une réponse eurosceptique chez ses soutiens habituels du projet européen. Se servant d'une analyse textuelle inductive de programmes électoraux des trois partis du centre-droit des trois plus grands Etats Membres de l'Union (la France, l'Allemagne, et le Royaume-Uni), l'étude trouve que la politisation de l'intégration européenne suit les logiques des systèmes de parti (et non pas une logique structurelle). Il y a néanmoins une tendance remarquable parmi les partis de centre-droit à travers les trois pays de déployer de plus en plus de cadrage dans la catégorie 'culturelle-identitaire' que de la catégorie 'économique-utilitaire' – ce qui implique un changement en vue de la nouvelle vague de contestation. La question de savoir s'il s'agit ici d'une tendance vers l'euroscepticisme au sein du centre-droit reste, pour le moment, une question ouverte.

Mots clés : *intégration européenne ; politisation ; euroscepticisme ; post-fonctionnalisme ; framing (cadrage) ; centre-droit ; élections domestiques ; France ; Royaume-Uni ; Allemagne*

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1. Introduction

The Maastricht Treaty of the early 1990s has come to be seen as a critical juncture in the development of the course of European integration by scholars of European Studies. The expansion of competences at the European level from principally an economic community to a political union has been cast as the end of the 'permissive consensus' - defined as passive popular trust in elite decision-makers' choices (Scheingold, Lindberg, 1970) - replaced instead by a more critical, dissenting public opinion (Eichenberg, Dalton 2007; Hooghe, Marks, 2009), seemingly in tandem with the further pooling of member state sovereignty. Indeed, studies have revealed that popular opinion has declined as the mass of legislation from the European level mounts up (Franklin, Wlezien, 1997).

This retrenchment in public opinion towards Europe throughout the 1990s, despite 'positive economic conditions', led to a re-evaluation of understandings of citizen support for integration (Eichenberg, Dalton, 2007). Whereas previously a utilitarian logic was assumed to drive support for further integration, with citizens evaluating integration in terms of costs and benefits (Ibid., 130), closer political integration has seen symbolic politics of identity come to the fore as a potential explanatory factor for the eroding support of the EU (McLaren, 2006).

This shift has led certain scholars to assert that previously dominant theories of European integration based on functionalist, elite-centred logic, needed to be re-evaluated to 're-insert' the symbolic, values-based politics, as Europe becomes more contested, and thus more politicised in domestic electoral settings. This paper therefore seeks to understand how parties depict Europe in domestic elections. Using an inductive textual analysis to examine manifesto data from the three most recent elections in France, Germany and the UK, the paper examines the evolving framing strategies of the centre-right parties in the context of heightened politicisation of Europe. The findings reveal that under conditions of heightened politicisation, centre-right parties take recourse to cultural-identitarian frames with increasing regularity. This coincides with an increasingly negative portrayal of Europe in these terms by the centre-right parties under examination.

The study unfolds in seven principal parts. In the first section, a general overview of the concept of politicisation is offered, before the second section turns to the specific element of framing, and the use of frames among the centre-right party-family. It also provides a short background into the country-cases selected for scrutiny in the present study. The third section lays out the three hypotheses that the study seeks to test relating to parties' uses of frames within domestic elections, while the fourth section elaborates on the methodology to be employed in order to test the hypotheses. The fifth section addresses the research design and reports the initial results of the study. The sixth section then discusses and analyses the results more thoroughly and in line with the hypotheses proposed, before the seventh section rounds off with some conclusions on the evolving use of frames by the centre-right, and what this might mean for the future course of European integration.

1.1 European Integration: A sleeping Giant?

While European integration has become an ever-more contested issue at the level of popular opinion, the level of importance given to this issue by political actors is the subject of scholarly debate. While some scholars posit that traditional left/right cleavages structure party positions on European integration (Marks, Wilson, 2000), others argue that the issue of European integration runs orthogonally to traditional cleavages, along a new pro/anti-EU dimension (Taggart, 1998; Eijk, Franklin, 2004). Plotting party positions against voter positions on both the traditional left/right cleavage dimension and a pro/anti-EU dimension, Eijk and Franklin (2004) find that opinion is significantly more widely dispersed towards the extremes on the pro/anti-EU dimension than on the traditional left/right dimension. This is deemed to highlight the more unstable, polarising nature of the European dimension than the traditional left/right, as well as the difficulty for mainstream parties of integrating EU issues into their traditional ideological positions. This leads to what Eijk and

Franklin dub the 'sleeping giant' – the issue of European integration ripens for politicisation as voters are unable to express their opinions on this issue at the ballot box (De Vries, 2007).

Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2004) find that in the face of changing orientations towards European integration issues among both mainstream left and mainstream right parties, a new dimension of contestation proved to be the most powerful predictor of positions on European issues. This dimension relates to what they call 'new politics issues', such as immigration, nationalism, cultural diversity, ecology and lifestyle (Hooghe, Marks, Wilson, 2004: 130), and coincides with Inglehart's post-materialist values. They label this new, cultural axis the Green, Alternative Libertarian (GAL) versus Traditional, Authoritarian Nationalist (TAN) axis – GAL-TAN. They conclude that this axis exerts a strong and consistent effect on EU issues (Ibid. 132). This new axis is corroborated by the work of Hanspeter Kriesi (2007), who similarly identifies a new conflict dimension, which he labels integration versus demarcation. This new cleaving line pits the so-called winners of globalisation against the losers (Kriesi, 2007: 85). He argues that there are two key aspects of this conflict; namely an economic and a cultural aspect. The European integration issue provides a challenge for parties within the context of this new dimension of political conflict, as it is almost orthogonal to the traditional left/right dimension, in that the left is divided between the perceived threats of economic integration for its social achievements, and the cultural aspects of denationalisation that chime with their internationalist traditions, while the right is supportive of economic denationalisation, but culturally opposed to the opening up of borders (Ibid. 86-7).

In light of their discovery of the importance of this second dimension of political conflict for EU issues, Hooghe and Marks (2009) devise a postfunctionalist theory of European integration. The central tenet of this new theory is that governance has two purposes; 'to achieve collective benefits by co-ordinating human activity', and to be 'an expression of community' (Hooghe, Marks, 2009: 2). However, given that these two central tenets of governance rarely coincide in multilevel governance, gaining an understanding of when identity is mobilised and integration politicised is essential to predict the future course of European integration. If the 'elite-centred' view of integration rested on three assumptions - that public attitudes towards integration are superficial and unstructured; that integration is a low-salience issue; and that issues raised by integration are unrelated to the conflicts that structure political competition - the period beginning since the 1990s is said to have debunked all three of these assumptions (Ibid: 6-7). Hooghe and Marks explain the retrenchment in public opinion towards Europe in terms of identity. While the jurisdictional shape of Europe has transformed, the ways in which the citizens conceive their identities have remained stable (Ibid:12). This causes tension, which can be activated under two conditions: the tension must become politically salient; and there must be a presence of political entrepreneurs mobilising the tensions by constructing connections between national identity, cultural and economic insecurities and European integration (Ibid. 13). Postfunctionalism posits that the primacy of identity in multilevel governance has caused the traditional left/right conflict dimension of party politics to be usurped by the GAL-TAN conflict dimension in debates around European issues.

