

The Eurozone Crisis and National Parliaments:
Representative Roles and Communicative Involvement

Paper prepared for the EUSA conference, Boston, March 5-7, 2015

Frank Wendler

University of Washington (Seattle)

Department of Political Science and Jackson School of International Studies

Box 353530, Seattle, WA, 98195

e-mail: fwendler@uw.edu

Abstract:

The paper approaches the Eurozone crisis as an opportunity for a stronger communicative involvement of national parliaments in European governance. In this context, the paper explores links between structures of argumentative justification and party political polarization in debates on the Eurozone crisis. The question addressed is in how far we observe generalizable patterns across very different cases and legislatures. Empirically, the paper presents an assessment of data on argumentative claims from four European legislatures (the Austrian Nationalrat, French Assemblée Nationale, German Bundestag and UK House of Commons). This data demonstrates that aside from some unsurprising differences in the structure of debate in the four countries, we can actually observe typical patterns of contestation across legislatures that differ along various levels of argumentative discourse. Debates on the utility, normative principles and legitimacy of Eurozone crisis management can be identified across all four cases, each resulting in characteristic patterns of party political polarization.

1. Introduction: The Eurozone crisis as a trigger of involvement for national parliaments

The outbreak and political resolution of the Eurozone crisis is generally described as a development that has weakened and marginalized parliaments, both at the European and the national level. In this sense, many observers have deplored the turn towards an intergovernmentalist mode of decision-making through the European Council, the increased influence of technocratic governance through the European Central Bank and authorities such as the EFSF and ESM, and the rise of a new mode of political cooperation characterized as “executive federalism” (Fabbrini 2013, Habermas 2013). Concerning the role of national parliaments in European governance, this argument may be plausible but also one-sided. Major initiatives to resolve the Eurozone crisis did not emanate from national parliaments but from political executives and technocratic institutions such as the European Central Bank. However, it should also not be overlooked that the Eurozone crisis has established various strong incentives for national parliaments to engage in a closer involvement into European affairs. Three arguments can be made to support this view: First, through the Eurozone crisis the overall salience of European governance has arguably grown, resulting in a far greater pressure by the public on parliaments to debate and scrutinize decisions on the Eurozone crisis. This is an important argument against the observation that the lack of political salience of European affairs works as an incentive to parliamentarians not to enact formally existing, potentially very strong scrutiny rights (Raunio 2010, 2011). Second, the Eurozone crisis has established various occasions where national parliaments were directly involved into decision-making as potential veto players – namely, through the requirement of passing ratification votes to enact credit assistance programs for crisis countries and to give authorization for the establishment of institutional innovations such as the European Stability Mechanism or TSCG (the so-called “Fiscal Compact”). The chance for national parliament to introduce substantial political changes into these decisions in hindsight may be low. However, these authorization votes nevertheless establish a strong incentive for a greater communicative involvement of parliaments into decision-making. The ESM and Greek ‘rescue packages’ may have been passed through large majorities in the German Bundestag and other national parliament, but nevertheless these decisions prompted

politically salient plenary debates (Wendler 2014a). In the context of intensive media coverage, such debates have been requiring government parties to justify their support for the management of the Eurozone crisis, and speakers of opposition parties to declare and explain their support or resistance for these measures (in relation to subsequent yes or no votes). In this context, the Eurozone crisis produced some of the first occasions where parliamentary debates on an issue of European governance produced major headline news in the Member States. Third, it should not be forgotten that a turn towards an intergovernmental mode of decision-making is institutionally related to a closer involvement of national parliaments. While a supranational mode of decision-making prescribes a strong involvement of the European Parliament as co-legislator of the Council of Ministers (and minimizes the role of domestic legislatures to involvement through the comparably weak Subsidiarity Procedure), most formal rights of involvement of national parliaments appear designed to work within an intergovernmental mode of integration – namely, through the scrutiny, control and potentially authorization of national executives as the primary agents of European decision-making (Raunio 2011, Heffler et al. 2014). A good part of this involvement may be felt not through political intervention but the communicative involvement of national parliaments: As the political relevance of meetings of the European Council and Eurozone group grows, it becomes standard procedure for heads of government and senior ministers to make declarations to parliaments prior to these meetings, inviting responses and debate from all parliamentary actors.

Considering these points, the overall effect of the Eurozone crisis on the relationship between executive and legislative institutions could be more ambiguous than assumed by many observers: The political decision-making for the resolution of the Eurozone crisis has arguably turned towards a more clearly expressed intergovernmental mode that sidelines the European Parliament. However through this development, the incentives and opportunities for domestic parliaments to become involved in a closer scrutiny of their domestic executives enacting this mode of decision-making have also grown. Against this background, this paper adopts an approach that understands the Eurozone crisis primarily as an opportunity and incentive for a more active communicative involvement of national

parliaments in European governance, focusing on their function as arenas of discursive justification and contestation of decisions taken for the resolution of the Eurozone crisis. Few contributions to the large literature on the Europeanization of national parliaments have addressed the debating function of parliaments (Auel/Raunio 2013, Maatsch 2014, Wendler 2014b).

Addressing the communicative function of national parliaments involves two dimensions of analysis: First, this perspective involves the analysis of discursive justifications for decisions and policies adopted for the resolution of the Eurozone crisis. This dimension implies questions about what kind of arguments are used to establish and contest justifications for decisions taken to address the crisis. This dimension of analysis links the investigation of parliamentary debates to discourse theoretical approaches of European integration, including the prominent model of discursive institutionalism (Sjursen 2009, Schmidt 2013, Diez Medrano 2010). Second, the public communication of parliaments towards national publics inevitably involves a dimension of public contestation and party political polarization. Parliamentary parties compete for public support and encounter strong political and institutional incentives in the parliamentary arena to contest and delegitimize arguments of competing political actors rather than to engage in a consensus-oriented process of public deliberation. In this sense, the analysis of public debate by parliaments establishes a link to the literature on the party political contestation of European governance and EU politicization (Statham/Trenz 2013, de Wilde 2011). Taken together, this paper approaches the Eurozone crisis as a dual challenge for political party groups interacting in the parliamentary arena: to establish argumentative justifications for the approval or rejection of Eurozone crisis management policies, and to engage in political competition with each other towards the public through the mutual contestation and polarization of positions. In this context, the aim of this paper is to analyze the dimensions of justification and political polarization in relation to each other in a comparative perspective of four European legislatures. Is the result of increased debate in parliament a wide diversity of very different perspectives, or do we observe similar patterns of contestation of polarization across countries that can be related to familiar patterns of domestic party politics? To answer this question, the main question of this

paper relates to the connection between justification and polarization: The main question asked here is to what degree we can observe the emergence of similar types of political discourse and patterns of contestation across four very different legislatures, and to what degree the depiction of debates on the Eurozone crisis results in a diversity of national perspectives and party political constellations.

