

European Integration, Economics, and Voting Behavior in the 2001 British General Election

Erik R. Tillman
Department of Political Science
University of Nebraska
511 Oldfather Hall
Lincoln, NE 68588-0328
Etilman2@unl.edu

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Workshop on the Politics of Change, June 13-14, 2008, Amsterdam, Netherlands. I thank the participants at that conference and Tim Hellwig for helpful comments.

Abstract: This paper develops and tests three hypotheses about the effects of European integration on voting behavior in the 2001 British General Election. First, preferences over joining the common currency (Euro) influence voting behavior, as predicted by the EU issue voting hypothesis. Second, economic voting is weaker among those who believe the national economy to be influenced more by the EU than by the national government. Third, voter abstention is higher among those who believe that the economy is influenced more by the EU than by the national government. Analyses of data from the 2001 British Election Study find support for the first and third hypotheses, suggesting multiple ways in which European integration influences national elections and highlighting several avenues for further research.

Students of comparative politics have given greater attention in recent years to the effects of international economic integration on domestic electoral politics. Noting the consequences of these policies for citizens and domestic interest groups and the difficulties that integrations poses for domestic governance, researchers have developed several hypotheses. One group of studies, focusing primarily on the European Union (EU), has marshaled evidence in support for the EU issue voting hypothesis, which posits that preferences over European integration shape voting behavior in domestic elections (Gabel 2000, Tillman 2004, de Vries 2007, Schoen 2008). One finding from this literature is that global market integration undermines the perceived competence of national leaders to make economic policy, thus weakening economic voting (Hellwig 2001, Samuels and Hellwig 2007). More recently, studies have examined the consequences of globalization for other aspects of domestic electoral behavior, with findings suggesting that globalization reduces voter turnout (Tillman 2008). Taken together, these studies suggest that the transfer of sovereignty from national governments to supranational organizations or to international market forces have several important consequences for domestic electoral politics.

Although these recent studies have made impressive strides, they have operated largely as independent research agendas. As a result, there has been little consideration of how one set of findings might relate to the others. Also, it is unclear whether we should expect European integration to have similar effects as globalization upon voting behavior. For example, the evidence collected to this point does not allow us to evaluate whether European integration has reduced the magnitude of economic voting in the same fashion as globalization. This paper seeks to build upon and unify these separate research agendas by simultaneously testing each claim on data drawn from an EU member state.

This study presents and tests three hypotheses drawn from these research traditions. In addition to examining these hypotheses in different empirical settings, this approach also has the advantage of allowing one to examine whether these effects operate simultaneously. The hypotheses are tested using data from the 2001 British Election Study. The evidence is consistent with the three hypotheses. The results indicate that preferences over British adoption of the common currency (the Euro) have a clear effect on voting behavior, as respondents are more likely to vote for parties closer to their own position on the Euro. This finding extends the EU issue voting hypothesis (Gabel 2000, Tillman 2004, de Vries 2007) to examine the effects of an issue related to European integration (see also Schoen 2008). Second, respondents who believe that the EU has the greater effect upon economic conditions in the UK are less likely to vote than those who do not, consistent with other arguments about the depressing effects of globalization on voter turnout (Tillman 2008). However, this paper does not find evidence that economic voting is weaker among those who ascribe more economic responsibility to the EU than to the British government (Hellwig 2001, Hellwig and Samuels 2007).

The following sections of this paper elaborate on these arguments and findings. The next section develops the three hypotheses by drawing upon the relevant literatures. The following sections describe the research design and present the results of the analyses, and the final section discusses the findings and suggests directions for future research.

European Integration and Domestic Electoral Behavior

The arguments in this paper draw upon research examining the effects of European integration on mass behavior within the EU specifically, and the consequences of globalization on mass politics generally. However, the focus is solely on the consequences of European

integration. Of course, there are a variety of ways in which globalization and European integration are very different processes. For the purposes of this study, I expand hypotheses developed in the study of the consequences of globalization on mass politics to study of the EU. Doing so increases our understanding of the consequences of economic and political integration on domestic electoral politics. In addition, I expand a hypothesis about the effects of EU membership on voting behavior to consider a more specific EU policy.

This paper focuses on two ways in which European integration influences mass behavior. First, it generates political conflict over potential EU policies that become the basis of issue voting in domestic elections. To use the issue studied in this paper, British political elites and citizens differ on when, if ever, the United Kingdom should adopt the Euro as its currency. In the 2001 general election, the Conservative Party aggressively campaigned on a pledge to “save” the Pound (Bartle 2003, 167), while Labour and the Liberal Democrats adopted more favorable positions. This differentiation gave citizens the ability to vote for the party closest to their preferences on this issue. Second, European integration results in the transfer of authority from the national to the supranational (EU) level. This transfer of authority reduces the real and perceived competence of national governments in economic policy, with monetary policy being constrained by participation in the common currency. Below, I develop three hypotheses relating these two consequences of European integration to domestic electoral politics.

