Euroskeptic Voting in European and National Elections: A Coalition Theory of European Voting[1]

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Paper prepared for the 2015 Meeting of the International Studies Association

Working Draft; Not for Circulation or Citation

ABSTRACT

The conventional explanation of European Parliament (EP) voting maintains that European elections are "second-order" elections in which citizens send a message to their national government. As a result, governing parties normally see significant losses in their vote shares in EP elections. This argument assumes that national elections reflect voters' sincere preferences, while voters make strategic choices in EP elections. This is not fully satisfactory because there is no theoretical or empirical reason to assume that voters act strategically *only* in EP elections. Instead, we assume that voters act strategically in all elections, and voters anticipate the policy effects of coalition negotiations at the domestic level and bargaining within the European Union at the supranational level. We show that Euroskeptic parties are less likely to join governing coalitions and that their supporters may vote against them in national elections for this reason. Because the EP does not form a European government, this strategic consideration is absent in EP elections, and Euroskeptic parties will therefore perform better there.

[1] Working paper; not for circulation or citation without permission. All errors remain the responsibility of the authors. We thank Caitlin Robertson for excellent research assistance.
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European Parliament (EP) elections are conventionally seen as "second-order" contests (see *inter alia* Reif and Schmitt 1980; Franklin 1996) in which citizens use their vote to send a message to their national government. As a result, governing parties normally see significant losses in their vote shares in EP elections. This affects the democratic legitimacy of the European Union (EU), weakening the EP's ability to reflect voters' interests, and strengthening the EU's reliance on nation-states instead of the European citizenry as a whole.

While second-order theory claims that voters make strategic choices in EP elections, it also assumes that voters behave non-strategically in national elections. In contrast, we maintain that if voters act strategically in one setting, we should assume that they vote strategically in all settings. In this case, choices do not simply reflect voters' underlying sincere preferences because voters anticipate the policy effects of coalition negotiations at the domestic level and bargaining within the European Union at the supranational level.

From this, we develop a "coalition theory" of voting. We argue that voters in national elections will avoid Euroskeptic parties, even those that are relatively large and/or within the political mainstream, because coalition bargaining disfavors them (see Pahre 2004; Sitter 2001, 2002; Taggart 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002). Moreover, because the EP does not form a European government, this strategic consideration is absent in EP elections. As a result, voters are more likely to support Euroskeptic parties in EP elections than in national elections.

As this summary suggests, we do not deny that the claims of the second-order theory might apply in some European elections, but we do maintain that this approach offers an incomplete understanding of voting, especially when we consider Euroskeptic parties. For this reason, our coalition theory of voting offers a better explanation for current voting patterns in the European Union. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to distinguish empirically our coalition theory

from second-order theory, because Euroskeptic parties are also more likely to be in opposition and Euroskeptic parties are also likely to be minor parties at the fringes of the political spectrum. Subject to these selection problems, we seek to show that (1) Euroskeptic parties perform better in EP elections than in national elections; (2) Euroskeptic parties in the national opposition do better in EP elections than do non-Euroskeptic opposition parties; and (3) a Euroskeptic party in the national government will perform better in EP elections than will non-Euroskeptic parties in government. We also expect that these effects are less noticeable in majoritarian systems than in political systems characterized by coalition governments.

If our claims are correct, these systematic differences between party strength at the national and European levels are an important feature of the European political system. They bias preferences in particular directions on the Euroskeptic dimension and do not simply reflect transient factors such as the current government or opposition in each country. In this respect, this bias acts much as the different selection rules of the two chambers in a bicameral legislature and should be part of our evaluation of the EU political system.

Euroskeptic parties, second-order elections, and strategic voting

Our analysis brings together literatures on Euroskeptic parties and on second-order elections. Interestingly, each literature has a set of well-supported generalizations in its particular area, but the two groups of generalizations are not fully consistent with each other. Our theoretical analysis, which draws on both, therefore contributes to each area of research.

Research on Euroskepticism began inductively, describing the phenomenon and working up analytical concepts for it, with a particular focus on public opinion toward the EU and the relationship between mass Euroskepticism and the Euroskepticism of political parties. Many studies have argued for a distinction between "hard" and "soft" Euroskeptics, with soft

Euroskeptics opposing deeper integration while hard Euroskeptics seek their country's exit from the EU (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak 2001; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002).

Alongside such typological work, others have begun to examine the correlates of Euroskepticism. Research has traced Euroskeptic beliefs to a voter's material interests, each country's economic interests, the Left-Right political spectrum, and particular ideologies (Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Aspinwall 2000; Cichowski 2000; Eichenberg and Dalton; 1993; Gabel 1998; Henderson 2001; Hooghe 2003; Marks et al. 2002; Noury 2002). Many such studies have analyzed voting choices in a straightforward, non-strategic way. In their most basic form, these approaches assume that people with Euroskeptic preferences vote for Euroskeptic parties, more or less under all conditions. Similarly, parties' Euroskepticism reflects party leaders' beliefs, and those parties appeal to people with similar beliefs.