1.2 What is politicisation?

The underlying factor that differentiates postfunctionalism from its theoretical predecessors of neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism is the impact of politicisation on European integration. Whereas neofunctionalism predicts that politicisation will lead to further integration, as citizens' loyalties transfer to the supranational level of governance, and intergovernmentalism largely ignores the phenomenon (Hooghe, Marks, 2009), postfunctionalism posits that politicisation re-inserts symbolic issues of identity, which undermines utilitarian cost/benefit evaluations that have driven further integration to this point. Politicisation of European integration is defined as 'an increase in polarisation of opinions, interests or values' (De Wilde, 2011: 560). Hutter and Grande (2014) identify four dimensions of politicisation, namely intensity, visibility, direction and scope. These are translated into operational terms as issue salience (visibility); actor expansion (scope); and actor polarisation (intensity and direction). While issue salience is measured as the proportionate emphasis actors place on the issue of Europe in comparison to others on a given issue agenda at any given time, and actor expansion is measured as the number of competitors on a given issue,

actor polarisation refers to the degree of difference between the main protagonists within a party system (Hoeglinger, 2016).

As the scholarly literature on politicisation has gained prevalence, so the number of studies testing for politicisation of the European issue has grown. One of the 'established wisdoms' of students of European integration, is that the acceleration of integration since the 1980s has led to increased salience of this issue in domestic political debates (Guinaudeau, Persico, 2013). However, despite being repeatedly tested, this wisdom does not bear out empirically (Ibid.; Hoeglinger, 2016; Kriesi 2007; Grande, Kriesi 2016). Even if the salience of European integration is found to have increased over time, what is found is 'punctuated politicisation' (Grande, Kriesi, 2016), where European integration flares up as a highly salient issue at various instances in time in different domestic settings, before going back to being only a moderately salient issue.

In his own empirical analysis of the politicisation of European integration in domestic party systems, Dominic Hoeglinger finds that EU integration is tenth on a list of twelve salient issues for the six countries in his case study. He therefore concludes that the salience of European integration is only modest (Hoeglinger, 2016: 128). However, in a further step in his investigation, this measure of politicisation is then complemented with the measure of polarisation. On this scale, European integration comes in joint top of the twelve issues, along with the army, as the most polarising issue for political actors (Ibid). While high levels of polarisation are not necessarily accompanied by high salience, Hoeglinger addresses the need to take these measures together. When combined, Europe is ranked as an upper mid-range issue in terms of politicisation (Ibid: 131). This finding leads Hoeglinger to characterise politicisation of European integration as modestly salient but highly polarised; concluding that the presence of a strong party close to the TAN pole of the GAL-TAN conflict dimension is conducive to politicisation of integration, as it pushes the issue onto the agenda.

Similarly, in a summary of their own findings on drivers of politicisation of European integration, Grande and Kriesi find qualified support for their hypothesis of increased salience, but clear confirmation of their hypothesis of increased polarisation. They reject the hypothesis of actor expansion as a factor of politicisation (2016: 283), which might lead us to modify the dimensions of politicisation to remove the 'scope' factor from the operational definition proposed earlier. They also find that less integrated countries tend to provide the most fertile ground for politicisation of European issues, which is suggestive that politicisation is not necessarily produced by the accumulated effects of authority transfers, but rather results from conflicts over membership (Grande, Hutter, 2016: 108). A positive relationship between frames pertaining to the TAN pole of the GAL-TAN conflict dimension and the level of politicisation is also observed, corroborating Hoeglinger's findings of a relationship between actors' proximity to the TAN pole and levels of politicisation.

2. Framing Europe

Following the findings of Eijk and Franklin (2004) of a polarisation of opinions towards the extremes of a new political cleaving line, and following Hooghe Marks and Wilson's (2004) discovery of the GAL-TAN cleavage on the issue of Europe, an examination of the use of frames by mainstream right parties is envisaged, in order to trace whether political competition has indeed shifted to this GAL-TAN cleavage, and whether this has pushed parties away from the centre and closer to the extremes of this cleavage. It is believed that a heightened recourse to cultural-identitarian frames in relation to Europe by these parties would be accompanied by lower EU-favourability in mainstream parties, as they evacuate their central position on the left/right cleavage towards a more polarised position on the GAL-TAN cleavage. To this end, it is the framing strategies of political actors that will be examined in greater depth in order to gain an understanding of how actors position themselves on issues pertaining to Europe, in the context of domestic electoral campaigns. If, as anticipated, the issue of Europe causes polarisation, we might expect this to be reflected in the way in which parties address European issues. If the examination of centre-right parties reveals that political

contestation on Europe has shifted to the cultural, GAL-TAN cleaving line, then this should provide insight into the validity of the postfunctionalist theory of integration.

In order to understand how parties position themselves in relation to Europe, it is necessary to study the process of framing of European integration. Frames are schemata of interpretation (Helbling, Hoeglinger, Wuest 2010: 498), while the act of framing refers to the 'more or less consciously managed process by which schemata are manufactured, selected, distributed and adopted in successive steps (Ibid). Frames are essentially thought organisers (Ferree et al 2002), which can be deployed strategically to shift the central logic of a political conflict (Grande et al 2016:181). In the words of Diez, Medrano and Gray (2010: 196), frames are images of reality, and it is they, not reality itself, which shape behaviour.

In the multitude of studies that have examined party framing strategies towards European integration issues (Helbling et al 2010; Hoeglinger, 2016; Hutter, Grande et al, 2016), a consensus has been reached on the basic frame categories mobilised. These frame categories are largely in line with individual attitudes towards Euroscepticism (Helbling et al, 2010), in that they are cultural frames, economic frames and utilitarian frames. These three categories can be further broken down into subcategories.

The cultural frames category contains subcategories of nationalist frames, referring to exclusive ethnic and institutional civic values, and multicultural universalist frames. Ethnic nationalist frames generally emphasise cultural homogeneity and the exclusivity of identity, whereas institutional-civic nationalist frames uphold the exceptionality of a political community (Hoeglinger, 2016). By contrast, multicultural-universalist frames argue in favour of cultural openness and harmonious coexistence of diverse groups in society (Ibid.).