EU Issue Voting

Since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, scholarly interest in the sources of citizen attitudes towards the EU and their consequences for European politics has grown. Several key findings have emerged. First, citizen attitudes towards the EU are rooted in utilitarian (Gabel 1998), domestic political (Anderson 1998), and socio-cultural (Carey 2002, McLaren 2002)

concerns. Second, there is some level of responsiveness between citizen attitudes and party positions on EU issues (Carrubba 2001, Steenbergen et al 2007), though there also appears to be a gap between elite and mass opinion on the EU, with elites being more supportive (Hooghe 2003, Mattila and Raunio 2006). Finally, the institutional weakness of the European Parliament engenders low participation in European elections (Mattila 2003), suggesting that national politics may prove a more viable outlet for contesting European issues. This set of circumstances led van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) to describe the EU issue as a “sleeping giant” in electoral politics. As a result, scholars have begun to examine whether the EU has evolved in an electoral issue in national politics.

The EU issue voting hypothesis states that citizen preferences over European integration influence their vote choice in national elections. Specifically, citizens are expected to vote for the party that adopts a position closest to their own on the EU question. Previous studies have found evidence consistent with this hypothesis (Gabel 2000, Tillman 2004, de Vries 2007, de Vries and Tillman 2008). These studies have largely established the point that (at least in recent years) evidence of EU issue voting can be found across West and East Europe in different political contexts.

This paper expands our understanding of the EU issue voting hypothesis by moving beyond the question of general support of or opposition to the EU. The previous studies cited above have measured the distance between a party and citizen in terms of placement on a scale in which one pole indicates opposition to European integration (or EU membership) and the other indicates support.¹ However, EU membership itself is often not the point of contention among

¹ The exact measures have varied across studies, although each has followed the same basic logic. For example, Tillman (2004) measures the respondent’s and party’s perceived support or

parties. Instead, specific issues related to European integration (such as an expansion of EU powers) may become salient in campaigns. For example, Schoen (2008) demonstrates that attitudes about Turkey's bid for EU membership influenced voting behavior in the 2005 German federal elections.

This study examines the electoral effects of support for adopting the Euro in the 2001 British general election. There are several reasons why the EU issue voting hypothesis would apply to questions about the Euro. First, adoption of the common currency requires a major transfer of sovereignty from the national to the supranational level. States that adopt the Euro lose control over monetary policy and face additional constraints over fiscal policies as well. The policy importance (as well as the symbolic meaning) of this issue means that it likely to be salient to voters and parties. Second, there was considerable disagreement over the Euro in Britain at the time of the 2001 election. The major British parties took divergent and public positions on the Euro, which are reflected in the 2001 British Election Study survey data. The mean respondent in the 2001 British Election Study identified the Liberal Democrats as being most in favor of joining the Euro, Labour holding a slightly weaker position in favor, and the Conservatives being opposed. Importantly, respondents were equally divided on the Euro. Thus, there is mass- and party-level disagreement over the issue. This leads to the first

opposition to that country's EU membership. De Vries (2007) uses a similar measure, in which one pole indicates exit from the EU and the other indicates the fastest build-up of the EU. De Vries and Tillman (Nd) use a scale in which one pole indicates that integration has "already gone too far" and the other indicates that integration "should be pushed further." Though the wording differs, the logic of each involves support for EU membership or continued European integration in a general sense.

hypothesis that attitudes over joining the Euro affect voting behavior in the 2001 British election. Individuals should be more likely to vote for the party closest to them on the issue. Phrased differently, increasing distance between the respondent and party on the Euro should reduce the likelihood of the respondent supporting that party.

Hypothesis One: Individuals are more likely to vote for a party that is closer to them on the question of adopting the common currency.

Economic Integration and Economic Voting

Scholars more recently have begun to consider the effects of economic integration on electoral politics. Of particular concern is the degree to which economic integration constraints the (real or perceived) ability of national governments to pursue independent economic policies. Given its emphasis on regional economic integration, it stands to reason that European integration will produce similar effects on domestic electoral politics. Compliance with EU law on internal markets eliminates a variety of policy options for national governments, and participation in the common currency further limits member states' monetary and fiscal policies. If governments are forced to abandon certain economic policies in order to comply with EU law (and, possibly, to remain competitive within the common market), democratic representation may be curtailed insofar as publics may demand certain policies that leaders are constrained from adopting.

A series of recent studies argue that economic voting under globalization has been weakened (Hellwig 2001, Hellwig and Samuels 2007). As globalization increases, citizens may believe that their national governments are constrained in their ability to manage the economy in

the face of market forces.² Believing that maintaining competitiveness in an open market prevents state leaders from adopting certain policies and that market forces may overwhelm others, rational citizens decline to hold the government accountable for economic outcomes that it was (apparently) powerless to control. The result is that citizens do not engage in economic voting. This argument found support at the individual level (Hellwig 2001) and at the aggregate level (Hellwig and Samuels 2007).