The remainder of the paper proceeds in three steps. The subsequent chapter explains the theoretical and analytical framework of the present analysis (ch.2). The following short section presents the data and method of the paper (ch.3) before the main part presents the empirical findings (ch.4), to be summarized in the conclusion (ch.5).

2. Theoretical framework

The task of this theoretical chapter is twofold. First, it aims at the presentation of an analytical framework to empirically describe and assess parliamentary debate within the two dimensions discussed at the outset – namely, with regard to structures of argumentative justification and political contestation. Second, the section presents a discussion on the links of both dimensions with each other, establishing hypotheses to be scrutinized in the comparative perspective of four different legislatures in EU Member States.

Addressing the first task, this paper maps argumentative justifications of parliamentary speakers for and against Eurozone crisis policies by referring to a well-established discourse theoretical distinction between pragmatic, ethical-political, and moral types of justification (cp. Habermas 1991, Sjursen 2002, Helbling et al. 2010, Wendler 2014c). This threefold distinction will be used to categorize key arguments that are identified in the debates, and serves as a point of reference for the comparison of debates across cases. The distinction is not purely analytical. Applying the distinction between the three different types of argumentative justifications, we gain insights into the fundamental definitions that different speakers assign to the Eurozone crisis, and the proposed logic of action they apply for the justification of subsequent decisions and policies.

In this sense, pragmatic arguments are based on a simple principle of utility that measures the success or failure of political action in terms of the returns of decisions for gains in political, legal or economic resources. While pragmatic arguments measure decisions in terms of their effect on actor-specific assets such as political action capacity, economic gains or legal instruments, this type of argumentation does not engage with the justification or contestation of principled values or goals of political action underlying this assessment. The political logic of action proposed by pragmatic arguments is one based on the logic of consequentiality – political decisions make sense when they offer measurable gains in terms of pre-defined goals and interests. This type of argument is used for a problem-solving discourse that basically ignores more genuinely political questions about desirable goals and principles of collective decision-making.

This dimension is addressed through ethical-political and moral types of argument. Both kinds of justification refer to a logic of appropriateness of political action by establishing arguments about what norms and values can be considered as acceptable norms of political decision-making and behavior. A crucial difference between both kinds of normative justification, however, consists in their reference to the social frame of reference in which justifications for normative arguments are made. In this sense, ethical-political arguments are principled commitments to a norm of political action that is representative for a particular social or political group, and that stands in contrast to other, competing norms and values. It is inherent to this logic of justification that a given norm is declared as fundamental for the beliefs and values of a particular social group and seen as preferential to potentially conflicting norms. Moral types of justification, by contrast, establish a claim of universal agreement: A justification made on the basis of typical moral categories such as justice, fairness, legitimacy or responsibility is made with the argument that all participants of a discourse – regardless of their competing ethical convictions – can agree to this argument by reference to universally accepted principles of rationality and reciprocity. Put in a nutshell, ethical arguments describe what is good, whereas moral arguments describe what is fair. Reconstructing these types of justification uncovers levels of discourse on the Eurozone crisis that differ substantially from the pragmatic level of debate on utility and problem-solving. At the ethical-political

level, we address justifications in which speakers express fundamental normative beliefs about the right principles for the resolution of the crisis, and thus arguably a more fundamental level of political disagreement than at the pragmatic level. The most demanding and fundamental standard of justification is reached at the moral level – when speakers address decisions or policies used for the resolution of the Eurozone crisis as (un)just, (un)fair, (ir)responsible or (il)legitimate.

The distinction between pragmatic, ethical and moral kinds of argument therefore opens up to comparative scrutiny of three aspects of the debate on the Eurozone crisis that were highlighted as relevant both by political and academic observers: the need for fast and pragmatic solutions to a severe crisis endangering on the EU's major substantial achievements, namely its common currency (Laursen 2014, Daianu 2014); the related debate on principles guiding crisis management policies as expressed by catchwords such as solidarity, competitiveness, austerity, and growth (Maatsch 2014, Crespy/Schmidt 2014); and finally, the debate on the Eurozone crisis as a crisis of justice and democracy (Crum 2013, Habermas 2013).

As discussed above, the aim of this paper is not just to map these different dimensions of the Eurozone crisis but to relate their appearance in parliamentary discourse to the process of political contestation and polarization in public debates of legislatures. To conceptualize this interaction dimension, it appears necessary to systematize the incentives prompting parliamentary speakers to take positions in relation to Eurozone crisis management policies.

To describe incentives, it appears helpful to relate to the three basic modes of representation and decision-making of European governance that are discussed in the growing literature on political representation in the EU: namely, an intergovernmental, supranational, and demoi-based mode (cp. Bellamy/Castiglione 2012, Kroeger/Friedrich 2013). None of these modes of decision-making is exclusive in the EU; in contrast, one of the defining characteristics of the EU multi-level system is that it combines and balances all three modes in its processes of decision-making, representation, and

legitimization. As I will argue below, the role of national parliaments within European governance can equally not be reduced to one of these modes, as sometimes observed in the literature when national parliaments are identified with a demoi-based element of representation (Cooper 2011). Instead, I argue that all three modes suggest models of political community in Europe that parliamentary speakers refer to in their statements, and that establish different incentives for their political interaction and polarization.