The economic frame category can be split into the subcategories of labour and social security frames, versus economic prosperity and wealth frames. Labour and social security frames include arguments related to employment prospects, level of wages and welfare systems, where economic prosperity frames include arguments about competitiveness, economic growth and wealth (Ibid.).

The utilitarian frame category includes political efficiency and efficacy frames, referring to arguments about effective governance and bureaucratic efficiency, the capacity of a state to act, and channels of power. Within this category is also included security and ecology as a subcategory, with references to peace and regional stability, as well as environmental protections (Ibid.). It is important to note that all subcategories of frames can be mobilised both in favour of and in contestation against European integration. Therefore, the presence of a greater number of nationalist frames in a party's discourse does not necessarily indicate a more Eurosceptic stance towards integration.

In terms of the two conflict dimensions on which European integration issues are fought, it might be expected that parties further to the right of the left/right cleavage draw on more economic frames pertaining to economic prosperity to justify favourable positions to European integration, while parties on the left might draw on labour and social security frames to justify positions of contestation of further integration (Hoeglinger, 2016). On the cultural axis, it is expected that those parties gravitating more closely to the TAN pole will utilise nationalist frames to contest European integration, while those parties closer to the GAL pole will utilise multicultural-universalist frames to justify further integration (Ibid.). What does this mean for framing strategies of mainstream centre-right parties?

2.1 Framing Strategies of the Centre-Right

The extant literature generally agrees that mainstream parties find Europe an unattractive issue on which to mobilise (Green-Pedersen, 2012). This is the case for two reasons: firstly, the issue itself does not fit neatly into the traditional left/right conflict dimension that still commands a hegemony over most electoral issues; secondly that voting behaviour on this issue is largely dependent on how the issue is framed, which means it is a highly unpredictable issue. Given that mainstream right parties are generally deemed to be pro-European integration, due to their role in building the project

(Kriesi, 2007), they have largely sought to avoid contestation on the issue by keeping Europe off the electoral agenda.

However, as has been previously alluded to, it is thought that the importance of the cultural dimension of political conflict has usurped the economic dimension in terms of political contestation of European integration. This is what is referred to as the cultural shift hypothesis (Hutter Grande et al 2016). This has had knock-on effects for the centre-right's strategy on European integration issues. Grande, Hutter et al (2016) also find that there has been a marked increase in the use of cultural frames in domestic debates on Europe over time. Perhaps surprisingly, they find that multicultural-universalist frames vastly outnumber nationalist frames. They also find that the populist radical right has no monopoly over the use of nationalist frames, with moderate right-wing parties using them most often, accounting for 40% of all nationalist frames in election contests. In spite of this, the authors find that cultural framing is not the most important strategy for centre-right, and that nationalist frames are in fact often used to support European integration by these parties. They conclude that as a result of their heightened use of cultural frames, it is therefore moderate right parties, rather radical right parties, that must be considered the most forceful drivers of the politicisation of Europe (Ibid: 197).

2.2 British, French and German Centre-Right Parties: Case selection

The cases of British, French and German centre-right parties will be taken up in the present study. As the three biggest nations of Europe, these cases have all been impactful on the course of European integration in their own ways. Indeed, these three cases are representative of three different actor clusters within the intergovernmental EU political space, as envisioned by Kriesi and Maag (2016: 225). These clusters are: the integrationist cluster, as the most pro-European cluster of actors, of which the German government is a constant feature; the protectionist cluster, which is described as generally pro-European but more wary of economic liberalisation, and consists of the French government as one of its key actors; while the third cluster type, which is labelled the neoliberal cluster, is dominated by the British government and generally acknowledges the need for economic integration but is hesitant about political integration. They therefore provide a suitably wide variety of approaches to the question of European integration.

3. Hypotheses

As alluded to above, two elements are posited to be key to a cultural shift by centre-right parties. The first of these is the presence of a strong radical right party. This is because parties mobilise on the issues that are most important to their constituents – and while larger, mainstream parties will compete on a broad range of issues, single-issue parties can draw attention to their particular issue if it resonates with the wider public, thereby forcing it onto the electoral agenda (Netjes, Binnema, 2007). While Guinaudeau and Persico differentiate the French case from the German and the British one in this regard, this observation must be updated, as all three party-systems now contain a radical right element, and while UKIP may have garnered only one seat in the British elections of 2015, its vote share of 12.6% is indicative of its rise (+9.5% on its 2010 share, the largest increase in its votes of any party by some distance) (BBC, 2015). Before the 2017 election, AfD remained a very marginal force in German politics, with just 4.7% of the vote in its first federal election of 2013; however, the outcome of the 2017 election, in which the AfD garnered 12.6% of the vote to become the third-largest party in Germany, and take over 90 seats in the Bundestag, provides evidence that the German electoral agenda increasingly resembles that of France and the UK, with a strong radical right element.

The second element for a cultural shift is thought to be the level of importance political actors place on the new, GAL-TAN cleaving line of political contestation. Given the significant retrenchment in public opinion vis-à-vis European integration, and given the highly polarised nature of public opinion on this issue (Eijk, Franklin, 2004), parties' positions are expected to reflect this polarisation in their contestation along the new, GAL-TAN cleaving line. To test for this polarisation, it is the use of cultural frames that becomes the dependent variable in this study, with the expectation that the

importance of the GAL-TAN cleavage will translate into an increased use of cultural frames by centre-right parties in proportion to economic/utilitarian frames.

The question to be addressed in the course of this study is thus *how do mainstream centre-right parties of the British, French and German party systems deploy cultural frames in their most recent electoral campaigns?*

Building on previous research, this paper will focus exclusively on elections of the previous decade in the respective countries, as this era of elections is yet to be studied. It is expected that a general trend of increasing salience of Europe in domestic electoral settings will be visible (H1a), though that the level of salience of Europe will differ substantially in each electoral setting (H1b).

As per the cultural shift hypothesis (Hutter, Grande et al, 2016), and in line with Hoeglinger's (2016) findings, greater salience is expected to be matched by greater recourse of the centre-right to cultural framing strategies (H2a). Finally, following Hoeglinger (2016), greater recourse to cultural framing is expected to be linked to greater criticism of Europe, especially in the face of any strong radical right challenger parties in the party system (H2b).

4. Methodology

In order to address the research question at hand, the paper will take a diachronic and multilevel comparison of framing of the issue of Europe by centre-right parties in domestic election campaigns. The time period under examination is the last decade, from 2007 to the present. This timeframe complements previous research in the area, by adding a previously unexamined time period, and provides scope to examine new evolutions beyond what has previously been observed in the literature. To that end, data will be scrutinised from party election manifestos in the course of the election campaigns. Manifestos are useful as a representation of the official position of a party at a certain point in time (Volkens, 2007), as they are generally the only document that is debated within the party and is accepted as common ground (Guinaudeau, Persico, 2013), and they give a good indication of the issues that the party deems to be of salience in an electoral campaign, and how the party frames those issues.