However, these approaches leave at least two critical anomalies that deserve further explanation. First, if votes reflect values directly, it is difficult to understand the systematic differences between elite and mass views on the European Union, or divisions between national and local elites (Hughes *et al.* 2002 *inter alia*). Presumably, both voters and elites for each party would have similar values if strategic considerations were absent. Second, this behavioralist tradition cannot account for the strategic choices of both voters and parties. Euroskepticism is often a strategic choice of opposition parties (i.e., Taggart 1998; Sitter 2001), who take advantage of voters' desire to punish incumbent pro-EU positions. This regularity is particularly interesting, since pro-EU opposition parties apparently cannot use the EU as a mobilizer in the same way. In short, the literature on Euroskeptic voting behavior has not yet incorporated our

understanding of Euroskeptic elite and party behavior, and the strategic nature of elites highlights anomalies in the former.

The literature on second-order elections for the European Parliament does address strategic behavior in a more satisfactory way, but one that is still incomplete. This literature assumes that voters are primarily motivated by national political concerns (Hix 1999: 181-183). European elections provide an opportunity for some voters to register their disapproval of the national government, instead of the issues at hand in that particular contest (van der Eijk and Franklin, eds. 1994; Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994; Franklin, van der Eijk and Marsh 1995; Garry et al. 2005). In short, this literature treats EP elections in instrumental terms: voters make choices in European elections to influence national politics.

The evidence for this claim is strong, but it leaves several questions unanswered. Voters have a large menu of opposition parties to choose from—do they favor some parties over others? The second-order literature does not address this question explicitly, but it would seem to imply that larger parties that provide credible alternative governments would be favored over minor parties. Empirically, in contrast, these less credible opposition parties often gain significantly in European elections, especially if they are Euroskeptic.

One group of Euroskeptic parties illustrates this problem with the second-order theory particularly well. Several countries have parties that contest only EP elections, such as the June List in Denmark and Sweden, or Europa Transparant in the Netherlands. Second-order voters who support such EP-specific parties send a weak message to the incumbent government, which could dismiss the result as peculiar to European institutions and irrelevant for national politics. Recognizing the possibility that incumbents might dismiss these protest votes, voters for these EP-only parties must be choosing *these particular* non-governing parties as a way to express

their preferences on *the European Union* and not just on national politics. If these voters simply wanted to express opposition to the national government, as the second-order theory predicts, they should be more likely to choose the mainstream opposition instead of the Euroskeptic parties.

Once we consider such EP-specific parties, other issues with the second-order theory appear. If some voters use European elections to express their views on the EU—either in addition to their opposition to the government, or instead of such opposition—we should expect the full set of EP-specific parties to include both pro-EU and anti-EU parties. Empirically, however, there are absolutely no pro-EU parties that contest EP elections but not national elections. This pattern, which cannot be explained by the second-order theory, can be explained in the coalition theory we present here.

We join many others in arguing that voters act strategically. There have been studies finding such voting in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States, among others (Alvarez and Nagler 2000; Blais 2002; Blais et al. 2001; Cox 1997; Garry et al. 2005; Givens 2005; Kedar 2005; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1972). As one would expect, the extent to which strategic considerations change behavior depend on the details of the electoral context. For example, Garry et al. (2005) find that both strategic and non-strategic issue voting played a role in the Irish referenda on Nice, but strategic voting was more important in the first election than in the second. Kedar (2005) also finds that the extent of strategic voting is sensitive to institutional context. Similarly, Givens (2005) demonstrates that the electoral success of far-right parties varies considerably because of strategic voting. The assumption of strategic voting has been discussed in a remarkably long exchange of papers in the *British Journal of Political Science* concerning the British general election of 1987 (Evans and

Heath 1993; Franklin et al. 1994; Heath and Evans 1994; Niemi et al. 1992, 1993). Both sides of this debate agreed that only 20% of the electorate had an incentive to vote strategically, and those most skeptical of strategic voting acknowledged that one third of these voters (6.5% out of the 20%) took advantage of the opportunity. Indeed, by looking carefully at particular types of voters in particular constituencies, Niemi et al. 1992 find rates of strategic voting in the range of 50-60%. We should note too that the 80% of the electorate who had an incentive to vote strategically in the 1987 UK election were nonetheless behaving strategically–they examined the political situation in their constituency and, determining that nothing was to be gained from voting for a second-choice party, voted their first choice. In sum, there is substantial evidence from a range of European contexts that voters do make the kind of calculations that we allege they make.

To understand voting behavior in a strategic setting, we begin with the process of forming a governing coalition in a non-majoritarian election system. We show that coalition formation presents a different problem when a country is a member of the EU than when governments address purely domestic issues. This difference accounts for the tendency of Euroskeptic parties not to join national-level governing coalitions. Knowing this, national voters will be less likely to vote for Euroskeptic parties that they might otherwise favor at the national level. However, these considerations are absent at the EP level, so voters do not have to consider coalition formation in those elections and are thus free to vote for which ever party they most favor.

