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PARTY COMPETITION, CORRUPTION AND ELECTORAL
BEHAVIOUR IN THE NEW EU MEMBER STATES

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Abstract

What accounts for the electoral successes of Eurosceptic and populist political parties in Central and East Europe? Citizens in the region have expressed their support for these types of parties in recent elections while, at the same time, aggregate levels of support for EU membership and trust in EU institutions remain high. EU-centered explanations for the growing popularity of these parties have focused on the dissatisfaction of citizens with specific aspects of European integration such as economic reforms, perceived loss of sovereignty or the strict requirements regarding protection of minorities. This paper proposes an alternative causal explanation by establishing a relationship between perceptions of domestic political corruption, mainstream party convergence and citizens' growing support for populist and Eurosceptic parties. By choosing to support these parties citizens in the region are, in fact, casting a protest vote against domestic political elites. A public opinion survey from Bulgaria and the Czech Republic is utilized to test these hypotheses. Results suggest that perceptions of political corruption and the similarity of mainstream political parties play a large role in determining vote choice.

Keywords

Euroscepticism, populism, EU membership, voting choice, corruption.

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Introduction

What accounts for the emergence and electoral performance of Eurosceptic political parties in the domestic party systems of Central and East Europe (CEE)? Related to this question, in this paper I explore *how the determinants of electoral Euroscepticism differ from those of genuine, ideology-based Euroscepticism in CEE.* Parties with moderate or high Eurosceptic agendas have gained 50% of the vote in Hungary, 46% in Poland, 31% in the Czech Republic in recent parliamentary elections. At the same time, there are important regional differences present with Eurosceptic parties gaining about 20% of the vote in Estonia and only 6% of the share of the vote in Slovenia. Almost all of the Eurosceptic parties in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia have a clear populist basis as well, and virtually every country in the region has had at least one strong populist party in recent elections, thus adding to the spread of protest politics.

A paradox, however, arises from the fact that the distribution of Eurosceptic parties in a country does not always mirror the distribution of public opinion. Instances where public opinion polls reveal a population that expresses significant disapproval for European integration or EU membership also exhibit few or weak Eurosceptic parties in the political system (e.g. Estonia), and vice versa (e.g. Poland). This raises two important questions: first, if it is not mass attitudes towards European integration that explain the electoral success (or lack thereof) of these political parties, what does? And second, if Eurosceptic parties are gaining support for reasons unrelated to their opinions on Europe, then why engage the Eurosceptic dimension?

In this paper I argue that Euroscepticism in Central and East Europe is a strategic response to various degrees of mainstream party convergence and its electoral success is largely due to the disenchantment of the population with *domestic* elites and political processes rather than the EU per se. Political parties in the new Member States adopt a Eurosceptic agenda as a means of differentiating themselves from the mainstream consensus and offering voters an electoral alternative. Citizens who choose these parties do so largely as a form of protest against what they see as hollow mainstream party competition and a lack of choice on substantive issues. Many of these Eurosceptic parties lack clearly defined and stable positions on substantive issues but their main appeal consists of opposing the mainstream establishment. Picking on the EU issue often represents a shortcut to get their message of protest politics across to the voters.

Yet, a perception of “sameness” of the mainstream political parties does not automatically need to result in a protest vote. If citizens felt that the core political parties were performing satisfactorily, their convergence on a variety of issues might not have resulted in disenchantment with the political process. In Central and East Europe, however, mainstream political elites have continuously been charged with engaging in corrupt and dishonest behaviour with disastrous consequences for the political system. Perceptions of widespread political corruption can thus serve as a trigger which, coupled with viewing mainstream parties as “all the same”, intensifies the likelihood that voters would choose a Eurosceptic party as a form of electoral protest.

For the sake of capturing this larger sense of disenchantment with the mainstream elite, Eurosceptic parties in CEE often have heavy populist undertones in their rhetoric and utilize the corruption issue to their benefit. Thus, I analyze Eurosceptic parties as a subset of the larger category of protest parties and attempt to disentangle the link between populism and Euroscepticism. According to my argument, the domestic electoral success of protest parties that mix Euroscepticism with populism is largely due to the populist anti-elite and anti-corruption element in them rather than their anti-EU positions.