Similar effects upon economic voting should exist within the EU. Given the degree to which the common market has developed, member states face numerous constraints on their policymaking ability. The regulatory power of the European Commission may reinforce these constraints in the eyes of voters. Finally, the strategic behavior of politicians in blaming unpopular decisions on external constraints is prevalent within the EU, which may further increase these perceived constraints (Hellwig and Samuels 2007, 288). Following the arguments of Hellwig (2001) and Hellwig and Samuels (2007), the second hypothesis predicts that evidence of economic voting should be weaker among those who believe that the EU has more influence on the national economy than one's national government.³

² Note that for the purposes of this argument, the distinction between real and perceived constraints is not important. If citizens widely share the belief that their government is unable to manage the economy due to international market pressures, they will behave in the same fashion regardless of whether their perceptions are actually correct or not. A same argument applies when one substitutes "Brussels" for international market pressures.

³ Carey (2006) finds that the influence of national economic perceptions on EU support in Great Britain is stronger among those who believe the EU has more influence over the British

Hypothesis Two: Individuals who attribute responsibility for the economy to the EU are less likely to engage in economic voting than those who attribute responsibility to their national government.

Economic Integration and Turnout

One important line of recent scholarship on the determinants of turnout has emphasized the competitive context of an election. Individuals are more likely to vote when they believe their vote will be decisive. Accordingly, electoral participation rises when the election result is expected to be close (Blais 2000), when elections produce clear outcomes (Jackman 1987), and when the policy decisiveness of an election is high (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998, Franklin 2004). By contrast, turnout drops in US elections contested under divided government (Franklin and Hirczy de Mino 1998), and turnout in the EU is generally lower for “second-order” elections to the European Parliament than to national elections (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Thus, a central result is that changes that reduce the perceived importance of voting should cause declines in electoral participation.

Increasing economic integration may reduce the perceived importance of elections. As discussed above, evidence suggests that voters in open economies are less likely to sanction governments for economic conditions than (Hellwig 2001, Hellwig and Samuels 2007). Building upon this logic allows us to predict that globalization should also reduce voter participation. As national governments lose the (perceived) ability to operate independently in economic spheres, elections lose value as mechanisms for selecting or removing competent managers of the economy. A globalized economy is one in which “elections are less meaningful

economy. This finding provides further evidence that citizens incorporate their understanding of multi-level governance into judgments of accountability.

as vehicles for achieving or blocking policy change” (Franklin 2004, 179). If true, the implication should be that voter participation is less likely under economic integration, particularly among individuals who believe that integration constrains government policy. In a cross-national study, Tillman (2008) finds evidence of a negative relationship between economic openness and aggregate voter turnout.

In this paper, I examine whether the logic of this argument applies to European integration. Are citizens who perceive high levels of EU influence on the national economy economics less likely to vote than those who do not? I expect to find a relationship between electoral participation and perceptions of control of the national economy. Respondents who believe that EU policies have more influence over the state of the national economy than national government policies should be more likely to abstain from voting than those who think that the national government has the main effect on the national economy.

Hypothesis Three: Respondents who attribute responsibility for the economy to the EU are less likely to vote than those who attribute responsibility to the British government.

Research Design

The three hypotheses described in the previous section predict relationships between preferences over adoption of the Euro, judgments of the influence of the EU in the British economy, economic judgments, and voting behavior—defined to include both participation and party choice. These multiple demands limit the availability of data. The 2001 British Election

Study (Sanders et al 2001) includes appropriate questions on each issue, so it is used in the analyses below.⁴

The dependent variable is the reported voting behavior of the respondent in the post-election survey.⁵ There are three major parties included in the analysis: the incumbent Labour Party, the main opposition Conservative Party (Tories), and the traditional “third-party” Liberal Democrats (LDP). In addition, approximately 40% of eligible voters failed to cast a ballot in the 2001 election. As is fairly typical, the survey underestimates the number of individuals who did not vote; however, this creates a more conservative test of Hypothesis Three. Additionally, supporters of several smaller parties and regional parties are dropped from the analysis, as they are too few in number to make estimation feasible. The dependent variable is structured as follows (percentage of respondents choosing each alternative in parentheses):

0=Abstain (33.9%)

⁴ Ideally, one would analyze multiple elections from multiple countries. However, I could not find other election studies that contained the necessary questions to test all three hypotheses proposed in this paper.