Coalition formation and European integration

To show how Euroskepticism affects coalition formation and then voters' choices, we begin with the pure theory of coalition formation (i.e. Givens 2005). We use a spatial model,

which represents policy on any issue as a point on a line. The spatial model of policy further assumes that every political actor has an ideal policy and judges each policy by how close it is from that ideal point.

In a coalitional polity, parties form governing coalitions because none control enough seats to govern alone. The costs and benefits of including each party in the coalition lie at the heart of our analysis. Though we do not model the process formally, this section draws from the growing literature on coalition formation in parliamentary democracies (i.e., Laver and Shepsle 1990; Martin and Stevenson 2001; Pahre 1997; Strom 1990).

Figure 1 shows the basic logic of coalition formation. It shows three political parties that have preferences over two issues, represented by the vertical and horizontal axes. A governing coalition requires a majority of the three parties, which is two parties. Any point outside the triangle is inefficient, in that moving policy into the triangle would bring policy closer to at least two and possibly all three parties. A coalition of, say, parties A and B will choose a policy on the AB line because it is efficient for those two parties—moving toward B makes B better off but A worse off, and movements toward A have the reverse effect. In this model, no coalition is disadvantaged compared to other coalitions: A and B, B and C, or A and C are all equally plausible.

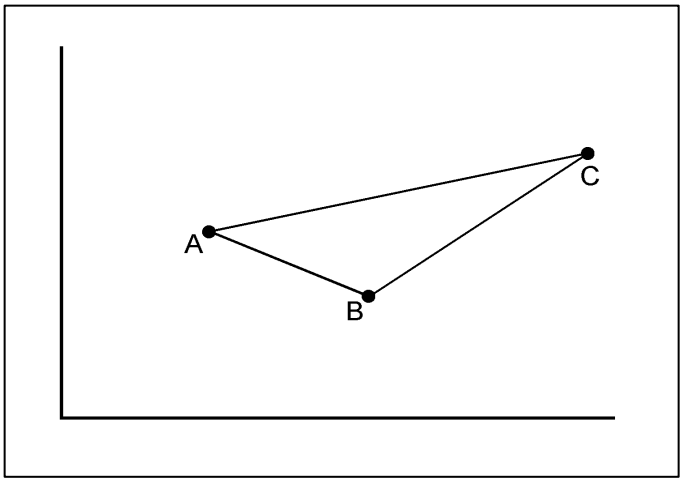

Figure 1
The Logic of Coalition Formation Without the EU

However, this symmetry between parties may disappear when we consider European integration. European integration differs because the national government must negotiate policy with the European Union, and this need to negotiate with the EU may make some national parties unattractive or impossible partners. The cost to pro-EU parties of not participating in European integration may be so large that anti-EU parties will not be chosen as coalition partners.

Figure 2 illustrates the logic of this argument. Now the three national parties (A, B, and C) control only the horizontal policy dimension, labeled "Home Policy." All other EU members are treated as a single actor that controls the vertical policy dimension, labeled "EU Policy." Suppose that there is a status quo policy that the national government and the European Union may wish to change. The EU chooses its ideal point on the dimension that it controls, and the home government chooses its ideal point on the dimension that it controls. For simplicity, we suppose that the home government chooses the ideal point of the median party on the horizontal dimension, which is party B.

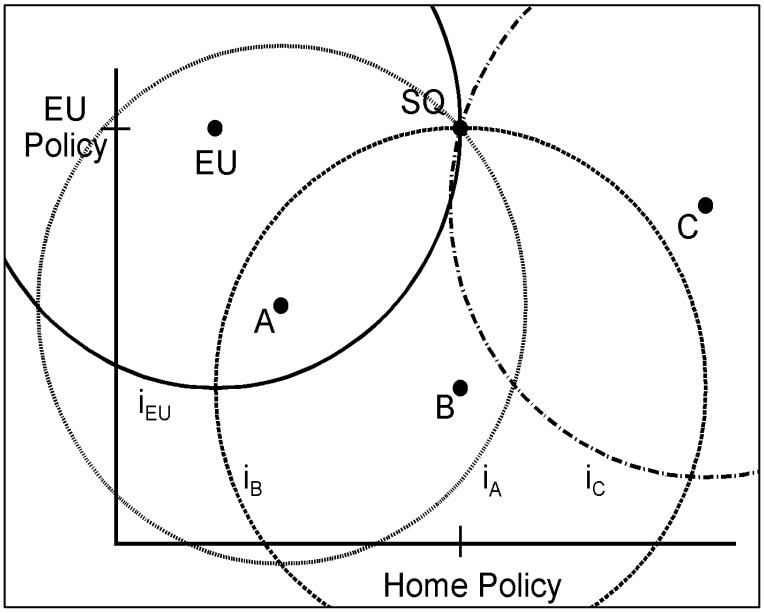

Figure 2
Coalition Formation with EU Policy on the Agenda

Each actor compares policy proposals to this status quo, labeled SQ. It is indifferent between the SQ and all points equally distant from its ideal point, a set that describes a circle

around its ideal point. This indifference curve is labeled "i" in Figure 2 for each actor (hence i_A, i_B, i_C, and i_{EU}).