First, an intergovernmental mode of decision-making between domestic executives interacting at the supranational level is central to European integration and has been strengthened through the Eurozone crisis according to many observers. National parliaments are not absent from, but an integral element of this mode of decision-making. This is demonstrated by the fact that from its earliest stages, the involvement of national parliaments into European governance was institutionalized through mechanisms of scrutiny, control and potential mandating towards domestic executives (and only to a very limited extent through transnational networks and direct exchanges with supranational institutions, cp. Raunio 2009, Heffler et al. 2014). Even at the current stage, the primary way of involvement of legislatures is through the provision of information and scrutiny procedures towards national governments, enacted mostly by European affairs and sectoral committees. Considering incentives for the interaction of parliamentary actors, this representative role of national parliaments prescribes almost by definition an antagonism of the government majority and the parliamentary opposition: As pointed out in a much-cited article on the Europeanization of parliaments, the institutional antagonism between representatives of the executive and legislative branch is highly likely to be outweighed by the politically far more salient polarization between the government majority and opposition (Auel/Benz 2005). As discussed at the outset, the more strongly pronounced political role of the European Council for the resolution of the Eurozone crisis and perception of a sidelining of the European Commission and European Parliament are likely to reinforce this form of parliamentary interaction. Debates and parliamentary interactions are therefore very likely to follow a pattern of polarization between government and opposition.

In comparison to this first type, a supranational mode of representation and decision-making is more difficult to relate to the role of national parliaments in the context of European governance. Within this mode, political community is imagined as a pan-European demos with a shared public sphere and identity that engages in joint decision-making through representation in institutions representing the transnational European citizenry as a whole. Arguably the European Parliament, instead of national legislatures, is the key institution representing this perspective on representation in the European Union (Hix/Noury/Gerard 2009). From this point of view, a supranational frame of reference can be expected to be far weaker in the deliberations and self-understanding of parliamentarians than one that is focused primarily on the domestic polity. However, it should not be dismissed as necessarily absent from parliamentary debate. More than many other developments of European governance, the Eurozone crisis has highlighted the interdependence between Member States of the Eurozone and beyond, and brought to the fore debates about principles and instruments of fiscal and economic governance for the entire Eurozone to address the financial and economic crisis (Maatsch 2014, Crespy/Schmidt 2014, Wendler 2014a). These developments and decisions go beyond the national level and relate to debates about transnational developments and modes of governance. Addressing these topics, parliamentary speakers therefore locate themselves in a different context of institutional and political incentive structures than in the intergovernmental mode: At the forefront of this perspective is no longer the scrutiny of actions by the national executive but the debate on competing policy choices and interdependence effects between Member States of the Eurozone. The most important political action incentive described for the intergovernmental dimension – namely, the support or criticism of an incumbent government that is accountable to parliament – is absent at this level. When referring to the supranational dimension of decision-making, parliamentary interactions are therefore more likely to become polarized along competing ideological convictions of parliamentary speakers and party groups. The polarization of parties within the left/right dimension of market freedom vs. state regulation is likely to be more prominent when supranational developments are addressed within debates of national parliaments (cp. Hooghe et al. 2004, Statham et al. 2010). It should be added that a supranational mode of decision-making excludes a second dimension of political

conflict discussed for European politics, namely, the dimension of debate about the balance between national sovereignty and supranationalism. By definition, a supranational mode of debate and decision-making assumes a political space and conception of political community beyond the national level, addressing modes of governance for this level but not its very boundaries.

This latter aspect of debate is addressed within the third, demoi-based mode of representation and decision-making (Mueller 2010). At the basis of this conception is the association of national polities as self-governing entities with strong bonds of civic solidarity and public debate that relate to each other in a wider European framework. Within this conception, the role of national parliaments extends beyond the scrutiny of executives interacting at the supranational level to the role of a public arena representing the citizenry and enacting their democratic self-governance. An aspect of European governance that moves to the forefront in this conception is a process of public debate and democratic decision-making about the delimitation between the autonomy of the respective Member States and rules and institutions established for their mutual association with each other in a 'polity of polities'. In the context of the Eurozone crisis, the delimitation between the principles of national sovereignty and supranational integration moved to the forefront of debates and decisions primarily through ratification votes. With these votes, parliaments were asked to authorize new European institutions such as the European Stability Mechanism, or to legitimize the imposition of constraints on the sovereignty of other Member States in the framework of European credit assistance programs. These authorization votes are not enacted merely as an act of scrutiny towards domestic governments, as potential vetoes have consequences for the adoption of institutional innovations in the entire Eurozone. They are also not to be equated with a choice of policy instruments within the supranational dimension but concern the assignment of rights of self-governance, and the pooling of sovereignty at the level of the supranational polity. In this dimension, political conflicts within the sovereignty/integration dimension therefore move to the forefront of political interactions much clearer than within the other two modes of representation. Beyond the intergovernmental model, this act of decision-making involves a process of open public

debate and involves all parliamentary parties. The authorization role of national parliaments in European decision-making is therefore only adequately captured from the perspective of a demoi-based model of representation and decision-making.

To summarize, it was argued that national parliaments relate to three modes of political decision-making that each encourage a particular form of interaction between parliamentary actors: first, an intergovernmental mode privileging government/opposition politics, a supranational mode related to the ideological polarization of parties along the left/right dimension, and a demoi-based mode encouraging interactions within the integration/sovereignty mode of political conflict.

The theoretical arguments discussed so far mainly aim at establishing an analytical framework for the mapping and assessment of parliamentary debates in two dimensions – argumentative justification and political polarization. Beyond empirical description, the paper also aims at the investigation of links between these two dimensions. It is expected that the patterns of political polarization discussed above do not occur in a random form but to different degrees and in specific connections with the three types of argumentative justification outlined here. In this sense, we expect the following connections between the spheres of justification and polarization (for this see also Wendler 2014b,c):

- First, as discussed above, pragmatic arguments and justifications are almost by definition non-ideological but based on the utility of decisions or policies towards pre-defined goals or interests. These arguments are therefore easily adjusted to particular roles and strategic behaviors adopted by political actors in the parliamentary arena, independently of the ideological affiliation of political parties. In parliamentary procedure the antagonism between government majority and opposition is arguably the strongest incentive for such behaviors. Pragmatic justifications are therefore expected to resonate strongly with this mode of interaction. Hence it is expected that pragmatic justifications are contested primarily through patterns of government/opposition politics (H1).