⁵ I use reported voting behavior rather than party utilities here for several reasons. The party utilities approach has recently been advocated (van der Eijk et al 2006) due to its inclusion of information about the voters’ preferences for all parties, much of which is lost when the dependent variable records only the party choice of the individual. Furthermore, party utilities correlate highly with reported vote choice. However, the party utilities approach is not feasible for this study because it provides no intuitive way of incorporating voter abstention into the dependent variable, and the transformations necessary for individual-specific independent variables rule out the use of interaction terms with those variables.

1=Conservative (18.6%)

2=Labour (34.5%)

3=Liberal Democrat (13.1%)

Several independent variables are included. *Euro Distance* measures the distance between the respondent and the mean of each party on an 11-point scale asking whether the UK should adopt the Euro as its currency or not. A score of 0 indicates “definitely replace” the Pound with the Euro and 10 indicates “definitely keep” the Pound instead of the Euro. Respondents are asked to indicate their own position on this scale as well as their perception of each party’s position: I take the absolute distance of each respondent’s position from the mean value of each party’s position to create the variable. Hypothesis One leads us to expect a negative relationship between this variable and one’s vote choice: as the distance between the respondent and a party increases (indicating less agreement on the Euro question), the likelihood of the respondent voting for that party decreases.

Hypotheses Two and Three predict that perceptions about the relative influence of the EU and the British government on the British economy affect voting behavior. To measure these perceptions, I use the responses to a question asking, “Which one of the following do you think affects the general economic situation in [the United Kingdom] the most? Would you say the British government or the European Union?” Respondents had the option of indicating either of those two choices, or spontaneous responses that both had an equal effect or neither had an effect were also recorded. Using these responses, I generate a dummy variable called *EU Influence* that is coded 1 if the respondent chose the EU, and 0 otherwise (the British government, both equally, or neither). Hypothesis Three predicts that this variable should have a direct and positive effect on the likelihood of a respondent not voting.

I measure economic judgments using a standard retrospective sociotropic questions. *Economy* is coded using a question asking respondents to evaluate how the “general economic situation” in the UK has changed over the past twelve months. Responses indicating that it had worsened are coded as -1, those indicating that it was unchanged are coded as 0, and those indicating that it had improved are coded as 1. In order to test Hypothesis Two, I create interaction terms between this measure of economic evaluations and *EU Influence*. I expect that *Economy* will be negative and significant for the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, and abstention relative to the Labour Party (indicating that negative judgments reduce the likelihood of voting Labour in favor of the other three alternatives). However, the interaction term should be positive, indicating that respondents who believe that the EU has more influence on the state of the economy than the British government are significantly less likely to base their vote on their judgment of the economy than those who do not.

I include two other policy distance scales to control for other factors influencing the vote. *Ideology* is based on the answers to a question asking respondents to place themselves and each party on a standard 11-point left-right ideological scale. I expect that this variable to have the most powerful effect on voting behavior. *Crime* is based on respondents’ placement of themselves and parties on a scale where 0 indicates that “reducing crime is more important” and 10 indicates that “protecting the rights of the accused” is more important. Each of these two policy distance variables is constructed in identical fashion to *EU Distance*, meaning that each measures the unique distance for each party-respondent combination. In general, all three variables should be negative and significant.

I include a series of additional variables in the analysis to control for other potential influences on voting behavior. *Income* measures the respondent’s self-reported household

income on a twelve-point scale. *Class* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent self-identifies as a member of the working class and 0 otherwise. *Gender* is coded 1 if the respondent is male, 0 if female. *Political Interest* is measured on a five-point scale where 5 indicates “a great deal” of interest in politics and 1 indicates that the respondent is “not at all” interested in politics. *Democracy* is coded 1 if the respondent indicates being very or fairly satisfied with “the way democracy works” in the UK, and 0 otherwise. Respondents living in an owner-occupied home are coded 1 in *Homeowner*, and respondents who do not are coded 0. *Union* is coded 1 for those respondents who indicate being members of union households, 0 otherwise. *Age* measures the respondent’s age bracket on a five-point scale. *EU Member* is based on the standard question asking respondents’ approval of British membership in the EU. Responses indicating that membership is a bad thing are coded 1, those that say it is neither good nor bad are coded 2, and those indicating that it is a good thing are coded 3.

Analyses and Results

To test the hypotheses described above, the statistical analysis must allow for the inclusion of choice-specific variables, such as the policy distance variables, in which there is a different possible value for each combination of respondent and party (the choice in this analysis). In addition, it must incorporate interaction terms between individual-specific variables.⁶ For these reasons, the conditional logit estimator is preferred. In addition, the

⁶ The need to include these interaction terms between individual-specific variables rules out the use of the party utilities approach (van der Eijk et al 2006). The party utilities technique requires that individual-specific variables be transformed prior to analysis, making analysis of any interactions between them substantively meaningless.

conditional logit estimator does not suffer from the potentially serious (and hard to diagnose) problem of fragile identification as does the multinomial probit model.