While the Comparative Manifesto Project would be a ready-made database of coded manifestos for use in this study, it has two limitations which make it inapt here; firstly, the most recent electoral contests of interest here are not yet integrated into the project, and secondly, the project has been criticised for underestimating the salience of EU-related issues, because if a party politicises Europe in relation to another policy area such as welfare or agriculture, the coders must choose between one or the other categories (Ibid: 151). To attempt to overcome this problem, this study uses an inductive method of categorisation of manifesto data, following Guinaudeau and Persico (2013). A keyword search for all entries with the stem 'euro-' or 'EU' was first conducted, with all hits making up the corpus of EU-related statements to be categorised. These statements were then categorised according to the policy areas they dealt with. Decisions then had to be made by the coder as to which of the three larger framing categories these statements belonged in, from cultural-identitarian, to economic, or utilitarian. In order to simplify the choice, these three umbrella categories have been broken down into several subcategories. Once the sentences were categorised under the apt subcategories and categories, the direction of the frame, whether EU-positive, EU-negative or EU-neutral was then deciphered, by assigning each phrase a numerical value of +1 (EU-positive), -1 (EU-negative), or 0 (EU-neutral).

Frame category	Frame Subcategory	UK		France		Germany	
Frame direction		+1	-1	+1	-1	+1	-1
Cultural-identitarian	<i>Ethnic-nationalist</i>	We will make it a priority in our negotiations with the European Union that the 140,000 staff from EU countries can carry on making their vital contribution to our health and care system. (2017)	'the scale of migration triggered by new members joining [the EU] has had a real impact on local communities' (2015)	Il faut affirmer la souveraineté numérique de la France et de l'Europe face aux États-Unis, à la Chine, ou aux géants de l'internet ; l'indépendance technologique et la cybersécurité seront nos priorités ; il faut continuer à défendre nos valeurs et notre liberté d'expression. (2017)	Nous instaurerons une politique de différenciation dans les relations de la France et de l'UE avec les pays en développement, en excluant les principaux pays émergents du bénéfice des droits de douane réduits prévus par le système de préférence généralisé européen (2012)	We advocate for the strengthening of the usage of the German language in Europe. (2013)	We reject the kind of immigration that abuses the freedom of movement in Europe and exploits our social security system. (2013)
	<i>Institutional-civic nationalism</i>	We believe Britain's interests are best served by membership of a European Union that is an association of its Member States. (2010)	Applying transitional controls as a matter of course in the future for all new EU Member States. (2010)	Continuer à enrichir la construction européenne avec des projets entre États pionniers, en commençant par le moteur franco-allemand' (2012)	Créer une redevance pour l'usage du réseau routier et autoroutier et empêcher le report de certains trafics routiers européens sur le réseau français (2007)	Our education system is a strong part of the the European educational area. (2009)	Germany must put an end to the EU's tendency towards liberalisation in this regard. (2009)
	<i>Multicultural-universalist</i>	Yes to working together where we are stronger together than alone. (2015)	In leaving the European Union, we have chosen a truly global role for Britain. (2017)	Notre destin se jouera dans une Europe plus rassemblée. (2012)	En revanche, nous restons opposés à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne. (2012)	We must fly the flag for democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law and Europe (2017)	We Europeans must take our fate into our own hands now more than ever. (2017)
Economic	<i>Labour/Social Security</i>	We have taken action in Europe to promote your economic security (2015)	We will negotiate new rules with the EU, so that people will have to be earning here for a number of years before they can claim benefits, including the tax credits that top up low wages (2015)	La France, et plus encore l'Europe qui est le bon cadre d'action en la matière, doivent apporter de la protection' (2007)	La priorité pour l'Union européenne n'est donc plus la libéralisation et la concurrence, mais dans la promotion de l'emploi et de la croissance, dans un contexte de mondialisation et de concurrence internationale qui peut se révéler déloyale.(2012)	Further steps towards a common European labour market lie in a better exchange of languages as well as a better portability of educational certificates and social security. (2013)	For far too long in Germany, Europe and beyond, we have lived at the expense of future generations – in terms of financial markets as well as the environment. (2013)
	<i>Wealth/Prosperity</i>	European countries need to work together to boost global economic growth, fight global poverty (2010)	Overall we are still too dependent on slow-growing European markets. (2015)	Sans rien céder de ses valeurs, notre pays, avec l'Europe, doit aussi se doter d'une politique qui lui permette d'assurer sa souveraineté économique et de tirer le meilleur parti de la mondialisation sur le plan économique. (2007)	Enfin, nous souhaitons que ce principe de réciprocité s'applique à l'accès aux marchés publics : l'Europe ne doit autoriser l'accès à ses marchés publics qu'aux entreprises des pays qui, en retour, ouvrent l'accès à leurs propres marchés publics. (2012)	'A stable currency is a necessity for a strong economy and stable political relations' (2009)	The German farming economy requires fair competition with other EU countries. (2009)

Utilitarian	<i>Political efficiency/efficacy</i>	We will push for further reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. (2015)	We took Britain out of Eurozone bailouts, including for Greece –the first ever return of powers from Brussels (2015)	Enfin, les mécanismes institutionnels qui régissent le fonctionnement de l'Union européenne ne doivent pas empêcher ceux qui veulent avancer plus vite de le faire (2007)	Ce n'est pas parce qu'elle est indépendante, que la banque centrale européenne ne doit pas écouter, entendre, et prendre en compte les préoccupations exprimées, au nom des peuples, par les gouvernements des pays membres de la zone euro (2007)	We support the proposals for a European Defence Union, and for a defence fund. (2017)	The criterion must remain: we rule out any debt union. (2017)
	<i>Security & Ecology</i>	The new CAP should reflect the importance we attach to the environment, to ensuring food security and to tackling global poverty (2010)	'We will release spending on unnecessary and bureaucratic EU defence initiatives and spend the money on our Armed Forces' (2010)	Face aux menaces qui l'entourent dans un monde toujours plus imprévisible, j'ai la conviction que l'europe sera l'un des principaux sujets des années qui viennent. (2017)	Réformer en profondeur les accords de Schengen : expulser systématiquement de l'espace Schengen tout étranger reconnu coupable d'un crime ou d'un délit et en interdire l'accès à tout étranger condamné pénalement ou ayant participé à une entreprise terroriste (2017)	We are convinced that Europe is indispensable for a peaceful, free and prosperous life is. (2013)	A one-sided [climate]burden on a few EU countries and their economies must not be allowed to happen (2009)