- Second, ethical-political arguments relate to the justification of decisions on the basis of a principled commitment to specific values and norms that are presented as intrinsically desirable in comparison and contrast to other, competing values. It is expected that this mode of debate resonates more strongly with the ideological affiliation of parties, particularly along the left-right spectrum (H2);
- Finally, moral arguments and justifications relate most closely to the concept of legitimacy. Norms of legitimacy, however, arguably differ strongly in relation to specific national contexts and understandings of the domestic polity in relation to supranational integration, as suggested widely in the literature (cp. Schmidt 2009). It can therefore be expected that moral types of justification prompt more country-specific patterns of polarization and resonate more strongly with the integration/sovereignty dimension of political debate (H3).
- Beyond these connections between types of discourse and political polarization, we also expect the interaction of parliamentary groups within a government/opposition mode to be the strongest across legislatures, as it is strongly institutionalized, politically salient and encouraged through the rise of intergovernmental modes of decision-making during the Eurozone crisis (H4).
- Finally, we expect the mode of government/opposition politics to occur in the most universal form across legislatures as this mode of interaction is found in all domestic legislatures. Patterns of left/right politics are expected to differ more strongly according to specific domestic party political constellations, whereas the occurrence of a sovereignty/integration mode depends on the presence of Eurosceptic parties that are found only in some of the cases. Government/opposition politics is therefore expected to be more generalizable as a mode of interaction than left/right politics and pro-/anti-EU polarization (H5).

3. Cases, method and data

This case study compares parliamentary debates in the period between 2009 and 2012 in four very different legislatures: the Austrian Nationalrat, the French Assemblée Nationale, the German Bundestag and the UK House of Commons. This case selection combines a very heterogeneous mix of cases, as it concludes arena and transformative legislatures, countries inside and outside the Eurozone, cases with and without the presence of populist right Eurosceptic parties (A), and different degrees of fragmentation and polarization. Furthermore, during the period of analysis different constellations of government and opposition parties are found, including a Grand Coalition government (A), two center-right coalitions (D/UK), and one center-right government politically affiliated to a presidential executive (F). This heterogeneity of cases is intentional. The aim of this paper is not to use the variation in independent variables to track differences in communicative responses but to ask whether broadly generalizable patterns of debate can be traced between very different cases.

The method used here is based on claims-making analysis (Koopmans/Statham 2010) and data collection through computer-based manual coding of the transcripts of plenary debates dealing with European governance. This data is part of a bigger research project in which a wide variety of thematic areas are explored (Wendler 2014b). Here, the subset of argumentative claims dealing with EMU during the time frame stated above were drawn from the larger data base. As the subsequent sections will demonstrate, claims coded in this thematic category were reviewed both qualitatively and quantitatively to investigate links between the structure of argumentative justification and patterns of political polarization in the debates under analysis.

4. Justification: Core arguments in parliamentary debates about the Eurozone crisis

The task of the subsequent section is mainly descriptive. The aim is to give an overview of the main content of the debates coded for the present analysis, and to demonstrate which kinds of claim were categorized in the three different dimensions of discourse

distinguished at the outset. Apart from discussing content and levels of discourse, another aim to give an overview of the degree of contention of different parts of the debate.

Overall 2540 argumentative claims from parliamentary debates in the four legislatures under comparison were coded for this analysis. Just under half of these claims were coded as pragmatic (1141) while slightly more were categorized as norms-based (1399). Moreover, in both argumentative dimensions just over half of the claims were coded as positive or affirmative and close to half as critical (585/456 for the pragmatic dimension, and 731/669 for the normative dimension). Considering both observations, two conclusions can be drawn about the structure of the empirical material considered here: First, that debates on the Eurozone crisis are (unsurprisingly) very contested and therefore offer insights into the evolution of political contention on European governance. Second, that the structure of claims is balanced enough across different argumentative dimensions to compare levels and forms of political polarization.

In order to provide insights into the actual argumentative content of debates, the review of the empirical data was undertaken in two steps. First, during the initial coding process each argumentative claim was assigned either to different types of pragmatic justification (related to gains or losses in economic, legal or political resources) or normative argument (related to ethical statements about collective identity or political values, or moral standards of justice and legitimacy). Each group of claims was subsequently reviewed to create broad groups of argument made in each category, summarized and numbered in the following categories: economic resources (ER), political resources (PR), collective identity (CI), social values (SV), and moral standards (MS). These ‘core arguments’ were created separately for positive/affirmative and negative or critical statements in the debate. The table below provides an overview of all of these core arguments in the four legislatures compared.

(table 1 on core arguments in debates on the Eurozone crisis)

The discussion of this qualitative overview cannot go into very much detail here. However, a simple observation is that unsurprising national differences aside, some core arguments and debates can be traced across different legislatures. For the pragmatic dimension, an important observation is that arguments based on economic criteria are important but in no way exclusive to this debate. A substantial part of pragmatic justification relates to more genuinely political concerns – considering the Eurozone crisis as an opportunity for institutional reform in the positive dimension, and criticisms of the coherence and effectiveness of government leadership and EU decision-making in the negative dimension.