Only a very small set of policy change is acceptable to both C and the EU, shown by the lens lying below and a little to the left of SQ. The smallness of this set reflects the fact that C and the EU disagree strongly about Home Policy—as an example, C may wish to retain national autonomy over asylum policy while the EU wants to harmonize these policies. Parties A and B are much more amenable to compromise, and there are large areas of agreement between them and the EU (specifically, the large lens mostly left of SQ for A and the EU, and the large lens mostly below SQ for B and the EU). Most important, both A and B can agree to reject a (minority) government led by C—parties A and B working together can bring policy much closer to the AB line from the small C-EU wedge described earlier.

To reduce clutter, we do not show the A-B-EU triangle in Figure 2, but the intersection of this triangle and their three indifference sets (i_A, i_B, and i_{EU}) shows the set of policies that an AB government might negotiate with the EU. Both parties A and B (and the EU for that matter) will prefer any point in this A-B-EU "win-set" to any point in the C-EU win-set. As a result, parties A and B will avoid forming a government with party C. Of course, there may be non-EU issues that we have not shown that bring party C to a coalition with A or B. However, any such coalition would come with significant costs on EU policy issues for A or B if they concede EU policy to C, or significant costs to C if it concedes EU policy to A or B.

In short, the governing coalition game shown in Figure 1 is no longer symmetrical when parties must negotiate with outsiders such as the EU. This asymmetry drives the rest of our analysis.

This asymmetry also provides an indirect definition of "Euroskeptic" political parties. A Euroskeptic party is one whose ideal point on EU policy matters is sufficiently extreme that other parties will avoid forming a coalition with it.[3] Voters will know that some parties—which we label "Euroskeptic"—are much less likely to join a governing coalition than other parties are. Voters who consider the coalition process at the national level will be less likely to vote for such Euroskeptic parties.[4]

This finding differs somewhat from Kedar (2005), who finds that voters may be *more* likely to vote for some extremist parties—many of which are also Euroskeptic—if they believe that the influence of these extremist parties will be "watered down" in the government-formation process. We will not include this possibility in our analysis, but we do note that strategic voting may have different meanings depending on institutional and empirical context; the frequency of particular patterns may ultimately be an empirical question.

Finally, note that the entire analysis in this section depends on two assumptions that we must clarify here. First, our logic assumes a national political system with parliamentary coalitions, which is the modal system type among members of the European Union. Therefore, a "two-party" system with majority governments, such as the United Kingdom, would not be subject to these constraints; similarly, parties in the European Parliament, which functions without governing coalition, will also not be subject to this logic. Second, our logic assumes that

[3] This definition is obviously tautological if we were trying to explain governing coalitions, but we are not. Instead, we will take this tautology as given, and simply assume that some voters understand this strategic setting.

[4] Euroskeptics may not be the only parties that are disfavored in coalition negotiations. For example, minor parties may be mathematically superfluous to any coalition, and therefore unlikely coalition partners. A four-party vote distribution of {A=31, B=31, C=31, D=7}, though contrived, illustrates this point. Any two of the large parties suffice for a minimum winning coalition, and adding D does not bring any non-majority government over the top. There is no incentive for the others to include party D in their coalitions. Voters who care about this coalition process will therefore be less likely to vote for party D.

European policy is relevant to coalition formation. Given the ever-expanding mandate of the European Union, we believe it is reasonable to assume that EU policy directives matter at the national level and thus that EU policy is relevant to coalition formation.

In summary, this section has argued that the process of parliamentary coalition formation treats "Euroskeptic" parties differently than other parties, leading to asymmetries: Euroskeptics are less likely to join governments. This pattern is not unique to Euroskeptics—minor parties are also less likely to join governments—and primarily applies to political systems that require parliamentary coalition formation. In short, our Euroskeptic focus is only a part of the story, but one that has not yet been examined in the literature. Voters who choose parties strategically, and who want to strengthen preferred parties with a chance of joining a government, will behave differently across these environments. We develop the logic of these voting choices in the next section.

Coalition-theory hypotheses about voter choices

Voters make their electoral choices for many reasons. Choices might mechanically reflect their partisan identification and socialization, their prospective or retrospective evaluation of incumbent performance, preferences over policy outcomes, or many other motivations. We will not pretend to review such motives here, but will focus more narrowly on voters' preferences over policy. As long as a significant share of the electorate votes strategically to influence policy outcomes, we should observe some effect of the logic developed above. Those effects may be large or small depending on just how large the policy-oriented strategic electorate is as a share of the total.

Again, we will start with a baseline expectation of voter behavior. Suppose that parties (or legislators) are arranged on a single Left-Right dimension and that the legislature does *not*

form a government. Inside the legislature, the median voter theorem applies, and the legislature will choose the policy of the median legislator. This situation is shown in Figure 3, where party C is the median party.