The paper is organized as follows. The next sections develop the theory in more detail. In what follows, the hypotheses of this study are tested by using an original random representative survey conducted in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic in the summer of 2009. The final section of the paper discusses some of the implications of this study and suggests avenues for future research.

Domestic Determinants of Mass-Level Euroscepticism

While the literal definition of Euroscepticism refers to opposition to and suspicion of Europe or European integration, political parties that subscribe to Eurosceptic beliefs may have additional agendas that do not place the highest priority on anti-Europe sentiments. Taggart (1998) categorizes three types of Eurosceptic parties. *Single issue Eurosceptic parties* can be viewed as representing the purest anti-EU sentiment since their entire platform is based upon opposition to European integration. Occasionally, mainstream parties can adopt a Eurosceptic agenda for strategic reasons – thus forming the second category of *Established parties with a Eurosceptic position*. Finally, the third category of *Protest-based Eurosceptic parties* is the one that has the most relevance in Central and in East Europe. Euroscepticism in the region, as I argue in this paper, is largely a form of protest against developments in the domestic political system.

Recent studies of CEE voting behaviour have begun to empirically explore the link between views of the domestic political system and Eurosceptic voting preferences. Jasiewicz (2004) finds that an anti-EU vote in the Polish accession referendum was associated much more with a perception that “things are going in the wrong direction” domestically rather than with structural socio-economic factors or cultural predispositions. In a later piece in 2008, he looks at the nature of Polish populism and argues that the major contributing factors to the surge of populism in the country are the failed government policies, the sense of economic and social crisis and the corruption scandals plaguing politicians. Putting the conclusions from these two studies together, it seems that both the anti-EU vote and the populist vote a few years later were caused by similar factors having to do with perceptions about domestic problems. This helps illustrate the close overlap between Euroscepticism and populism in the region and the tendency of the populist Eurosceptics to gain votes by capitalizing on disenchantment with the domestic political system.

Yet it also raises the question: if the failure of specific government policies is one of the primary sources of popular discontent, why aren't mainstream oppositional parties succeeding electorally rather than the protest-based parties? The perception that mainstream parties, whether governing or oppositional, have grown too similar can provide the missing link in the causal process. When coupled with widespread perceptions of corruption, it leaves citizens with “a feeling of having been betrayed by the politicians” and leads them into the domain of protest politics as a “quest for a new purity” (Tismaneanu, 2007).

Perceptions of domestic governments and political actors have also been found to matter in the Baltic states. Mikkel and Pridham (2004) argue that “public opinion on the European issue tended to be related to the role and popularity of the government” during the Latvian and Estonian accession referendum. Vetik (2003) finds through an examination of Estonian public opinion that a decreased trust in national institutions leads to a greater degree of Euroscepticism. McLaren (2007) finds the same relationship EU-wide. However, the idea that trust in domestic institutions affects levels of support for the EU has not remained uncontested. Lust (2006) argues that such relatively fixed characteristics as income and ethnicity predict the anti-EU vote better than trust in government. Ilonszki (2009), on the other hand, contends that “the more critical respondents are about their national polity, the more positive they seem to be about strengthening the unification process, at least in the CEE context” (p. 1049).

Moreover, studies of public opinion sometimes produce conflicting findings due to the two distinctive ways they measure “public” Euroscepticism. While the majority of studies use responses to survey questions about EU support as a dependent variable, others look at the vote gains of Eurosceptic political parties. Underlying attitudes, however, do not automatically translate into voting preferences as factors like salience and strategic use of the EU issue by voters can create a disjuncture. Voters, for whom the EU issue is not that salient, for example, may use a seemingly anti-EU vote as a punishment strategy for mainstream elites with which they are dissatisfied. This disjuncture is best exemplified by the paradoxes reported continuously across the region regarding the number and strength of Eurosceptic parties and the distribution of public opinion on the issue of integration. Most authors agree the Eurosceptic brand is used strategically by parties but a causal mechanism that accounts for both the motivation of voters to choose these parties *and* the electoral disjuncture between strength of Euroscepticism at the party and mass levels remains missing.