Within the normative dimension of debate, only few claims were coded as statements based on ideas on identity. Most evidence of this kind of claim was found in the German debate, where a substantial amount of claims are made that principles of stability and austerity resonate with genuinely German understandings of economic governance and are engrained in the development of postwar Germany. The remainder of claims in the ethical dimension covers claims based on a commitment to social values, mostly expressing a principled commitment or rejection of the stability paradigm and budget restraint (SV+1 vs SV-1), appraising or criticizing principles of economic management inherent to Eurozone governance and the regulation of the financial sector (SV+3 vs. SV-2), and the principled endorsement or rejection of the Euro as a symbol of supranationalism (SV+2 vs SV-3). Within the moral dimension of debate, similar pairs of positive and critical arguments can be identified. First, a substantial amount of claims refers to the moral category of responsibility, either affirming or rejecting the claim that Eurozone government act in responsible ways towards each other and their respective domestic constituencies (MS+1 vs MS-1). A second, positive moral argument that is particularly strong in the German debate is one based on the idea of reciprocity – that credit assistance programs can only be offered as a sign of solidarity in exchange for efforts at economic and budgetary reform of recipient countries (MS+2). The remainder of arguments in the moral dimension is biased towards critical arguments. Positive statements that the decision-making of crisis management for the Eurozone is fair (with regard to voting rights, transparency, accountability, etc., MS+3) is countered by three

negative arguments criticizing the questionable legal base of decisions (MS-2), a democratic deficit of decision-making (MS-3), an unfair distribution of burdens between the public and private sector (MS-4), and claims criticizing governments of a lack of political integrity and corruption (ie, ‘governments being bought by banks’, MS-5). Overall this review reflects a good deal of political contention on the management of the Eurozone crisis. How patterns of political polarization evolve in these various argumentative dimensions presented here is the task of the next section.

5. Polarization: Patterns of party positions in debates of national parliaments

In the subsequent discussion, the polarization of parliamentary parties is assessed in relation to two criteria. First, an important aspect of a party position is the degree or emphasis to which a certain topic, argument or type of discourse is emphasized in parliamentary debate. To assess this dimension, the subsequent analysis considers emphasis scores (ES) of parliamentary parties, calculated as the relative percentage to which the speakers of a parliamentary group used a specific kind of argument in relation to all their statements. For example, if 20 out of 100 arguments made by the speakers of one parliamentary group used an ethical type of justification, the emphasis score would be 0.2. Second, parliamentary parties obviously create political contestation and polarization by taking opposite stances towards particular topics and within the different kinds of parliamentary discourse. To assess this dimension, the subsequent analysis considers position scores (PS) of parties, calculated as the relative amount of positive statements in relation to all statements made by the parliamentary party within the respective level of discourse. For example, if 5 out of the 20 ethical statements made by a party group were positive and the rest negative, the position score would be 0.25. This measurement allows to map party positions on given issues, but also to identify ‘leaders’ of positive and critical discourse in the case of parties with very high emphasis scores. Combining both values, a case of strong polarization is found when emphasis scores are high, and a wide distance found in the position scores of two (groups of) parties. A more conditional type of polarization is found when parties differ only in emphasis, or if different position scores are combined with one party strongly de-emphasizing an issue.

The position and emphasis scores for all parliamentary parties compared in this paper are presented in the subsequent table. For better readability, score rank orders were entered into the table, listing all values in descending order from highest to lowest. From this overview, we can establish an overview of position patterns of parliamentary parties in debates on the Eurozone crisis across all four legislatures (cp. table 1).

(table 2, emphasis and position scores of parties)

NOTE: The final version of the paper and the talk at the conference will most likely use two-dimensional scatter plots to discuss party positions, but they cannot yet be included here in the paper, FW

An initial observation about this data is that across legislatures and levels of discourse, a polarization between government and opposition parties is generally a correct description of interactions in the parliamentary arena. Both within the pragmatic and norms-based dimensions of discourse (including its subcategories of ethical and moral argument), the position scores of parties in government office are above those of parties in the parliamentary opposition. The only exception to this pattern is the British Conservative party, which in spite of holding government office during the period of analysis shows position scores closer to the camp of opposition parties. This outlier position is unsurprising given the well-established Eurosceptic position of the Conservatives and Britain's non-membership of the Eurozone. In this context, the fact that the position score of the UK Tories is still above the more Europhile British Labour Party and other opposition parties considered as supportive of European integration (such as the German SPD) actually strengthens the observation that government or opposition status strongly influences the direction of statements in the parliamentary arena, even about a question of supranational governance. In comparison, neither the ideological profile of parties along the left/right dimension nor their general attitude towards European integration appears in an equally strong and clear way as the government/opposition divide. This confirms our expectation that the interaction between the government majority and opposition sets very strong incentives for how parties take political stances in parliamentary debate.

In addition, it is noteworthy how strong the polarization of positions is within the divide between government and opposition parties. Across discursive dimensions, very few entries of parliamentary parties are found in the corridor between positions scores of 0.2 and 0.8. The noteworthy exceptions to this observation are, again, the British Conservatives, the two green parties, and the French Nouveau Centre – an outlier probably explained by the relatively small N of statements for the latter parties. Entries for larger parties, in contrast, are always near position scores of 0 and 1, indicating a strong polarization in debates on the Eurozone crisis. In comparison, emphasis scores of parties differ widely across the spectrum and no ready generalizations can be made between government and opposition parties. More characteristic patterns of party polarization as described through position and emphasis scores can be identified in each of the three distinctive dimensions of discourse, as discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Pragmatic dimension of debate: Government vs opposition

Within the pragmatic dimension of debate, two broad clusters of parties can be identified along two corridors of very low (0-0.2) and very high (0.8-1) values, with only a few outliers (the two Green parties and British Conservatives, as discussed above). The two clouds are populated entirely by parties in government (for high values) and opposition (for low values). In addition, a review of emphasis scores distinguishes this field from other levels of debate. As indicated by the emphasis scores, major mainstream parties have generally higher emphasis values than smaller and ideologically more radical parties. In this sense, the three leaders of positive discourse are all major government parties (SPO, UMP and OVP), whereas the leaders of critical course are also mainstream parties (LAB, CON, and SPD). Both radical left-parties (GDR, LINKE) and populist right parties (FPO, BZO) have lower position scores than mainstream parties (with the only exception being the SRC, which ranks behind the parties just mentioned in terms of emphasis). If polarization is measured as a combination of high emphasis values and strong variation in position scores, this field of debate is dominated by mainstream parties along the lines of government vs. opposition politics, while ideologically more radical parties are remarkably withdrawn from this dimension of the debate.