Typically, conditional logit models have been used to analyze the determinants of party choice in studies of voting behavior (e.g., de Vries, 2007, Hellwig 2008, Tillman 2004) and have not included abstention as a possible alternative in the dependent variable. Incorporating non-voters poses an analytical challenge, as abstention does not have a meaningful policy position as do parties. However, it is necessary to set a policy position for abstention to estimate the model—creating the potential for biased coefficients on the policy distance variables. To alleviate these problems, the policy positions for abstention are arbitrarily set to the sample of respondents' self-placements, creating a (substantively meaningless) distance between respondent and abstention. I then create an interaction term between the marker variable indicating abstention and the policy distance variable (e.g., *Euro Distance X abstention*), which isolates the effect of the policy distance on the likelihood of not voting. In turn, this means that the coefficients for the policy distance variables show their effects only upon the likelihood of voting for one of the three parties (in other words, when abstention is not the choice under consideration).⁷

Table 1 reports the results of the conditional logit model. Note that the variables contained in the analysis are a mix of choice-specific variables (the policy distance variables) and respondent-specific variables (all other variables). There is a single coefficient for each

⁷ These interaction terms between abstention and the policy distance variables are substantively meaningless. However, the fact that each is positive is to be expected: the (meaningless) relationship between the policy distance and the likelihood of abstention is weaker than it is for the substantively meaningful party alternatives.

choice-specific variable (*Euro*, *Ideology*, and *Crime*), which can be understood as an unconditional effect for all respondent-party combinations. The respondent-specific variables have a unique coefficient for each respondent-party combination, which shows the effect of that variable upon the likelihood that the respondent will choose the option indicated in the header over the baseline option (the Labour Party).

[Table 1 about here]

The results provide mixed support for the three hypotheses. Hypothesis One predicts that preferences over the Euro influence voting behavior. Consistent with expectations, *Euro* is negative and significant. This coefficient indicates that respondents become less likely to vote for a party as its position on adopting the Euro becomes more distant from their own. Notably, this finding holds even with the inclusion of two domestic policy distance variables. *Ideology* is negative and significant, as expected. However, *Crime* is not significant, suggesting that preferences over participation in the Euro had a larger effect than preferences over policies related to law and order in this election. In short, the evidence is consistent with Hypothesis One and suggests that preferences over the Euro had a significant effect on party support. This finding is consistent with the EU issue voting hypothesis and adds to the work demonstrating that European issues influence voting behavior in national elections (Gabel 2000, Tillman 2004, de Vries 2007, Schoen 2008).

Hypothesis Two predicts that economic voting is weaker for respondents who attribute more responsibility to the EU for the state of the national economy. This hypothesis requires care in testing, as it requires the use of an interaction term between *Economy* and *EU Influence*. The coefficients for *Economy* show the effect of past economic judgments on each party combination only when *EU Distance* = 0. These coefficients are negative and significant,

showing that positive perceptions of the economy increase the likelihood of voting Labour (versus any of the other three choices) among those who attributed responsibility to the British government. The interaction terms are not significant, but two of the three (for the Conservatives and Abstention) are positive.

At first glance, this might indicate that Hypothesis Two should be rejected, but it is necessary when using interaction terms to conduct post-estimation analyses (Brambor et al 2006). To test Hypothesis two properly, I simulate the voting behavior of four hypothetical respondents. Using the *spost* package available as an add-on to Stata 9 (Long & Freese 2006), I estimate the predicted probability for each party under different conditions.⁸ Figure 1 presents the *predicted change* in the likelihood of voting for the incumbent Labour Party for a hypothetical partisan of each party and a non-partisan as the respondent's judgment of the economy is shifted from "worse" to "better" while all other variables are set to sample median values. This simulation is repeated while setting the respondent's belief that the British government is primarily responsible for the state of the economy (*EU Influence* = 0) and then when the respondent believes the EU has a greater effect on the state of the national economy (*EU Influence* = 1).

[Figure 1 about here]

⁸ Due to complications with simulating probabilities using interaction terms in the conditional logit model, I first estimate a multinomial logit model (not shown) that does not include the policy distance variables in order to conduct the simulation. The coefficients for *Economy*, *EU Influence*, and the interaction between the two are substantively identical to those obtained from the conditional logit model presented in Table 1.

An examination of Figure 1 shows that the evidence does not support Hypothesis Two. For each hypothetical voter, the darker bar shows the change in voting Labour when responsibility is attributed to the British government, and the lighter bar shows the predicted change when responsibility is attributed to the EU. For the evidence to support Hypothesis Two, the darker bars would need to be consistently larger than the lighter bars. This occurs only for the hypothetical Conservative Party identifier. The effects are virtually identical for the Labour partisan and non-partisan, and the results are in the opposite direction for the Liberal Democrat. In short, the evidence leads to a rejection of Hypothesis Two.