Table 1: Framing categories and subcategories

Within the cultural-identitarian category, the literature has found wide consensus on three subcategories of ethnic-nationalist framing, institutional-civic nationalist framing, and multicultural-universal framing (Helbing et al, 2010; Hoeglinger, 2016; Hutter, Grande et al 2016). Ethnic-nationalist frames focus on cultural homogeneity and identity. An example of a phrase categorised as ethnic-nationalist, taken from the UK Conservative manifesto of 2015, is 'the scale of migration triggered by new members joining [the EU] has had a real impact on local communities'. Accordingly, any sentence that drew a distinction between the national community and the EU was coded into this category. In this particular example, a numerical value of -1 was assigned, as it is deemed to be EU-negative. However, not all ethnic-nationalist frames are negative; an example from the UK Conservative manifesto of 2017 attests: 'We will make it a priority in our negotiations with the European Union that the 140,000 staff from EU countries can carry on making their vital contribution to our health and care system'. This is given a value of +1, because it is talking about an exclusive feature of the in-group's community – 'our health and care system' – whilst acknowledging the positive role EU citizens have played in it.

Institutional-civic nationalism refers to the exclusivity of a particular political community. The example in the table above, taken from the French UMP manifesto of 2012, gives the impression that the Franco-German superiority can add value to the European project. This was given the numerical value of +1, as it is manifestly EU-positive. However, from the same manifesto, an example of an EU-negative frame in the institutional-civic nationalist category: 'Thanks to our solidarity, inequalities are felt less strongly than in the majority of other countries in Europe, and the French have suffered less from the crisis.' The favourable comparison of France against other European countries shows a more chauvinistic sense of exceptionality that earned a -1.

Finally, multicultural-universalist frames show a spirit of openness and diversity, and adherence to common values. In the example in the table above, taken from the German CDU/CSU manifesto of 2017, there is a very universalist sense that they wish to stand up and represent these universal values. Including Europe in the list of the values to be defended ensured that this was attributed a +1. A rare example of a multicultural-universalist frame attributed an EU-negative score comes from the UK Conservatives' 2017 manifesto: 'In leaving the European Union, we have chosen a truly global role for Britain', thereby implying that the EU is an exclusionary community that has turned its back on the rest of the world.

The same inductive logic was applied to the categories of economic and utilitarian frames, as the examples in the above table attest; however given that the focus of this paper is on the cultural category of frames, we will not dwell on the other frames here.

5. Research Design and Preliminary Results

In a first step, the salience of Europe as an issue in domestic issues was measured. This was done by first identifying all the references to Europe from each of the manifestos for each country case. This involved running a simple document key word search, seeking out all references pertaining to 'Euro-', and 'EU'. All sentences returning a hit were then exported into a new document, where a cursory word count of all words in the sentences referring to Europe was conducted. These were then calculated as a percentage of the total word count of the manifesto to give an indicative measure of the level of salience granted to Europe within the party programme. The results for each of the three latest elections of the selected country cases are displayed in figure 1, where manifesto 'sets' refer to the chronology of the elections, with 'set 1' being the manifestos from the earliest elections recorded in this study, and 'set 3' referring to the most recent.

	UK Conservatives		France UMP/Républicains		Germany CDU/CSU	
Manifesto set 1	1251	4.3%	3391	8.3%	2335	7.4%
Manifesto set 2	2066	6.4%	1747	11.3%	4225	9.6%
Manifesto set 3	2428	7.9%	2219	10%	1505	7.2%

Figure 1: References to Europe in manifestos

References to Europe follow a clear trajectory of expansion in the UK, as the percentage of references to Europe increases continuously from 2010-2017 across all three Conservative manifestos. This suggests that the salience of Europe has continuously grown in the UK over the years. Despite this clear trend of rising salience, the single-digit percentages are suggestive that the observation made by Hoeglinger that Europe has only gained modest salience in domestic elections (2016: 128) still stands going into the 2010s. In France, the salience of Europe begins in 2007 from a higher level than its peak levels in the UK in 2017, implying that it is a more salient issue for the French domestic elections than for the British. Between 2007 and 2012, the salience of Europe jumps by 3% to a high across all three countries of 11.3%. In 2017, this falls back to 10%, but nonetheless remains comparatively higher than the British and German cases, suggesting that Europe as an issue occupies an important place in the electoral contest. Although a quantitative comparison of the salience of Europe to other issues in the respective electoral agendas of the countries under analysis here is beyond the scope of this paper, Hoeglinger's (2016) own results indicate that only the three most salient issues examined in his study scored above 10%. In Germany, a similar pattern to France is evident, with a sharp incline from the 2009 level of salience of 7.4% recorded in 2013, to its highest overall level of 9.6%, before dropping back to under the 2009 level in 2017.

As a next step, the statements pertaining to Europe were categorised and subcategorised according to the frame placed on them by the parties. As a recap, the three established categories of frames are cultural-identitarian, economic, and other utilitarian frames. Within these categories are various subcategories of frames.

As previously discussed, for the purposes of this study, the distinction between economic and utilitarian frames will be dissolved into a single category, in opposition to the cultural frames, which will be of principal interest here.

Once all the statements pertaining to Europe had been categorised according to their frame, this left a set of raw data indicating the number of times each frame was used in each manifesto. In order to make this data comparable, these figures were turned into a percentage of the total number of sentences categorised per manifesto. The results are displayed in the following tables (figures 2-4).

These tables reveal some interesting trends both within and across the country cases. In the first election of all three country cases, the number of cultural-identitarian frames as a percentage of all frames hovers around the one-third mark. For France and Germany, this figure drops a few percentage points from the first election to the second election, indicating a falling recourse to cultural framing strategies by the centre-right parties from manifesto set one to manifesto set two. In the UK, the opposite is true, with a dramatic rise in recourse to cultural framing strategies by the Conservatives from 2010 to 2015, from 33% to 47%. However, this tails off again in 2017, dipping under the levels of 2010 to 31%. In France and Germany, meanwhile, a dramatic rise in the number of cultural frames comes in 2017, with the French *Républicains* leading the trend of using cultural frames, as the only party to cross the 50% threshold. The German CDU/CSU alliance also reaches 45% recourse to cultural frames, which implies that there might be a structural trend towards the use of cultural framing strategies to talk about Europe in domestic electoral settings.