The Manifestations of Populism in Central and East Europe

Populism, much like Euroscepticism, is a contested concept. Definitions of populism have often been criticized as being so broad they can include anything or so specific that you need a separate category for each case. Taggart (2000, 2002) offers a set of core characteristics that can help us distinguish populist movements. First, populists are inherently hostile to representative politics since they portray it as corrupt and unresponsive to the needs of ordinary people. Second, populist movements are characterized by an idealized conception of the country's 'heartland' – a notion intentionally ambiguous and romanticized in order to capture a larger constituency. Third, populism has an ideological "empty heart" – that is, it can adopt views and ideas from the entire range of the political spectrum depending on contextual and strategic necessities since it lacks its own value system. Fourth, populism emerges as a reaction to a sense of crisis in society and builds its platform around the notion that mainstream politics cannot adequately handle the pressing problems of the time. Using this analytical framework makes it possible to identify populist movements based upon a set of generic criteria while also examining the contextual manifestations of each of these criteria and a possible link to Euroscepticism.

Cas Mudde (2004), when writing on populism in Europe, arrives at very similar core characteristics of populism: a lack of well-defined ideological underpinnings, personalistic leadership, anti-elite rhetoric and the juxtaposition of "the pure people" versus the "corrupt elite". Populist supporters are most often those segments of the population who feel "excluded or marginalized from national political life" (Weyland, 2001). This disadvantaged segment of the population is assumed to harbour intense disenchantment and distrust of traditional political elites and the populists appeal to this sentiment through their markedly anti-elite discourse (De la Torre, 2000). Thus it often seems clearer who and what populists are *against* than what they are for. They are against established elites and mainstream politics, and/or against groups in society targeted as the "others" – the ones who do not fit in the carefully constructed ideal of the heartland.

Studies of populism in Central and East Europe have proliferated recently following the region-wide rise to power of populist political parties. Authors have asserted that the populist resurgence is not merely a symptom of transition, nor is it a pre- or post-accession phenomenon, but a lasting political development that is no longer confined to the fringes of party systems (Rajacic, 2007; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007; Krastev and Smilov, 2008). Most studies also acknowledge that populism has varying manifestations and comes in degrees. Krastev and Smilov (2008) distinguish between "soft" and "hard" populism depending on whether it challenges mainly the existing party system or the entire principles of liberal democracy. Meseznikov et. al (2008) come up with as many as 6 categories of populism observed in CEE – far-right nationalistic; agrarian; anti-capitalist; moderate social; nationalist-conservative, and centrist. Smilov (2008) finds that populism has incorporated a nationalistic discourse into mainstream politics, at least in the case of Bulgaria, while Ucen (2007) argues that CEE has become the playground of a new "centrist" type of populism which is "largely free from nationalist mobilization" (p. 55).

The causes of populism have also garnered the attention of scholars in the field. Most analyses agree that there seem to be some common pre-conditions for the emergence of populism, such as the spread of corruption among political elites in the region, the constrained mainstream party competition before accession and economic dissatisfaction. Others go as far as to suggest that leftover authoritarian values from the communist period are behind the populist surge (Mungiu-Pippidi and Mindruta, 2002) or to link populist rhetoric to an attempt to discredit the post-communist political mainstream (Ucen, 2007). While all these studies make important analytical contributions to conceptualizing and approaching the study of populism in the region, very few of them have conducted a rigorous empirical analysis of voting preferences and populism. Linking underlying attitudes to voting preferences remedies this gap and provides insight into the political systems of Central and East Europe.

Linking Populism and Euroscepticism

Populism and protest-based Euroscepticism share the same principle at their core: protest against mainstream parties and aspects of the domestic political system. The overlap of these political

strategies in Central and East Europe raises the question: Is party based Euroscepticism largely a subset of populism and are voters, therefore, casting their vote for these types of mixed parties based on their anti-Europe or their populist dimension? Breaking down the broader category of protest parties into “purely populist”, “purely Eurosceptic” and “mixed” as shown in Table 1 sets up the framework for analysis and establishes some expectations. Populist parties are clearly a subtype of protest parties whose discontent is directed at the domestic political system, namely corrupt and incompetent elites, and/or targeted minority groups. Purely Eurosceptic parties, on the other hand, engage the anti-Europe dimension but do not fit the populist criteria.