Hypothesis Three suggests that abstention is more likely among those who attribute greater responsibility for the economy to the EU. The evidence presented in Table 1 provides some support for this hypothesis. *EU Influence* is positive and significant for the Labour/Abstain combination. In other words, individuals who attribute greater economic responsibility to the EU are more likely to abstain than to vote Labour. However, the effect is not significant for the decision of whether to vote for other parties or to abstain (the effect is negative but does not attain statistical significance for the other combinations). This finding suggests that individuals who attributed the state of the economy to the EU were more likely not to vote at the expense of the governing Labour Party.

To further examine Hypothesis Three, I estimate a logit model of electoral participation. This test allows one to examine whether the evidence in support of Hypothesis Three holds when no assumptions about policy distances are imposed. It is not possible to include the policy distance variables in a logistic regression, thus eliminating a test of the first and second hypotheses. However, it is possible to test Hypothesis Three directly. In this model, the dependent variable is coded 1 if the respondent reported voting (for any party) and 0 otherwise.

Other independent variables remain unchanged, with the exception that the respondent's ideology is now coded using two dummy variables. *Left* indicates those respondents placing themselves at a score of 3 or lower, and *Right* takes a value of 1 for those who placed themselves at a score of 7 or higher. The omitted reference category includes those respondents who self-placed between 4 and 6. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. *EU Influence* is negative and significant, indicating that perceptions of greater EU influence on that national economy reduce the likelihood of voting across all respondents. This effect holds even with the inclusion of various control variables that explain the decision to vote.⁹ Subsequent post-estimation simulations estimate that a change in *EU Influence* reduces the probability of voting by about 5 percentage points (this predicted change is significant at the .05 level). Thus, it is fair to say the effect is modest but not trivial. In sum, the evidence supports Hypothesis One and Hypothesis Three, but it provides little support for Hypothesis Two.

⁹ One potential objection is that the responses to the *EU Influence* question are endogenous to partisanship and support for EU membership. In order to address this possibility, I estimate a logistic regression in which *EU Influence* is the dependent variable, and independent variables include partisanship, *EU Support*, and other measures of political attitudes and demographics. Not surprisingly, Conservative Party and LDP identifiers are more likely to attribute responsibility for the economy to the EU, while Labour Party supporters are less likely to. Also, support for EU membership has a negative effect. A number of other control variables are significant; however, the overall fit of the model is weak (pseudo $R^2 = 0.05$), suggesting that *EU Influence* is largely exogenous to these variables. It is important to note that the models presented in Tables 1 and 2 include controls for partisanship and EU support, so the results are not likely to be driven by these variables.

[Table 2 about here]

Discussion

This paper has proposed and tested three hypotheses about the effects of European integration on voting behavior in the 2001 British general election. The results of the analysis support several empirical conclusions. First, the evidence is consistent with the EU issue voting hypothesis, as the results show that respondents were more likely to vote for a party that held a position closer to their own on the question of British adoption of the common currency. This result adds support to the EU issue voting hypothesis (Tillman 2004, de Vries 2007). More importantly, this paper expands the study of EU issue voting beyond a general pro/anti-EU dimension to consider the effects of attitudes towards a specific European policy issue (the common currency) on voting behavior (see also Schoen 2008). This finding adds to our confidence that European issues have become important in national elections and replicates previous findings about the role of European issues on party support and voting behavior in Great Britain (de Vries 2007, Evans 1998).

The second finding to emerge is that individuals who believe the EU has more influence over the British economy than the British government were less likely to vote in this election. The lack of similar questions on other surveys prevents any efforts to replicate this result in other elections at this point. Still, this result adds weight to the growing body of evidence suggesting that economic integration is weakening traditional forms of democratic accountability, reducing the potential salience of national elections with regards to economic policy (Tillman 2008). In addition, this finding, in combination with the EU issue voting result described above, generates an interesting picture for the development of national elections within the EU. With growing awareness of the impact of the EU on domestic circumstances, there appears to be increased

contestation and voting on European issues. However, it may also be that some voters are responding to this shift by withdrawing from politics. This conjecture seems plausible when one considers the concerns over the democratic deficit within the EU. Unfortunately, this survey does not include questions about perceptions of democracy within the EU, so this conjecture cannot be examined here. Scholars should examine this possibility in future work.

Interestingly, the second hypothesis did not find support. The analysis did not indicate consistently weaker levels of economic voting among those who attributed more economic responsibility to the EU than to the British government, contrary to the results of other cross-national studies (Hellwig 2001, Hellwig and Samuels 2007). There was a significant difference in the expected direction among Conservative Party identifiers, but this trend was not apparent for other partisans (and it was reversed among Liberal Democrat partisans).