Normative dimension of debate: Ideological polarization of parliamentary parties

A different pattern of contestation between parliamentary parties is found at the level of normative discourse. Again, position scores are polarized between two groups of parties in government office and parliamentary opposition (with the notable exception of the British Conservatives). However, the leadership of both positive and negative norms-based discourse is assumed by different sets of parties. The positive leadership of moral discourse on the Eurozone crisis – stating that crisis management measures and the institutional reform of Eurozone governance are appropriate, just and legitimate – is assumed by an ideologically coherent set of center-right and liberal parties. All position scores of these parties are near or identical with 1, while emphasis scores range between 0.85 to 0.51 (including FDP, LD, CDU, CSU, UMP and OVP in descending order). The only center-left party near this cluster (the Austrian SPO) has a far lower emphasis score of .481. The mainstream center-right is therefore clearly identified as the protagonist of a strong positive norms-based discourse. In this context, it might be added that the allegedly technical and pragmatic discourse of the German CDU was coded as consisting of about two thirds of norms-based claims, particularly those emphasizing the value of stability and reciprocity of credit assistance and reform efforts. The critical counterpart of this discourse coalition is a group of far-left parties (B90, GDR, and LINKE) near a position score of zero and very high emphasis values (above 0.9). Almost the entire parliamentary discourse of these parties consists of a strongly critical normative argument against the appropriateness and fairness of Eurozone crisis management. This group of left parties is even more clearly identified as a leader of critical discourse than populist right parties, whose position score is equally low but combined with less emphasis. A curious element is that the center-left parties (SPD, LAB, SPO, and SRC) have relatively low emphasis scores (rank orders 16, 18, 15, and 6, respectively) while their position scores are scattered across the spectrum of debate. According to our data, center-left parties are torn between reluctant normative support in government office (SPO) and more ambivalent (SRC) or even a highly critical (LAB, SPD) discourse from parliamentary opposition. Nevertheless the normative level of debate is more easily characterized as one influenced by an ideological characterization of parties. A strongly positive discourse of the center-right interacts with a strongly critical discourse of far-left,

and a more conditionally critical discourse of center-left parties. More insight into the structure of this dimension of debate is gained from a distinction of statements in the ethical-political and moral level of argumentative justification.

The mapping of party positions at the level of ethical justifications resembles the overall pattern of normative discourse in many ways, with the main difference that the presence of far-left parties as leaders of a critical discourse is less clearly present. Again, all center-right and liberal parties except for the British Conservatives appear as proponents of a positive value-based discourse on Eurozone rescue policies (identified within a corridor of position scores between 0.8 and 1), with the two liberal parties (FDP and LD) unsurprisingly leading in emphasis before the center-right (CSU, CDU, UMP, OVP). This group of parties is opposed to a cluster of parties expressing a strongly critical discourse (identified within a corridor of position scores between 0 and 0.2) that is led by three left-wing parties (B90, LINKE, Gruene) in about the same range of emphasis scores as the liberal/center-right leaders of positive discourse. Two center-left parties join this cluster of parties with critical stances, opposing themselves to two center-right parties (UMP, CDU) with about the same emphasis score but diametrically opposed position scores. This almost perfect image of polarization along the left/right spectrum is only confused by the presence of the two populist right parties (BZO, FPO) within the cluster of critical left-wing parties. However, their emphasis scores are comparably low (rank orders for the emphasis scores of both parties are 13 and 18, respectively). This level of debate is therefore dominated by a very polarized debate between center-right/liberal and left-wing parties, mostly in relation to paradigms of economic governance associated with the catchwords of ‘stability’ versus ‘growth’.

The polarization of parties takes a different shape at the level of moral discourse. Three observations stand out. First, the polarization of parties as measured through their polarization scores is extremely strong at this level (only one entry is found in the corridor between position scores of 0.2 and 0.8, while 12 parliamentary parties have position scores of either 0 or 1). As a result of this polarization, two clusters of parties with either very positive or critical positions can be identified.

Second, the polarization between left- and right-wing parties described above is more lopsided and ambiguous than at the ethical level. The emphasis score of parties within the cluster of critical parties reaches far higher values, establishing five parties of both the far-left and populist right as the leaders of a critical discourse against the legitimacy and justice of Eurozone crisis policies (in a descending order of emphasis scores, these parties are LINKE, GDR, FPO, B90, and BZO). These parties oppose themselves to a set of mainstream parties defending a positive discourse on the legitimacy of Eurozone governance. This group of parties unsurprisingly includes the two German parties in government (FDP, CDU) but also other mainstream parties in government office (SPO, UMP, NC and OVP). Setting these two groups of parties in relation with each other confirms the assumption of a ‘Inverted U’ polarization of parties between mainstream and ideologically more extreme parties. In comparison, both left/right and government/opposition patterns of polarization appear less plausible as an explanation at this level. Center-left parties in parliamentary opposition (SPD, LAB, SRC) have very low position scores but also far lower emphasis scores than the cluster of parties identified as the leaders of critical discourse. Mainstream parties with very critical positions towards the legitimacy of Eurozone governance are found within the data set, and interestingly both in government (CON) and opposition (SPD, LAB). Their criticism, however, is far more withdrawn at this level in comparison to political parties at the left and right fringes of the political spectrum.

Third, and finally, strong country-specific differences in the polarization of parties are actually found. All three British parties are clustered in a distanced and critical response that combines very low position and low emphasis scores, whereas both France and Austria show much clearer signs of polarization. The most surprising finding is probably that the German debate is the most strongly polarized, involving both leaders of positive discourse (CDU, FDP) and two of the four leader parties of critical discourse (LINKE, B90). The debate on the fairness and legitimacy of crisis management and institutional reform of the Eurozone was more contentious in Germany than acknowledged by many observers (for a more detailed discussion of this point, cp. also Wendler 2014a).

6. Conclusion

In summation, this paper aims at adding insight into domestic parliamentary contention about the Eurozone crisis, both with regard to the substantive content of debates and emerging patterns of party political polarization. The main question was whether, aside from the noticeable differences in national debates, we can identify broadly similar patterns of justification and polarization across very different political settings and legislatures. In the overall picture, many observations from this case study confirm this expectation. First, it was shown that within levels of the debate dealing with the utility, principles and legitimacy of Eurozone governance several core arguments can be traced that occur across different countries and legislatures. Second, it was shown that different argumentative dimensions are related to characteristic patterns of political polarization between parties. Normative contention on Eurozone crisis management policies is strong, and it includes both a dimension on values and paradigms of economic governance and a debate on the democratic legitimacy and fairness of crisis resolution policies. Whereas the former debate evolves primarily between representatives of left and right parties, the legitimacy of efforts to stabilize the Eurozone is contested from both the left and right against a somewhat defensive mainstream – and the degree of contention is actually strongest in one of the epicenters of decision-making, namely the German parliament.