Table 1 Dimensions of Protest

Type of Party	Type of Protest
Purely Populist	Against Domestic Political System
Purely Eurosceptic	Against the EU and European integration
Mixed	Against Domestic Political System

The final (and largest in CEE) category of protest parties, the “mixed” group, poses the following puzzle: Is it the domestic or European protest dimension that is dominant? Mixed parties are an embodiment of the “chameleonic” (Taggart, 2002) nature of populism since they mix the traditional populist rhetoric with an attack on European integration or at least certain aspects of it. They tend to become the “anti-establishment something-for-everyone party in a milieu where most of the other parties have crowded into the pro-Western, pro-market center” (Ghodsee, 2008). My proposed answer is that, despite the Eurosceptic streak in them, mixed parties succeed electorally largely by appealing to the dissatisfaction of citizens with domestic political developments rather than capitalizing on direct anti-EU sentiments.

After the end of the Cold War, the Central and East European countries embarked on a long process of democratization and liberalization. Applying for EU membership in the very beginning of the 1990s was viewed as a symbolic act expressing a final break with the past and a statement of the ultimate goal of the post-communist transition. A “return to Europe” meant CEE societies getting closer to the economic and social security their West European neighbours enjoyed but it also symbolized the struggle to re-define their national identity and embrace the European values of freedom and democracy that had been denied to them under the socialist regime.

European Union Membership thus had both far-reaching practical and symbolic importance for CEE countries. It was the ultimate form of legitimizing their belonging to the European family and the final reward for the difficulties suffered during the democratic transition. Mainstream political parties in Central and East Europe were left with little competitive leeway except to question each other’s competence in implementing the accession criteria within the desirable deadline. Membership became a valence issue (Riishoj, 2007) where real disagreement only “encompassed different ways to reach the common goal” (p. 7).

New political actors could then take advantage of the opportunity unintentionally created by the accession process and the path they often chose was the path of a protest party as this was the electoral strategy that could simultaneously differentiate their message from the mainstream consensus and capture the citizens disenchanted with the established political elite. As predicted by Evans and Whitefield (1993) early in the post-communist transition, countries dominated by valence issues in CEE are likely to produce candidates competing “along lines of competence and charismatic appeal”(p. 547). Evans and Whitefield, however, expected these types of political processes to be more pronounced in only a subgroup of the post-communist states while the past decade has witnessed a region-wide trend in this direction.

As accession approached, mainstream political parties grew ideologically closer and thus opened up more space for the new Eurosceptics and populists. Adopting a Eurosceptic position was a more viable option for newly formed parties, but re-defining their positions along those lines was not a strategy so readily available to mainstream parties who had been or were currently part of the governing coalition. As they were more directly involved in negotiations with Brussels, mainstream

parties were de facto responsible for carrying out and popularizing the integration project. This imposed heavier policy constraints on these parties and prevented them from taking advantage of the emerging electoral trend. The competition among those parties continued to revolve around *who* can do it better rather than *what* each one of them could offer that is a better alternative (Grzymala-Busse and Innes, 2003).

After accession some observers hoped that, as EU constraints were lifted, political life would return “back to normal”. However, this has certainly not been the case with new populist and/or Eurosceptic parties still coming and going, and fairing well in elections. Krastev and Smilov (2000) suggest that the new populism has “almost made the concept ‘party programme’ devoid of meaning” as many of the established mainstream political parties have been severely weakened. Shafir (2008) explores the progression of Romanian president Traian Basescu who was elected in 2004 under a mainstream platform but grew progressively more populist by 2008.

In this paper, I show that mainstream party convergence has had consequences for electoral behaviour. While attitudes towards the EU may indeed have an effect in determining one’s likelihood of voting for a Eurosceptic party, it is of only secondary importance compared to the impact of domestic perceptions. This work argues that if we were to eliminate the sources of domestic discontent (e.g. corruption, mistrust of domestic politicians, “sameness” of mainstream parties), Eurosceptics would still be in existence but in much smaller numbers and of a different type – the genuine opponents of European integration or aspects of their country’s membership in the EU whose ideological values would most closely match the platforms of purely Eurosceptic political parties.