Knowing that party C is the median, would voters for parties A, B, or C vote non-sincerely? (Voters for parties D and E are symmetric.) A voter for party B could choose any existing or hypothetical party left of party C without changing the median. To see this, imagine moving B's ideal point left and right within that region. If our voter were to support party D or E instead of B, the median would change, to party D's current ideal point. This would make our voter worse off. A similar analysis holds for all other voters. As a result, each will vote sincerely.

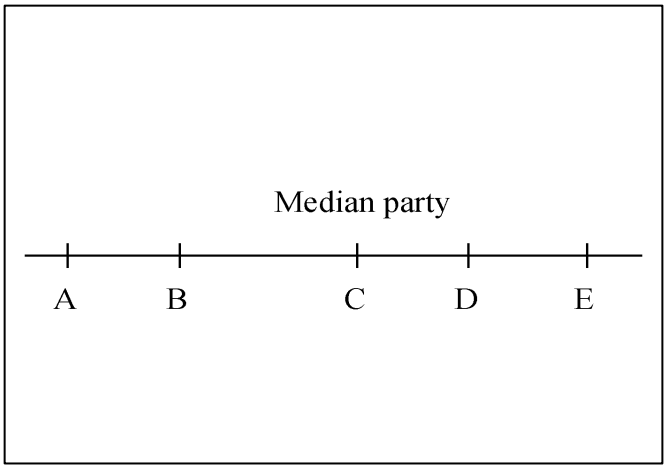

Figure 3
Voter Choices in a Non-Coalition System

The same sincere voting would happen in a two-party system such as Malta, or a system with one-party governments such as the UK or Spain. Take away any three parties in Figure 3, and then consider the voting decision of voters located at the ideal points of the parties thus removed. Each voter wants to strengthen the position of the party closest to her ideal point, since only one party will form the government and will then implement its ideal point. Each voter therefore votes sincerely.

Returning to the five-party case, our voter's choice is different if these parties must form a coalition. For illustration, suppose that Figure 3 represents a political system that has been

found at various times in many countries: a large center-left party B, a large center-right party D, a small centrist party C, and splinter parties to the left and right (A and E, respectively). To sharpen the illustration, suppose that seat shares are {A=6, B=37, C=14, D=37, E=6}. Minimum winning coalitions are BC, CD, BD, and minimum winning connected coalitions are BC and CD.

Votes for either of the two extreme parties A and E cannot affect the coalition outcome here. However, if all of A's supporters voted for B instead, it would be the largest party and would, in most systems, be given the first opportunity to form a government. Party A's supporters would clearly prefer the resulting coalitions BC (or BD, with B senior) to the situation in which party D is largest, which would yield coalitions CD (or BD, with D senior). Thinking strategically, party A's supporters would therefore vote for party B instead. Of course, party E's supporters likewise vote for D. The lesson, which is well understood in the literature, is that supporters of small and/or extreme parties may vote strategically for large and/or centrist parties.

The literature has not yet extended this logic to Euroskeptic parties, but the logic follows directly from the previous section. If a Euroskeptic party cannot accept the EU policy of a coalition government, or if pro-EU parties both prefer forming a coalition with one another over forming a coalition with a Euroskeptic party, strategic voters may abandon the Euroskeptics. Instead, they will choose the "coalitionable" party that they most prefer, hoping to strengthen it instead. For example, one of our more Euroskeptic interviewees (confidential interview) noted that her supporters expected coalitionability (*Regierungsfähigkeit*) in national elections, but they voted their preferences more sincerely in the case of EP elections, saying that they wanted her party to "Zeigt ihnen was!" (roughly, "You show them!").

Instead of making expressive voting decisions of this nature, some voters may despair of influencing government policy on the EU dimension and simply vote their preferences over other

issues. If we suppose the existence of two policy dimensions, one national and one European, Euroskeptic positions would disadvantage coalitionable parties because of the reasoning outlined so far. These parties would either move their EU policies toward the center, or downplay the relevance of European issues in favor of national issues. This would help explain why the EU is not a salient issue in most national elections. We would expect, however, that the EU would be a more salient issue in majoritarian systems such as the UK or Malta if they have a significant Euroskeptic part of the electorate.

In summary, we should see "sincere" voting on the European dimension in several settings that usually *do not include* national elections. In European elections, voters will choose sincerely on the European dimension because strategic voting cannot change the median member of the European Parliament (MEP) in a favorable direction. National elections between two parties will also elicit sincere voting on the European dimension.

This analysis should hold even if some voters behave exactly as the second-order literature expects. As we have seen, that literature argues that opposition parties will do better in European elections where voters seek to punish the incumbents. It does not address how voters select among the many opposition parties. Our analysis suggests that a preference for Euroskeptic positions, which voters rationally mute in national elections, will be seen in the choice of opposition parties in EP elections.

Summarizing our reasoning so far, then:

> Hypothesis 1. In national elections in systems with coalition governments, Euroskeptic parties do worse in national elections than in EP elections.

This hypothesis implies that Euroskeptics' poorer performance in national elections makes it more likely that they will be in the national opposition. From the opposition, they will

be able to appeal for protest votes as well as to appeal to their own voters who may have abandoned them strategically in the national election. This implies, in turn,

> Hypothesis 2. In national elections in systems with coalition governments, Euroskeptic opposition parties do better in EP elections (relative to their performance in national elections) than do non-Euroskeptic opposition parties.