Type of frame	2010 Manifesto	2015 Manifesto	2017 Manifesto
Cultural-Identitarian (N)	33% (14)	47% (40)	31% (20)
Ethnic nationalist	3% (1)	14% (12)	5% (3)
Institutional-civic nationalism	23% (10)	29% (25)	11% (7)
Multicultural-universalist	7% (3)	4% (3)	15% (10)
Economic/Utilitarian (N)	67% (29)	53% (45)	69% (45)
Labour/social security	0	2% (2)	2% (1)
Wealth and prosperity	7% (3)	13% (11)	11% (7)
Political efficiency/efficacy	53% (23)	33% (28)	48% (32)
Other issues	7% (3)	5% (4)	8% (5)
Total (N)	100% (43)	100% (85)	100% (66)

Figure 2: UK Conservatives' Framing Strategies

Type of frame	2007 Manifesto	2012 Manifesto	2017 Manifesto
Cultural-Identitarian (N)	36% (44)	33% (22)	54% (50)
Ethnic nationalist	8% (10)	6% (4)	15% (14)
Institutional-civic nationalism	20% (24)	21% (14)	32% (30)
Multicultural-universalist	8% (10)	6% (4)	7% (6)
Economic/Utilitarian (N)	64% (79)	67% (46)	46% (42)
Labour/social security	7% (8)	18% (12)	4% (4)
Wealth and prosperity	11% (14)	16% (11)	8% (7)
Political efficiency/efficacy	30% (37)	29% (20)	28% (26)
Other issues	16% (20)	4% (3)	5% (5)
Total (N)	100 (123)	100 (68)	100 (92)

Figure 3 French UMP/ Républicains Framing strategies

Type of frame	2009 Manifesto	2013 Manifesto	2017 Manifesto
Cultural-Identitarian (N)	35% (46)	30% (65)	45% (36)
Ethnic nationalist	7% (9)	4% (9)	3% (2)
Institutional-civic nationalism	26% (34)	18% (38)	30% (24)
Multicultural-universalist	2% (3)	8% (18)	12% 10
Economic/Utilitarian (N)	65% (84)	70% (149)	55% (44)
Labour/social security	4% (5)	6% (12)	5% (4)
Wealth and prosperity	12% (15)	21% (46)	10% (8)
Political efficiency/efficacy	28% (37)	32% (69)	25% (20)
Other issues	21% (27)	10% (22)	15% (12)
Total% (N)	100 (130)	100 (214)	100 (80)

Figure 4 German CDU/CSU Framing strategies

The tables above also display the break-down of subcategories of frames deployed by the respective parties from each of the country cases. It is interesting to note that in the case of the UK in 2015, the number of ethnic-nationalist frames deployed jumps significantly from 3% of all frames, to 14%, which represents the largest change among all the subcategories of cultural-identitarian frames from 2010. This might be revelatory of a correlation between the increased proportion of cultural frames, and the deployment of an ethnic-nationalist framing strategy. The institutional-civic frames nonetheless retain the largest share of all cultural frames from 2010, registering a small increase from 23% to 29% of all frames. The multicultural-universalist frames are the least significant of this category of cultural-identitarian frames, even losing percentage points between 2010 and 2015, despite the large growth in the use of cultural frames by the Conservatives overall. In 2017, the picture is somewhat different, with multicultural-universalist frames becoming the most important of the cultural-identitarian category, with a 15% share of all frames. The ethnic-nationalist subcategory of frames falls to just above its 2010 levels, at 5%, while institutional-civic nationalist frames decline most significantly from 29% to 11%.

For the UMP/Républicain party of France, the trend of frame deployment within the cultural-identitarian category is somewhat more consistent than for the British Conservatives, with institutional-civic nationalism remaining the most prevalent cultural-identitarian frame from 2007 to 2017, albeit growing more sharply between 2012 and 2017. However, while ethnic-nationalist frames and multicultural-universal frames were deployed in equal measures in 2007 and 2012 (8% and 6% respectively), the ethnic-nationalist frames were deployed far more regularly than multicultural-universalist frames in 2017 (15% versus 7%). Similarly to the UK in 2015, with an overall increase in the proportion of cultural frames deployed in 2017, there is a tendency of more frequent recourse to ethnic-nationalist frames.

In Germany, the picture is different again, concerning the deployment of cultural-identitarian frames by the CDU/CSU party alliance. While in 2009 the highest proportion of cultural-identitarian frames deployed fell in the institutional-civic nationalism category, with 26% of all frames deployed, ethnic-nationalist frames were the second most-used of the cultural-identitarian category, with 7% of all frames. Multicultural-universalist frames were insignificant, making up just 2% of all frames used. In 2013, although the cultural frame category lost significance in comparison to the economic/utilitarian category, the multicultural-universalist category gained ground, making up 8% of all frames used, and overtaking ethnic-nationalist frames as the second-most significant cultural frame behind institutional-civic nationalist frames. In 2017, when cultural frames gained a large amount of ground on the other two framing categories among the CDU/CSU, it is interesting to note that the ethnic-nationalist frames slump to their lowest recorded proportion of all frames (3%), while multicultural-universalist frames gain significant ground, moving to 12% of all frames. This tendency seems to run counter to the French and British cases, where greater importance of the cultural frames categories vis-à-vis the other categories has been mirrored by greater recourse to ethnic nationalist frames.

In the final step of the data gathering process, the directional scores of the frames were calculated for each party manifesto in the three country cases, as displayed in figures 5 and 6. This was done by first assigning each phrase with a numerical value representing its level of support for Europe in principle. This numerical value was either +1 (EU-positive), -1 (EU-negative) or 0 (neutral). Once each statement was given a value according to its direction, the sum of the directional values for all phrases within one frame category was calculated. For example, for the UK in 2010, the total number of phrases within the cultural-identitarian category was 14, while the aggregate frame direction for this category was -4.

Once this calculation of frame direction for each category in each party manifesto had been carried out, a common scale had to be elaborated, in order to render the data from each different manifesto and each country comparable. This was done by turning the raw directional scores into a numerical score on a common scale between -1 (100% of

statements being EU-negative), and +1 (100% of statements being EU-positive). To this end, each of the raw directional scores for each framing category was divided by the total number of phrases belonging to that category. In the aforementioned example of cultural-identitarian frames in the UK, that means that the aggregate directional score for the category of -4 was divided by the total number of frames belonging to this category, of 14. This gave a final score of -0.29.