There are limitations to this paper's analyses. The first is that this paper takes hypotheses derived from the study of globalization and applies them to the EU, which may be inappropriate due to the fact that European integration is different than globalization. In many respects, this is true. However, the effects of European integration on domestic electoral accountability should be similar to those attributed to globalization. Even for countries such as the UK that have not adopted the Euro, EU law constraints domestic governments on a wide range of economic and social policies. Thus, governments within the EU face serious constraints on their policy making ability, and recent evidence suggests that voters are aware of these constraints (in some cases, perhaps overestimating their extent).

A second potential objection concerns the focus on the 2001 British election. Of course, this is a fair objection in that a study of a single election always leaves open the chance that various factors unique to this election have biased the results. The UK in 2001 was notable in

that there was clear disagreement between the major parties on whether to adopt the Euro. This marks a clear distinction between the politics of European integration in many member states (at least in Western Europe), where the major parties often take moderately pro-EU positions and are reluctant to campaign aggressively on the issue (Marks et al 2006). In addition, the UK is unlike many EU member states in that its political system facilitates strong single-party governments. These factors combined make the 2001 British election a favorable case for finding evidence of EU issue voting (Edwards & de Vries 2008). Thus, it is clear that this election provides a favorable case for finding evidence of these hypotheses, but there is little reason aside to think that it would produce misleading results. In any case, the lack of appropriate data from other election studies means that this concern will stand until future data become available.

Future research should also consider the role of political elites in conditioning the effects of economic integration on electoral behavior. Evidence suggests that competition between parties on the EU issue is necessary for EU issue voting to occur (de Vries 2007). However, mainstream parties in Western Europe also tend to be reluctant to adopt strong positions on the EU, as many face internal divisions on the issue (Edwards 2007). Elites may also choose to emphasize other, non-economic, issues for electoral gain (Hellwig 2008). It is likely that the degree of electoral responses seen in different cases (i.e., greater EU issue voting, increased abstention) will depend on how party leaders choose to approach integration-related issues. When rival parties take clear and divergent stands on integration, more issue voting should occur, and the importance of the issue may increase turnout by adding to the perceived salience of the election. When parties collectively avoid the integration issue, less EU issue voting and more abstention should be likely. Thus, we should begin to observe greater cross-national

variations in patterns of participation and issue voting as political elites diverge in their responses to economic integration.

References

- Blais, Andre. 2000. *To Vote or Not to Vote?* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Blais, Andre. 2006. "What Affects Voter Turnout?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 111-125.
- Blais, Andre, and Agnieszka Dobrzynska. 1998. "Turnout in Electoral Democracies." *European Journal of Political Research* 33: 239-261.
- Carey, Sean. 2006. "Exploring the Link between the Economy and Public Attitudes to the European Union." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- Carrubba, Clifford J. 2001. "The Electoral Connection in European Union Politics." *Journal of Politics* 63 (1): 141-158.
- De Vries, Catherine E. 2007. "Sleeping Giant: Fact or Fairytale? How European Integration Affects National Elections." *European Union Politics* 8 (3): 363-385.
- De Vries, Catherine E., and Erik R. Tillman. Nd. "European Union Issue Voting in East and West Europe: The Role of Political Context." Forthcoming, *Comparative European Politics*.
- Edwards, Erica E. 2007. "United We Stand? Intra-Party Dissent in the EU on Issues of European Integration." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 12-15.
- Edwards, Erica E., and Catherine E. de Vries. 2008. "Clarity of Responsibility beyond the Pocketbook: How Political Institutions Condition EU Issue Voting." Paper presented at the 3rd Pan-European Conference on EU Politics, Riga, Latvia.

- Evans, Geoffrey. 1998. "Euroscepticism and Conservative Electoral Support: How an Asset Became a Liability." *British Journal of Political Science* 28 (4): 573-590.
- Franklin, Mark N. 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Franklin, Mark N., and Wolfgang P. Hirczy de Mino. 1998. "Separated Powers, Divided Government, and Turnout in U.S. Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (1): 316-326.
- Gabel, Matthew. 2000. "European Integration, Voters, and National Politics." *West European Politics* 23 (4): 52-72.
- Hellwig, Timothy. 2001. "Interdependence, Government Constraints, and Economic Voting." *Journal of Politics* 63 (4): 1141-1162.
- Hellwig, Timothy. 2008. "Globalization, Policy Constraints, and Vote Choice." *Journal of Politics* 70 (4): 1128-41.
- Hellwig, Timothy, and David Samuels. 2007. "Voting in Open Economies: The Electoral Consequences of Globalization." *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (3): 283-306.
- Hooghe, Liesbet. 2003. "Europe Divided: Elites vs. Public Opinion on European Integration." *European Union Politics* 4 (3): 281-305.
- Jackman, Robert W. 1987. "Political Institutions and Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 81 (2): 405-424.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2007. "The Role of European Integration in National Election Campaigns." *European Union Politics* 8 (1): 83-108.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschier, and Tim Frey. 2006. "Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six