Our analysis has been largely probabilistic and does not exclude entirely the possibility that voters will sincerely support Euroskeptic parties, or that pro-EU parties might form a coalition with Euroskeptic parties despite the costs. Occasionally one might see a well-supported Euroskeptic party join a coalition government, as we have seen in Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands (briefly), or some parties in Eastern Europe. When this occurs, the incumbent Euroskeptics may be punished for their incumbency, just as the second-order literature expects. At the same time, these parties are well positioned to attract the latent Euroskeptic votes of strategic voters:

> Hypothesis 3. In national systems with coalition governments, any Euroskeptic party in government will perform comparatively better in EP elections than will its non-Euroskeptic coalition partners.

Finally, the qualifying clause at the start of Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggests the following additional hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 4. There will not be systematic differences in party support on the Euroskeptic dimension across national and European elections in majoritarian political systems; phrased differently, the second-order hypothesis will be most evident in these countries.

In addition, our analysis is not relevant for countries such as Spain in which Euroskeptic preferences are weak; the second-order hypothesis should be strongest there.

In summary, our coalition theory of voting maintains that we should see significant patterns between voters' treatment of Euroskeptic and non-Euroskeptic parties across elections at different levels.

Research design and data

To test these claims, we collected electoral data for 27 European states after the accession of the United Kingdom, the conventional date for the birth of Euroskepticism, through the 2009 European Parliament election.[5] We relied on numerous sources to obtain national and European election data including official governmental publications and databases on parliamentary elections, parties, and political leaders in Europe including, for example Parties and Elections in Europe (2005); Karlheinz (1985); and Perrineau, Grunberg and Ysmal (2002). We focus on parties that express either contingent or outright opposition to European integration—following the typological literature, this means soft or hard Euroskeptics, respectively. We rely on Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) and on Benedetto (2005) for classifying parties; when they disagreed, we used additional primary and secondary sources.

Our theory focuses on how national coalitions shape strategic incentives, so we compare each EP election with the immediately preceding national election. We have 95 observations for systems with coalition governments, in thirteen of which (13.7 percent) Euroskeptic parties were present in the government (see Table 1). We also have 16 observations for cases with majoritarian systems (see Table 2). Some elections are necessarily excluded from this list because of data limitations, or due to overlapping or non-paired elections.

In all, we construct two complementary datasets. In the first, we use the political party as the unit of analysis and include data on party type, vote share in national elections, and vote share in EP elections. In the second dataset, we use the country-election year as the unit of analysis. Here, data are aggregated based on governing parties, opposition parties, Euroskeptic parties, and country-level indicators.

[5] Data for all 28 member states through 2014 has been collected but not yet analyzed and is thus not included in the current draft.

Analysis and results

Our central hypotheses predict that particular parties will do better under some conditions than others, depending on type of election, whether a country is majoritarian, whether a party is Euroskeptic, and whether a party is in government or opposition. To examine these questions, therefore, we run two types of analyses. First, we compare differences in mean vote percentage earned across different election types or for different types of political parties in the same election type, as specified by the hypothesis. Next, we run a regression analysis to determine what factors increase the likelihood of high vote-share for Euroskeptic parties in European Parliament elections.

We begin by examining the performance of Euroskeptic parties in European and national elections in coalition governments. In our full sample, Euroskeptics have performed better in EP than in national elections (see Table 3 below). This finding is exactly as our coalition theory predicts.

Table 3
Euroskeptic Party Performance in National and EP Elections:
Mean Vote Difference in Non-Majoritarian Countries

	Euroskeptics at EU Level	Euroskeptics at National level
Full Sample **	16.91 (1.49)	13.6 (1.21)
Government Has Euroskeptics	24.27 (3.24)	22.39 (3.75)
Government Has No Euroskeptics **	15.73 (1.63)	12.20 (1.21)

As a robustness check, we also divided our data into two groups: those cases in which the national government included some Euroskeptic party (n=13) and those in which the national government did not include any such party (n=82). Interestingly, when a Euroskeptic party is

not part of the governing coalition, Euroskeptics perform better in European elections than in national elections. However, when Euroskeptic parties are part of the governing coalition, we see no statistically significant difference between electoral performance even though the reported means are higher at the EU level.

Neither second-order theory nor our coalition theory makes any prediction about this difference in behavior depending on the presence of Euroskeptics in government. This suggests that our theory captures an important general pattern while neglecting some other variable that is important in a small minority of cases (13/95=13.7%).

Next, we analyze the difference in election performance by Euroskeptic and non-Euroskeptic opposition parties. Second-order election theory would predict that all opposition parties would do better in second-order EP elections than in first-order national elections. The coalition theory here agrees that all opposition parties should do better in EP elections, while adding that Euroskeptic opposition parties are likely to do even better because voters will not be suppressing their Euroskeptic preferences for strategic reasons (see Hypothesis 2). However, we find that opposition parties do better than Euroskeptic parties in EU elections, regardless of the national-level governing coalition. Still, more research needs to be done at the party-level to further distinguish the type of opposition party and also whether the Euroskeptic parties are hard or soft, which we believe might make a difference in these results.