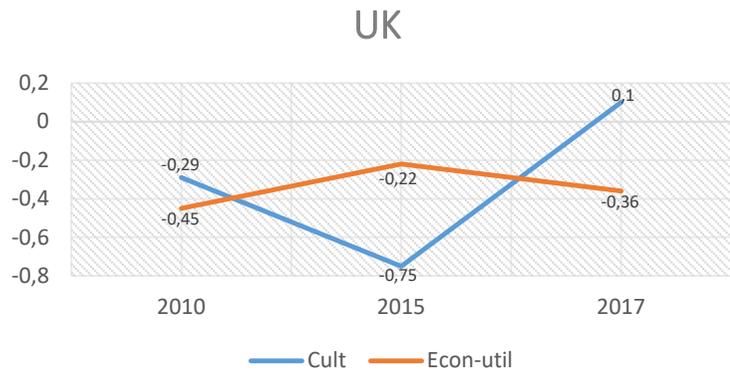


Figure 5: Cultural vs Economic/Utilitarian frames - directional values for UK

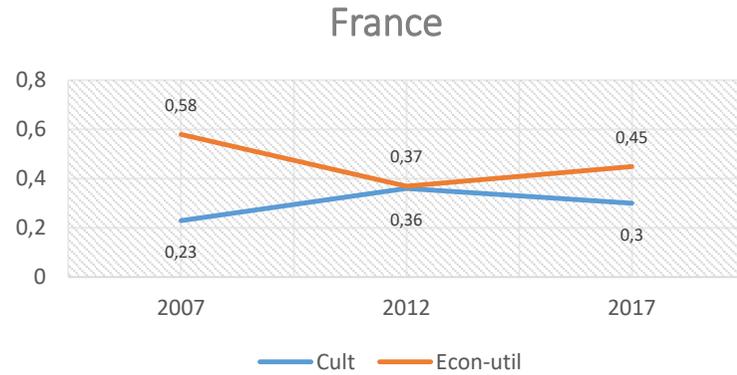


Figure 6: Cultural vs Economic/Utilitarian frames - directional values for France

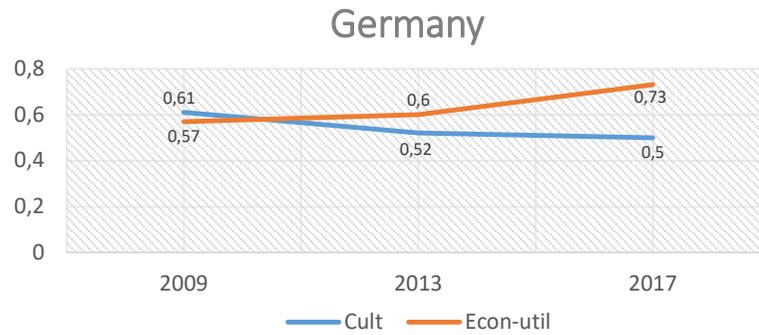


Figure 7: Cultural vs Economic/Utilitarian frames - direction values for Germany

The charts above display the final results of the aggregate frame directions deployed by each party in each of the manifestos analysed. This completes the previous observations of recourse to frame categories, by indicating the direction of the frames that the parties used within each category.

In the UK, the scores recorded for the cultural and economic/utilitarian categories show little consistency at all, with the economic/utilitarian frames being deployed against the EU most regularly in 2010, before a radical jump in negative cultural frames is recorded in 2015 coupled with a tempering of negative economic/utilitarian frames. This is then completely turned on its head again in 2017, with the cultural frames actually deployed in a positive direction towards the EU, while the economic/utilitarian frames grow more negative than in 2015.

In France, the picture is generally more positive, with the EU framed in a positive direction by the UMP/Républicains across all three campaigns, however there is a steady trend of decline from 2007 to 2017 in the overall level of positive framing. The most radical change is noted between 2007 and 2012 in the economic/utilitarian frames category, as the number of positive frames deployed in this regard declines substantially, before climbing again in 2017. 2007 represents the most negative manifesto in terms of cultural-identitarian frames (+0.23), with 2012 becoming markedly more positive in this regard (+0.36), before declining once more in 2017 (+0.3).

In Germany, trends are more linear. Starting from an already higher base than the other two countries, the economic/utilitarian frame directions increase from +0.57 in 2009 to +0.73 in 2017. The cultural/identitarian frames, by contrast show a steady, if small decline across the three manifestos, from +0.61 in 2009 to +0.5 in 2017. This score still remains overwhelmingly EU-positive when taken in comparison to the other two country cases, indicating that, as predicted by the literature (Kriesi 2007), Germany is the most Europeanist country in the case study. The overall scores for frame direction indicate a small incline in EU optimism among the German CDU/CSU from 2009 to 2017.

6. Findings and discussion

Earlier in the study, it was hypothesised that the salience of Europe would increase steadily over the course of the period studied (H1a). This was measured by the number of words in each party manifesto dedicated to European issues as a percentage of the total amount of words in the manifesto. The findings reveal that in the United Kingdom, Europe becomes a consistently more salient issue for the Conservative Party, with the percentage of words in the manifesto dedicated to Europe rising as a percentage of the total manifesto year on year, going from the very modest level of salience of 4.1% in 2010, to 7.9% by 2017. In France and Germany, this pattern does not find confirmation. While the level of salience of Europe to the French centre-right party shows an overall rise from 8% in 2007 to 10% in 2017, the level of salience in 2012 reached a height of 11.3%, before falling back again between 2012 and 2017. In Germany, a similar pattern of salience exists for the CDU/CSU as for the centre-right in France, with a peak level of 9.6% in 2013, up from 7.4% in 2009. However, again in 2017 the level falls backward, this time dipping narrowly under the original 2009 level of 7.2%. Hypothesis 1a therefore is not supported.

Hypothesis 1b states that the level of salience will differ in each electoral setting, due to the systemic salience dynamic at play within each country-case's party system (Dolezal, Hellstrom, 2016). In the French case, the level of salience of Europe to the centre-right is significantly higher than in the other two countries throughout the three elections studied, with 2012 representing an apogee of importance for the European issue. This is indicative of these systemic dynamics. The same is true for Germany, where the 2013 manifesto reveals a higher level of importance of Europe to the CDU/CSU than any of the other two elections.

In the UK, the 2010 election shows a very limited level of salience of Europe to the Conservatives compared to the next two elections. In 2017 meanwhile, the election was labelled the 'Brexit election' and the salience of Europe rose accordingly. The absence of any clear, pan-national trend in the levels of salience, with each domestic setting following its own pattern based on party-system dynamics, seems to support H1b. To be sure, a comparison of the salience of Europe in centre-right party manifestos with other parties operating in the domestic party systems would be required to confirm this hypothesis, which is beyond the scope of the present study, but the patterns found here lead to a tentative confirmation of H1b.