Electoral Euroscepticism thus needs to be analytically distinguished from value-based Euroscepticism where values concerning the European Union directly shape citizens’ political behaviour. The former represents actual behaviour (vote choice) while the latter is an attitude held by a voter who may or may not choose to act on it. Citizens who support EU membership and European integration, but are largely dissatisfied with the conditions of mainstream political parties, may cast a protest vote if perceptions about the performance of domestic politicians are more salient to them than their beliefs about the EU. The saliency of the EU issue in both party platforms and voters’ minds has, moreover, been found to vary in different elections (Haughton, 2009; Szczerbiak and Bil, 2009; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008).

In addition to a relatively low salience of the EU issue, the theory developed here assumes a higher than average salience of the corruption issue. Over the past decade, corruption has become an issue dominating political discourse in Central and East Europe and a frequent tool for populist mobilization. Miller, Grodeland and Koshechkina (2001) conducted an extensive study of experiences and perceptions of corruption in selected countries in East Europe. According to some of their findings, 84% of Slovaks, 80% of Czechs and 68% of Bulgarians believed that politicians were mostly interested in “gaining special privileges”. Moreover, 50% or more of the citizens of Slovakia and the Czech Republic believed that politicians now behaved worse than before and a majority in each surveyed country was convinced that the media actually *underreports* incidents of corruption. In addition, the authors found that corruption at “top government officials” was what angered the public the most despite perceptions that low level public servants may also be corrupt.

Grigorescu (2006) developed a measure of the salience of corruption in the media by calculating the proportion of news reports or articles mentioning the word ‘corruption’ over a period of 9 years (1996-2004). The results revealed a substantial increase (approximately seven times) in the media coverage of corruption in CEE countries. The trend is, moreover, not a result of developments in one or two particularly problematic countries. Even though there are countries such as Romania where the coverage of the issue increased “only” four times and others such as the Czech Republic where the topic is approximately ten times more present in media reports, the corruption issue has become more salient over the past decade in all of Central and East Europe. Grigorescu’s findings cover the period up to 2004 but any close inspection of the region’s news media and scholarly articles reveals that the trend has not subsided since then.

The increase in frequency and media coverage of corruption in the region since the late 90s coincides with the initial rise of Eurosceptic and populist parties in the region. The progressive increase in perceptions of corruption and the decreased trust in domestic politicians and political

parties can serve as a trigger for making citizens susceptible to the appeal of protest parties. It is in this political environment that mainstream party convergence becomes more strongly linked to electoral behaviour. Political corruption can act as a catalyst which, once unleashed in a setting where mainstream party convergence has become noticeable, can lead to changes in the dynamics of inter-party competition and electoral behaviour. Moreover, empirical evidence indicates that even in cases where corruption has actually declined in absolute terms, citizens' perception and the media paint a picture of corruption either remaining "intolerably high" or having worsened over time (Andreev, 2008; Holmes, 2003; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006).

For the purposes of investigating the factors that drive disenchanted citizens to vote for a range of protest parties, perceptions of corruption need to be thoroughly examined as a key contributing factor to a protest vote. For purely populist parties the corruption issue is at the very core of their platforms but perceptions of corruption should also play a key role in explaining support for the mixed category of populist/Eurosceptic parties. This effect should be the strongest when coupled with perceptions of high mainstream party similarity. In addition, it is possible that the effect of mainstream party similarity is conditional on corruption perceptions and has the strongest effect on voting behaviour when an individual perceives a high degree of political corruption in the country.

In accordance with the theory of individual voting behaviour developed above, the following propositions can be deduced:

H1: Citizens who perceive a higher degree of similarity between mainstream political parties would be more likely to vote for populist and mixed political parties.

H2: Citizens who perceive a higher degree of political corruption in the country will be more likely to vote for populist and mixed political parties.

H3: Citizens who have a less favorable view of EU membership or European integration will be more likely to vote for purely Eurosceptic political parties.

While proposition H1 predicts an independent effect of mainstream party convergence, it is also possible that low levels of mainstream party convergence would not be that consequential yet as to color citizens' vote choice. Therefore, an alternative proposition considers the conditional effect of this process – namely, mainstream party convergence can become an important determinant of vote choice when an individual's perceptions of corruption have reached a certain higher than average level. In other words, the idea that "parties are all the same" begins to matter only when "sameness" implies a negative evaluation such as corruption.