Table 4
Opposition Party Performance in EP elections:
Mean Vote Differences in Non-Majoritarian Countries

	Euroskeptics at EU Level	Opposition Party at EU Level
Full Sample of Coalition Government ***	16.85 (1.48)	55.03 (1.34)
Coalition Government Has Euroskeptics ***	24.27 (3.24)	56.02 (3.13)
Coalition Government Has No Euroskeptics ***	15.73 (1.63)	55.11 (1.50)

We now turn to examine Euroskeptic parties when they are part of the government. Hypothesis 3 predicts that Euroskeptic parties in a government coalition perform better in European elections, compared with their performance in national elections, than do their non-Euroskeptic coalition partners. Table 5 confirms that Euroskeptics in government outperform other parties in their governing coalitions at a level that is statistically significant.

Table 5
Governing Party Performance in EP Elections:
Mean Votes Difference When Euroskeptics in Government

	Euroskeptics at EU Level	Governing Party at EU Level
Coalition Government Has Euroskeptics **	24.27 (3.24)	12.15 (3.32)

Now, we examine Euroskeptic party performance in majoritarian systems. Hypothesis 4 predicts that voting behavior will be significantly different in majoritarian systems, where the strategic considerations above are absent. However, we find that Euroskeptics in opposition increase their vote share in EP elections over national elections, just as they do in non-

majoritarian cases (see Table 6). This finding is consistent with the theory of second-order elections. As a result, we cannot distinguish our empirical findings from those of second-order theory in the case of majoritarian polities. However, the fact that coalition theory distinguishes majoritarian and non-majoritarian polities—and makes successful and distinctive predictions for the latter—is itself evidence for the theory here.

Table 6
Euroskeptic Party Performance in National and EP Elections:
Mean Vote Difference in Majoritarian Countries

	Euroskeptics at EU Level	Euroskeptics at National level
Full Sample **	46.24 (3.65)	37.9 (2.93)
Government Has Euroskeptics**	46.48 (5.18)	38.64 (4.17)
Government Has No Euroskeptics **	45.84 (5.11)	36.75 (4.03)

Finally, we employ a regression analysis to determine the predictive power of Euroskeptic performance at the national level on Euroskeptic performance at the EU level. Consistent with our central theory and first hypothesis, we seek to determine what factors influence high *Euroskeptic Vote Percent in EP Elections* for non-Majoritarian countries. We include several independent variables consistent with our theoretical expectations. First, we expect *Euroskeptic Vote Percent in National Elections* to positively influence the vote share received by Euroskeptic parties in EP elections. Next, we expect that *Euroskeptic Parties in Government* will positively influence Euroskeptic parties in EP elections. Additionally, *Hard Euroskeptic* parties are likely to be better represented at the EP level.

We run a simple OLS regression using our aggregated country-year data for all non-Majoritarian countries. We use the country-election year as our unit of analysis. All independent variables and control variables capture data from the year(s) preceding the EP elections to control for time effects. We also employ robust standard errors clustered on the country to control for country-level effects.

Table 7. OLS Regression – Euroskeptic Vote Percent in EP Elections

Euroskeptic Vote Percent in National Elections	0.88 (0.07) ***
Euroskeptic Parties in Government	-0.39 (1.96)
Hard Euroskeptic	1.20 (1.98)
Constant	3.09 (3.08)

n: 95; r^2: 0.53; standard errors in parentheses
* p< 0.10; ** p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

As a robustness check, we include several control variables that could influence Euroskeptic vote share at the EP level. First, we control for the vote share received by the *Governing Party* and the *Opposition Party* at the EU level. Additionally, we control for two country-level indicators—*GNI per capita* and *Unemployment*—that could influence individuals to become frustrated with the EU and therefore seek out more extremist parties, like Euroskeptics. These data are collected from the World Development Indicators, and we include indicators for the year directly preceding the EP election.

Still, our results are largely unchanged. Only *Euroskeptic Vote Percent in National Elections*, our primary independent variable, reports a statistically significant positive influence

on the vote share received by Euroskeptic parties in EP elections. Several other variables are consistent with our expectations, but as none reach the conventional levels of statistical significance, we hesitate to make any formal conclusions based on this analysis.

Table 8. OLS Regression – Euroskeptic Vote Percent in EP Elections with Controls

Euroskeptic Vote Percent in National Elections	0.84 (0.08) ***
Euroskeptic Parties in Government	-0.05 (2.30)
Hard Euroskeptic	1.32 (1.85)
Governing Party	-0.16 (0.28)
Opposition Party	0.01 (0.32)
GNI per capita	0.00 (0.00)
Unemployment	0.56 (0.39)
Constant	3.23 (30.24)

n: 95; r^2: 0.56; standard errors in parentheses
* p< 0.10; ** p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

To summarize the findings in this section, our empirical analyses lend support to the majority of our hypotheses, although with some limitations as earlier outlined. Most interestingly, our coalition theory performs less well conditional on events that the theory says should be unlikely, such as the presence of Euroskeptic parties in a governing coalition. Some of this evidence is also consistent with the second-order hypothesis, but some is not. This suggests that voters viewing EP elections as second-order elections nonetheless choose among non-governing parties in exactly the way that we would expect. These findings suggest, in turn, that voter choice in national elections was strategic, just as voter decisions in European elections are.