7. References

- Auel, Katrin/Benz, Arthur, 2005: The Politics of adaptation: The Europeanisation of national parliamentary systems, in: *Journal of Legislative Studies*, No.3/4, pp. 372-93
- Auel, Katrin/Raunio, Tapio (eds), 2013: *National Parliaments, Electorates and EU Affairs*, HIS Working Paper 129, Vienna, URL: www.ihs.at/publications/pol/pw_129.pdf (last access: September 15, 2014)
- Hefftl, C./Neuhold, C./Rozenberg, O., Smith, J. (eds), 2014: *Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union*, Palgrave (forthcoming)
- Bellamy, Richard/Castiglione, Dario, 2013: Three models of democracy, political community and representation in the EU, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20:2, pp. 206-23
- Cooper, Ian, 2011: A 'Virtual Third Chamber' for the European Union? National Parliaments after the Treaty of Lisbon, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 35, 3, pp. 441-65
- Crespy, Amandine/Schmidt, Vivien, 2014: The clash of Titans: France, Germany, and the discursive double game of EMU reform, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 21/8, pp. 1085-1101
- Crum, Ben, 2013: Saving the Euro at the Cost of Democracy?, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 51/4, pp. 614-30
- Daianu, Daniel/ d'Adda, Carlo/Basevi, Giorgio/Kumar, Rajesh (eds), 2014: *The Eurozone Crisis and the Future of Europe: The Political Economy of Further Integration and Governance*, Palgrave
- De Wilde, Pieter, 2011: No polity for old politics? A Framework for tAnalyzing the Politicization of European Integration, in: *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 33/5, pp. 559-75
- Diez Medrano, Juan/Gray, Emily, 2010: Framing the European Union in National Public Spheres, in: Staham, P./Koopmans, R. (eds): *The Making of a European Public Sphere*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 195-222
- Fabbrini, Sergio, 2013: Intergovernmentalism and Its Limits. Assessing the European Union's Answer to the Euro Crisis, in: *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 46/9, pp. 1003-29
- Habermas/Juergen, 1991: *Erlaeterungen zur Diskursethik*, Frankfurt a.M.
- Habermas, Juergen, 2013: *The crisis of the European Union. A response*, Polity
- Helbling, Marc/Hoeglinger, Dominic/Wuest, Bruno, 2010: How political parties frame European integration, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, 49, pp. 496-521
- Hix, Simon/Noury, Abdul/Gerard, Roland, 2009: *The Politics of the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press
- Hooghe, Liesbet/Marks, Gary/Wilson, Carole, 2004: Does left/right structure party positions on European integration? In: Marks, Gary et al. (eds), *European Integration and Political Conflict*, Cambridge, pp. 120-40

- Koopmans, Ruud/Statham, Paul, 2010: Theoretical Framework, Research Design, and Methods, in: Statham, Paul/Koopmans, Ruud (eds): The Making of a European Public Sphere, Cambridge, pp. 34-62
- Kroeger, Sandra/Friedrich, Dawid (eds), 2012: The Challenge of Democratic representation in the European Union, Palgrave
- Laursen, Finn (ed.), 2014: The Eu and the Eurozone Crisis: Policy Challenges and Strategic Choices, Ashgate
- Maatsch, Aleksandra, 2014: Are we all austerians now? An analysis of national parliamentary parties' positioning on anti-crisis measures in the Eurozone, in: Journal of European Public Policy, 21/1, pp. 96-115
- Mueller, Jan-Werner, 2010: The Promise of 'Demoi-Cracy': Democracy, Diversity. And Domination in the European Public Order, in: Neyer, Juergen/Wiener, Antje (eds): Political Theory of the European Union, Oxford University Press, pp. 187-204
- Raunio, Tapio, 2009: National Parliaments and European Integration: What we know and Agenda for Future Research, in: Journal of Legislative Studies, Vol. 15/4, pp. 317-34
- Raunio, Tapio, 2011: The Gatekeepers of European Integration? The Functions of National Parliaments in the EU Political System, in: Journal of European Integration, Vol. 33/3, pp. 303-21
- Schmidt, Vivien, 2013: European Member States Elites Diverging Visions of the European Union: Diverging Differently since the Economic Crisis and the Libyan Intervention?, in: Journal of European Integration, Vol. 34/2, pp. 169-90
- Schmidt, Vivien, 2009: Democracy in Europe. The EU and National Politics, Oxford University Press
- Sjursen 2002
- Sjursen 2009
- Statham, Paul/Koopmans, Ruud/Tresch, Anke/Firmstone, Julie, 2010: Political Party Contestation: Emerging Euroscepticism or a Normalization of Eurocriticism?, in: Statham, Paul/Koopmans, Ruud (eds): The Making of a European Public Sphere, Cambridge University Press, pp. 245-76
- Statham, Paul/Trenz, Hansjoerg, 2013: The Politicization of Europe: Contesting the Constitution in the Mass Media, Routledge
- Wendler 2014a: End of consensus? The European leadership discourse of the second Merkel government during the Eurozone crisis and its contestation in debates of the Bundestag (2009-13), in: German Politics, forthcoming (invited contribution for a special issue, publication pre-approved)
- Wendler 2014b: Debating Europe in National Parliaments: Justification and Political Polarization in Debates on the EU in Austria, France, Germany and the UK, OPAL Online Working Paper No 17/2004, URL: [http://www.opal-europe.org/tmp/Opal%20Online%20Paper/17%20\(new\).pdf](http://www.opal-europe.org/tmp/Opal%20Online%20Paper/17%20(new).pdf) (last access: September 15, 2014)
- Wendler 2014c: Justification and Political Polarization in national parliamentary debates on EU Treaty Reform, in: Journal of European Public Policy, Vol. 21/4, pp. 549-67