In accordance with the cultural shift hypothesis (Grande et al, 2016), hypothesis 2a predicted that a rise in the salience of Europe would be matched by greater recourse to cultural-identitarian frames. However, the results on this front are mixed. In the UK, the 2017 Conservative manifesto dedicated the highest percentage of its words to Europe, yet the 31% of frames attributed as cultural-identitarian is the lowest score of all three of the manifestos examined. However, the UK is a special case, given that the issue of Europe evolves to the issue of Brexit from 2015 to 2017. The jump in salience of Europe in the UK Conservative manifesto from 2010 to 2015 is also matched by a jump in the use of cultural-identitarian frames from 33% to 47%. In France, the UMP dedicates the highest percentage of its manifesto to Europe in 2012, implying that this was a salient issue in this election. However, the percentage of cultural-identitarian frames recorded is also the lowest of all three manifestos examined, at just 33%. It is in fact the economic/utilitarian frames that grow in significance in this election, therefore disconfirming the hypothesis, and implying that the issue of Europe was inextricably tied to the economic crisis, which provided the backdrop for this election. In 2017, the picture is different, with the percentage of cultural-identitarian frames jumping above 50% in the *Républicain* manifesto. However, the percentage of the manifesto dedicated to Europe falls in comparison to 2012. This trend is repeated in Germany for the CDU/CSU party, with the highest level of salience for Europe being recorded in 2013, which corresponds with the lowest percentage of cultural-identitarian frames. This serves to disconfirm hypothesis 2a. Yet, just as in France, the recourse to cultural-identitarian frames bounces to its highest level by quite some margin in the 2017 manifesto, despite a relative fall in salience. This pattern could be attributed to the high salience of the ongoing Eurozone crisis at the time of the 2012/2013 elections in France and Germany. These elections could therefore prove to be outlier elections. Further, it is interesting that in the latest election in both France and Germany, the proportion of cultural-identitarian frames used by the centre-right hit the levels of the British Conservatives in the 2015 election, as the Eurozone crisis no longer occupies the forefront of European themes. Therefore, while hypothesis 2a cannot be confirmed, the more recent evidence might suggest that there is an ongoing shift towards cultural-identitarian framing strategies across all three countries. The hypothesis would therefore bear further testing in future elections.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that any shift towards more cultural frames among the centre-right parties under observation would be matched by an increase in EU-negative sentiment, especially in party-systems where a strong radical-right party is present (Hoeglinger, 2016). Interestingly, in every instance across all country-cases where the percentage of cultural-identitarian frames used by the centre-right parties in their manifestos increases, so the directional score of the frame category becomes more negative. In the UK in 2015, the Conservatives use cultural-identitarian frames 47% of the time, with a directional score of -0.75, indicating that three-quarters of the statements the Conservatives made in cultural terms on Europe were critical. While the level of negativity in the UK is unrivalled in the other two cases, the pattern nonetheless persists. In France, the *Républicains* framed 54% of the statements on Europe that appeared in their manifesto in cultural-identitarian terms – the only case of a party using more cultural frames than economic/utilitarian frames - recording a directional score of +0.3, which is 0.06 points lower than in 2012. In Germany, the CDU/CSU frames the highest proportion of its manifesto relating to Europe in cultural-identitarian terms

in 2017, with 45% of frames appearing in this category. This is also matched by a drop in the directional score in the cultural-identitarian category from +0.52 in 2013 to +0.5 in 2017. Nonetheless the framing of the EU by the CDU/CSU remains overwhelmingly positive.

While the manifesto data do not allow for an analysis that takes into account the presence of a radical right contender in the party-system, we might surmise from the success enjoyed by Marine Le Pen and the Front National in France in recent times, as well as UKIP's meteoric rise in terms of vote percentage between 2010 and 2015, and its ability to influence the agenda in the UK, that a strong radical right contender does indeed have an effect on the centre-right's framing strategy. In Germany, where the radical right element of *Alternativ für Deutschland* has only spawned since 2013, its influence on centre-right framing strategies appears to be more dubious – however, the unprecedented success of finishing as Germany's third largest party at the 2017 election and entering the Bundestag with 94 deputies will surely serve to expand its influence in this regard. While this does not represent a satisfactory empirical testing of hypothesis 2b, the correlation between the cultural shift among the centre-right parties under examination here and the electoral successes of radical right elements in the same election cycles is too coincidental to ignore.

7. Conclusion

This study has in part attempted to test the validity of the postfunctional theory of European integration, by examining the politicisation of Europe in domestic elections of three Member States. Taking the mainstream centre-right parties of France, Germany and the UK as its subject, this study has engaged in a diachronic examination of the framing strategies that these parties have adopted on Europe in the three most recent elections. The study set out with the primary aim of unearthing a 'cultural shift' (Grande et al 2016) in the framing strategies of centre-right parties, with the expectation that any such move towards framing Europe in cultural terms would be accompanied by the manifestation of heightened scepticism towards Europe.

The findings show that while evidence of a cultural shift in framing strategy exists, an accompanying increase in Euroscepticism was not found across the board. Although in France and Germany an increase in cultural frames is accompanied by a reduction in the aggregate level of support for Europe, this reduction is gradual, and the aggregate direction of frames remains positive. It is therefore more appropriate to talk of a (slight) 'erosion of Europhilia' rather than a 'rise of Euroscepticism' in the centre-right parties of France and Germany. For the UK, the Eurosceptic case *par excellence*, cultural frames were used most in the 2015 Conservative campaign, when the party's Euroscepticism seemingly reached an apogee.

By and large, the conclusions reached in the course of this study are consonant with studies that went before it on the topic of politicisation of Europe. Nonetheless, the study was constrained by numerous factors, not least its small scale, but in particular the lack of professional coders in coding the manifestos, and a lack of reference to a recognised codebook. The coding of the manifestos undertaken here was therefore necessarily normative in nature, and a potential source of dispute of the validity of the findings. In spite of this, it is hoped that the singular focus on the frame strategies and directions of party-families shines a new light on an important element of the politicisation debate, which is believed to provide an empirical basis for testing the postfunctional theory of European integration.

While this study focused exclusively on the centre-right party-family, future research should undertake to draw comparisons of the direction of frames of all party-families across the board. Given the wide variations in levels of Euro-negativity recorded across the three country-cases of this study, it seems plausible that the level of optimism or pessimism

towards Europe could follow a party-systemic dynamic, rather than a pan-national, party-family one. If this is the case, then a re-evaluation of the premise of European integration as the cause of politicisation in and of itself is at hand. As this study has revealed, and as has been concluded in another study (Grande, Hutter, 2016), it is the country which is least integrated where further European integration is most disputed. Further individual-level studies of countries with differing levels integration are therefore required, to gain a more thorough understanding of the drivers of Euroscepticism. From the present study, the answer to the original question of whether politicisation has caused a Eurosceptic turn in the centre-right must be that, while there is evidence of heightened politicisation over the time period studied, and while evidence of a cultural shift has been observed across the board, the UK Conservative party is the only centre-right element that can be properly described as Eurosceptic. However, given that the recent cultural shift has also been accompanied by an erosion of support for the EU, perhaps we stand at the beginning of a turning point only now? To answer that question, only time will tell.

Word count: ca. 8,800 (excl. tables & figures)

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