Conclusion

This paper has developed a theory of voter behavior in national and European elections in which some part of the electorate votes strategically, recognizing that coalition bargaining at the national level disfavors Euroskeptic parties. The evidence mostly confirms the hypotheses from the theory. This confirmation provides indirect evidence of the untested proposition about coalition behavior on which this strategic voting rests: all else equal, Euroskeptic parties are less likely to join governing coalitions than pro-EU parties are.

Our argument further implies that there is a systematic difference in preferences between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Because the Council represents only governing parties, it over-represents pro-EU sentiment in each countries and thus across Europe. In contrast, the EP better represents Euroskeptic parties and opposition parties—the latter because of the second-order-election effect. We therefore expect the Council to be more consistently pro-European than the European Parliament.

This expectation is the exact opposite of a common claim concerning the European political system, which maintains that the Council represents national interests while the European Parliament often joins the Commission in leading the EU in a pro-integration direction (see inter alia Tsebelis and Garrett 2000). Our argument emphasizes the presence of Euroskeptics in the European Parliament, which has increased its presence since the 2014 EP election. This body of anti-integrationists has no parallel in the Council of Ministers and exceeds the number of Euroskeptics in the national parliaments.

The procedural coalition of pro-European socialists (PES) and Christian Democrats (EPP) in the EP, often joined by the Liberals (ELDR), makes the *median voter* of the European Parliament more obvious to observers while obscuring the *full distribution* of preferences in that

body. That full distribution includes a significant number of Euroskeptics. Though they have been easily outvoted in parliaments so far, the apparent secular trend toward greater Euroskepticism throughout the EU will presumably give them a greater role in the future. Moreover, there are a few Euroskeptic parties within the larger federations, from the tiny Maltese Labour Party to the large British Conservatives. Our argument suggests that the influence of Euroskeptics will become apparent in the European Parliament long before it affects the Council of Ministers.

At this speculative level, the EU would not seem all that different from other political systems with bicameral legislatures. Here, the Council would be biased toward pro-integrationist positions, the EP against; the Council would also be biased toward centrist parties that are able to form coalitions, the EP toward a fuller representation of the political spectrum. Issue areas in which the Council plays a leading role, such as foreign policy or justice and home affairs, might be pushed in a more integrationist direction than is appropriate under a subsidiarity standard. Issue areas in which the Parliament plays a predominant role, such as the budget, would be less integrationist than appropriate, given the needs of the single market. Whether those particular biases make for good policy is, in light of the still-speculative nature of this part of our argument, very much an open question.

Table 1: National and EP Elections Studied – Coalition Systems

Country	National Election	European Election
Austria	1995, 2002*, 2006, 2008, 2013	1996, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Belgium	1978, 1981, 1987, 1991, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2010	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Bulgaria	2005, 2009	2009, 2014
Croatia	2011	2014
Cyprus	2001*, 2006*, 2011	2004, 2009, 2014
Czech Republic	2002, 2006, 2010*	2004, 2009, 2014
Denmark	1977, 1984, 1988, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011	1979, 1984, 1989, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Estonia	2003, 2007, 2011	2004, 2009, 2014
Finland	1995, 1999, 2003*, 2007, 2011	1996, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Germany	1990, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009	1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Greece	1981, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2012	1984, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Hungary	2002, 2006, 2010	2004, 2009, 2014
Ireland	1977, 1982, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007*, 2011	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Italy	1979, 1994, 1996, 2001*, 2006*, 2008*, 2013	1979, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Latvia	2002, 2006, 2010, 2011	2004, 2009, 2014
Lithuania	2004*, 2008, 2012	2004, 2009, 2014
Luxembourg	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Netherlands	1977, 1982, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012	1979, 1984, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Poland	2001, 2005*, 2007, 2011	2004, 2009, 2014
Portugal	1987, 1991, 1995, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2011	1987, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Romania	2008, 2012	2009, 2014
Slovakia	2002*, 2006, 2010, 2012	2004, 2009, 2014
Slovenia	2000, 2004, 2011	2004, 2009, 2014
Spain	1986, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2011	1987, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Sweden	1994, 1998*, 2002*, 2006, 2010	1995, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014

*Euroskeptic presence in government.

Table 2: National and EP Elections Studied – Majoritarian Systems

Country	National Election	European Election
France	1978, 1981*, 1988*, 1993, 1997*, 2002, 2007	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Malta	2003, 2008	2004, 2009, 2014
United Kingdom	1979, 1983, 1987*, 1992*, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014

*Euroskeptic presence in government.

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