	Positive / affirmative arguments	Negative / critical arguments	Text
Resource-based arguments	<p>ER+1: Containment of economic risks through crisis management: 307 (83/24/78/122)</p> <p>ER+2: Safeguarding of national economic and financial interests: 187 (36/78/67/6)</p> <p>PR+1: Crisis as opportunity for institutional reform of EMU: 91 (49/0/28/14)</p>	<p>ER-1: Economic arguments against EMU: 125 (0/92/32/1)</p> <p>ER-2: Economic and financial losses through crisis management: 126 (0/46/60/20)</p> <p>PR-1: Criticism of government leadership in EU crisis management: 117 (66/25/26/0)</p> <p>PR-2: Insufficiency of measures to resolve Eurozone crisis: 88 (27/0/17/44)</p>	
Norms-based arguments	<p>CH+1: Resonance of crisis management with core values of domestic economic order: 65 (47/0/18/0)</p> <p>SV+1: Endorsement of stability as core principle of crisis management: 238 (154/16/52/16)</p> <p>SV+2: Principled support for Euro as a symbol of supranationalism 53 (14/9/8/22)</p> <p>SV+3: Crisis management reflects right principles of economic governance: 171 (47/0/48/76)</p> <p>MS+1: Responsibility assumed by governments in crisis management 63 (22/2/10/29)</p> <p>MS+2: Reciprocity of solidarity and efforts for reform (ie, conditionality as fair principle): 73 (48/0/14/11)</p> <p>MS+3: Fairness of decision-making in resolution of crisis 68 (44/0/12/12)</p>	<p>SV-1: Rejection of stability / austerity paradigm 198 (83/0/22/93)</p> <p>SV-2: Criticism of degree of economic regulation enacted by EU: 106 (55/5/21/25)</p> <p>SV-3: Rejection of supranational integration: 47 (0/36/11/0)</p> <p>MS-1: Lack of responsibility of government action towards entire Eurozone: 60 (34/0/19/7)</p> <p>MS-2: Questionable legal base of crisis management: 30 (12/14/0/4)</p> <p>MS-3: Democratic deficits of decision-making during crisis management: 77 (28/7/9/33)</p> <p>MS-4: Unfair distribution of burdens between public and private sector (taxpayers/banks): 105 (60/0/29/16)</p> <p>MS-5: Political corruption of governments in resolution of Eurozone crisis: 46 (0/7/38/1)</p>	

Table 1: Key arguments in the debate on the Eurozone crisis Argument count: EU4 (BT/HoC/NR/AN)

Table 2: Emphasis and position scores of political parties in parliamentary debates on the Eurozone crisis

	ES Res	PS Res	ES CI	PS CI	ES SV	PS SV	ES MS	PS MS	ES Norms	PS Norms
CDU	0.328 (13)	1 (1)	0.097 (1)	1 (1)	0.317 (12)	1 (1)	0.256 (5)	1 (1)	0.671 (7)	1 (1)
CSU	0.373 (10)	1 (1)	0.043 (3)	1 (1)	0.582 (3)	1 (1)	0 (17)	Na	0.626 (9)	1 (1)
SPD	0.584 (3)	0 (14)	0 (4)	Na	0.201 (16)	0.031 (14)	0.213 (8)	0 (9)	0.415 (16)	0.015 (14)
FDP	0.151 (16)	1 (1)	0.090 (2)	1 (1)	0.505 (5)	1 (1)	0.252 (6)	1 (1)	0.848 (4)	1 (1)
B90/GR	0.087 (17)	0.625 (9)	0 (4)	na	0.538 (4)	0.020 (15)	0.373 (4)	0 (9)	0.912 (3)	0.012 (15)
LINKE	0.053 (18)	0 (14)	0 (4)	na	0.446 (8)	0 (16)	0.5 (1)	0 (9)	0.946 (1)	0 (16)
LAB	0.775 (1)	0.149 (12)	0 (4)	na	0.202 (15)	0.142 (13)	0.021 (16)	0 (9)	0.224 (18)	0.129 (11)
CON	0.666 (2)	0.4 (11)	0 (4)	na	0.183 (17)	0.484 (10)	0.150 (12)	0.074 (8)	0.333 (17)	0.3 (10)
LD	0.166 (15)	1 (1)	0 (4)	na	0.833 (1)	1 (1)	0 (17)	Na	0.833 (5)	1 (1)
SPO	0.581 (4)	1 (1)	0 (4)	na	0.224 (14)	0.965 (6)	0.193 (10)	1 (1)	0.418 (15)	0.981 (6)
OVP	0.467 (9)	1 (1)	0 (4)	na	0.460 (7)	1 (1)	0.072 (14)	1 (1)	0.532 (10)	1 (1)
FPO	0.518 (6)	0 (14)	0 (4)	na	0.044 (18)	0 (16)	0.437 (3)	0 (9)	0.481 (13)	0 (16)
BZO	0.528 (5)	0 (14)	0 (4)	na	0.2247 (13)	0.2 (11)	0.247 (7)	0 (9)	0.471 (14)	0.095 (13)
Gruene	0.46875 (8)	0.6 (10)	0 (4)	na	0.385 (10)	0.162 (12)	0.145 (13)	0 (9)	0.531 (11)	0.117 (12)
UMP	0.488 (7)	0.936 (7)	0 (4)	na	0.352 (11)	0.945 (7)	0.158 (11)	0.975 (5)	0.511 (12)	0.954 (7)
SRC	0.3 (14)	0.117 (13)	0 (4)	na	0.641 (2)	0.555 (9)	0.058 (15)	0.2 (7)	0.7 (6)	0.478 (9)
GDR	0.359 (11)	0 (14)	0 (4)	na	0.495 (6)	0 (16)	0.439 (2)	0 (9)	0.934 (2)	0 (16)
NC	0.359 (12)	0.782 (8)	0 (4)	na	0.4375 (9)	0.785 (8)	0.203 (9)	0.769 (6)	0.640 (8)	0.780 (8)
All parties	0.415	0.540	0.019	1	0.352	0.592	0.212	0.392	0.584	0.533