- European Countries Compared.” *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (6): 921-57.
- Lacy, Dean, and Barry Burden. 1999. “The Vote-Stealing and Turnout Effects of Ross Perot in the 1992 U.S. Presidential Election.” *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (1): 233-255.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Mary Stegmaier. 2000. “Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 183-219.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Marks, Gary, Liesbet Hooghe, Moira Nelson, and Erica Edwards. 2006. “Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West: Different Structure, Same Causality.” *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (2): 155-175.
- Mattila, Mikko, and Tapio Raunio. 2006. “Cautious Voters—Supportive Parties: Opinion Congruence between Voters and Parties on the EU Dimension.” *European Union Politics* 7 (4): 427-449.
- Rodrik, Dani. 2000. “How Far Will International Economic Integration Go?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14 (1): 177-186.
- Sanders, David J., Paul F. Whiteley, Harold D. Clarke, and Marianne Stewart. *British Election Study 2001-2 [computer file]*. University of Essex: Colchester, UK.
- Schoen, Harald. 2008. “Turkey’s Bid for EU Membership, Contrasting Views of Public Opinion, and Vote Choice. Evidence from the 2005 German Federal Election.” *Electoral Studies* 27 (2): 344-355.
- Steenbergen, Marco R., Erica E. Edwards, and Catherine E. de Vries. 2007. “Who’s Cueing Whom? Mass-Elite Linkages and the Future of European Integration.” *European Union Politics* 8 (1): 13-35.

- Tillman, Erik R. 2004. "The European Union at the Ballot Box? European Integration and Voting Behavior in the New Member States." *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (5): 590-610.
- Tillman, Erik R. 2008. "Is Globalization Reducing Voter Turnout?" Paper presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA.
- Van der Eijk, Cees, and Mark Franklin. 1996. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Van der Eijk, Cees, Wouter van der Brug, Martin Kroh, and Mark Franklin. 2006. "Rethinking the Dependent Variable in Voting Behavior: On the Measurement and Analysis of Electoral Utilities." *Electoral Studies* 25: 424-447.

Table 1. Conditional Logit Estimates of Voting Behavior in the 2001 British Election

	Conservative vs. Labour	LDP vs. Labour	Abstain vs. Labour
Euro		-.213*	
		(.038)	
Ideology		-.415*	
		(.084)	
Crime		.011	
		(.072)	
EU Influence	.187	.148	.490*
	(.294)	(.258)	(.215)
Economy	-.770*	-.277	-.445*
	(.208)	(.167)	(.145)
EU Influence X Economy	.259	-.479	.041
	(.367)	(.327)	(.269)
Income	.060	.048	.051
	(.046)	(.038)	(.033)
Class	-.588	-.509*	-.140
	(.325)	(.250)	(.199)
Gender	.104	-.262	.426*
	(.267)	(.218)	(.190)
Democracy Satisfaction	-.722*	-.387	-.475*
	(.272)	(.225)	(.197)
Homeowner	1.18*	.366	-.094
	(.374)	(.283)	(.228)
Political Interest	-.094	.016	-.086
	(.126)	(.106)	(.091)
Union	-.535	-.289	-.451*
	(.330)	(.251)	(.218)
Age	-.063	-.027	-.298*
	(.094)	(.077)	(.070)
Labour ID	-3.93*	-2.40*	-1.37*
	(.740)	(.265)	(.203)
Tory ID	3.04*	.626	1.38*
	(.453)	(.497)	(.452)
LDP ID	-.576	2.73*	.813
	(1.15)	(.543)	(.621)
EU Support	-.326*	.035	.197
	(.151)	(.127)	(.109)
EU Influence X Euro		.165*	
		(.052)	
EU Influence X Ideology		.075	
		(.060)	
EU Influence X Crime		.054	
		(.048)	

N	1160
Log-likelihood	-975.4013
Pseudo R²	0.38

Note: Labour is the omitted category for the individual-specific variables. Cell entries show the conditional logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed test

Table 2. Logit Estimates of Voter Participation in the 2001 British General Election

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
EU Influence	-.214*	.065
Labour ID	.590*	.071
Tory ID	.700*	.092
LDP ID	1.36*	.154
Left Ideology	.035	.082
Right Ideology	.222*	.823
Economy	.133*	.039
Income	.028*	.011
Class	-.130	.068
Gender	-.443*	.060
Democracy Satisfaction	.271*	.064
Homeowner	.641*	.072
Political Interest	.382*	.031
Union	.313*	.074
Age	.368*	.023
EU Support	.093*	.037
Constant	-2.37*	.140
N		1759
Log-likelihood		-3584.04
Pseudo R²		0.144

* p<.05, two-tailed

Figure 1. Magnitude of the Economic Vote by Partisanship