H4: Citizens who perceive a higher degree of similarity between mainstream political parties and perceive a higher level of corruption in the country will be more likely to vote for populist and mixed political parties.

As explained in this section, I expect that the determinants of electoral Euroscepticism and those of value-based Euroscepticism will differ substantially. What is meant here by "value-based" Euroscepticism is simply the genuine attitude towards EU and European integration as measured by direct survey questions as opposed to vote choice. Some electoral Eurosceptics may, in fact, be potentially *more* likely to support the EU as an alternative to the corrupt and disliked political elite domestically. However, this study's primary focus is electoral Euroscepticism and the theoretical foundations of value-based Euroscepticism will not be explored in greater detail. What this study demonstrates is that the determinants of value-based Euroscepticism do differ from those of electoral Euroscepticism.

In addition to the role of mainstream party convergence and perceptions of corruption, the analysis presented in the next section does of course take account of the traditional sets of explanations for views on the European Union. This study is agnostic as to whether utilitarian or identity-based (or both) groups of factors are consistent predictors of Eurosceptic attitudes. I expect, however, that these

factors are more likely to be systematically related to the value-based, not the electoral, expressions of Euroscepticism.

Data and Methods

For the purposes of testing the theory developed here I conducted a survey of public opinion in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. The survey consists of a random sample of 700 individuals of voting age per country for a total of 1400 respondents. These two countries were chosen for a variety of reasons. One of them entered the European Union in 2004 as one of the front-runners, the other was delayed until 2007 due to deficiencies in terms of curbing corruption and organized crime and reforming the judicial system. Thus, the survey ensures that results will not be biased on the basis of the timing of EU accession and, by extension, the degree of progress in fulfilling the accession criteria. Second, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic provide the necessary range of types of protest parties. Bulgaria has experienced the rise of populist parties in the last few elections and a lower degree of public Euroscepticism. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, has encountered less populism but has had strong Eurosceptic parties. Therefore, by combining the surveys from these two countries, it is possible to acquire a comprehensive range of Euroscepticism and populism.

In order to test citizens' motivations for picking Eurosceptic and populist parties, I conduct a series of statistical tests on the likelihood of voting for a type of protest party. The main dependent variable, therefore, is a standard vote choice measure about whether the respondent voted for a Eurosceptic party or not; and whether he/she voted for a populist/mixed party in the other set of hypotheses. Given the dichotomous nature of these variables, I use logistical regressions to estimate the models.

Key Independent Variables:

Perceived Similarity of Mainstream Parties: This is a measure aimed to capture the degree to which citizens perceive mainstream parties to be all the same. It is measured by the following survey question:

Here are some commonly cited distinctions between political parties in this country. Please place each of the following political parties on a scale from 1 to 10.

1. Views on the communist regime
2. Market versus government-managed economy.
3. Urban versus rural
4. Pro versus against European integration
5. Ethnic lines.
- 6 Other distinction lines (please name)

The largest distance between a respondent's placements is taken on each issue and then averaged across the issue to arrive at the final estimator of perceived party similarity. The final scale ranges from 1 to 10 where 10 equals the highest similarity. This survey question was asked fairly early in the survey due to its somewhat more complex nature to ensure that respondents were more likely to pay attention to their choices.

In addition to this measure, the survey also utilizes a split-sample technique to gauge citizens' perceptions of how similar parties are to one another. At the beginning of the interview, the respondents in half of the sample were asked a more direct question aimed to capture the notion of mainstream party similarity:

Consider the following political parties (list mainstream parties). To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “Political parties like this are all the same”

The second half of the sample was asked an identical question, with the exception that this time the list of parties also included all non-mainstream parties. The goal of this technique is to compare the means from the two samples. If the respondents who were given mainstream parties only tend to perceive a higher level of similarity than the respondents who were given a full list of the parties, we can infer that the difference is due to the effect of different perceptions towards non-mainstream parties.

Perceptions of Political Corruption: A standard straightforward way of measuring perceptions of political corruption in the comparative context involves the answers to the following question:

How widespread do you think bribe-taking and corruption is in this country?

1. Almost no public officials are engaged in it.
2. A few public officials are engaged in it.
3. Most public officials are engaged in it.
4. Almost all public officials are engaged in it.

Attitudes towards Europe: This variable aims to capture the European dimension of a protest vote. As Abts, Heerwegh and Swyngedouw (2009) have pointed out, attitude-based Euroscepticism is frequently theorized about as a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, while at the same time measured by a single indicator. This disjuncture creates the potential for measurement error through the simplistic measurement of support/opposition for the EU. In order to avoid this pitfall, the current study constructs a multi-dimensional index of attitudes towards the EU based upon 4 dimensions: membership, image, trust and identity. For a full description of the questions used to construct each dimension, see Appendix A.

Findings

Before describing the results from testing the aforementioned hypotheses, I present some of the more interesting descriptive information gained from the survey. This will help illustrate some general political and social trends and provide the first glimpse into citizens’ attitudes.

Who Are the Protest Voters?

The typical protest voter is dissatisfied with domestic political and economic performance; does not trust the institutions of the state; worries about crime, corruption and the economy; watches a lot of news programmes; is not a proponent of ethnic diversity in principle but does not disproportionately blame minorities and/or immigrants for society’s problems. He/she is supportive of EU membership and sees the EU in a positive light, but does not claim to know a lot about the European Union. He/she tends to place a lot of importance on the personality of a party leader. He or she tends to be fairly interested in politics but does not believe that he/she can have much influence on government policies. This is a simple snapshot of the average protest voter but more nuanced information will be provided below.

Cross-tabs of key variables from the survey indicate protest voters tend to be more dissatisfied with both political and economic developments in their country. 68% of protest voters find the economic situation in their country to be unsatisfactory¹, as compared to 46% of mainstream voters. Interestingly, however, there is no major difference between the number of mainstream and protest voters unhappy with their personal economic situation – 67% of protest voters and 64% of mainstream

¹ For the purposes of the cross-tabs, the economic satisfaction scales have been dichotomized where satisfactory = a score of 6 or higher and unsatisfactory equal a score of 5 or lower.

voters gave their household economic situation a score of 5 or lower. Protest voters are more pessimistic about the future, with only 34% of them predicting an improvement in their personal economic situation in 5 years, while 49% of mainstream voters predicted a slight improvement.

There was no difference in terms of age, education, income or gender for the basic cross-tabs. Protest-voters are both male and female, 56% of them have post-secondary education (similarly, 59% of mainstream voters also do), their self-reported income distribution does not exhibit any major differences from the general sample. These demographic characteristics coupled with the economic indicators discussed above suggest that while protest and mainstream voters have similar economic and educational backgrounds, protest voters are more likely to be pessimistic about the future and about the state of the national economy.

This pessimism also manifests itself when it comes to the political arena. While level of trust in the major institutions of the regime (courts, parties, parliament, president, police, army) was low throughout the sample (mean of 3.4 on a scale of 1 to 10), it was twice as low among protest voters as it was among mainstream voters. In addition, 76% of protest voters claimed that “almost all public officials” engage in corruption compared to 46% of mainstream voters. Respondents were also asked to rate each political party in terms of perceived corruption which yielded interesting results. The mean for both groups of parties is similar – 6.5 for the mainstream, 7 for the non-mainstream ones. However, 57% of protest voters tend to give mainstream parties a corruption score of 6 or higher, while only 37% of mainstream voters do so. Similarly, 52% of mainstream voters tend to give protest parties an average corruption score of 6 or higher as compared to 32% of protest voters. Perceptions of corruption, therefore, may also be an influencing factor for mainstream voters.

The salience of corruption perceptions is also manifested by the responses to the “biggest problem facing the country” question. 72% of respondents named corruption as either their first or second choice of biggest problem. The economic situation was most frequently cited as problem number 1, while the spread of corruption in society was most frequently cited as problem 2, followed closely by the spread of crime.

Protest voters are, on average, more interested in politics. 63% of them scored 6 or higher on the “interest in politics” scale as compared to 43% of mainstream voters. The majority of both protest and mainstream voters seem to get their information on politics from television programmes rather than newspapers or the internet. More than half of each sub-group watches news or political programmes on TV daily, while the majority in each case reads the newspaper “a couple of times a week” and visits news websites on the internet “once in a while”. There seems to be a connection between the news media and corruption perceptions as well. 54% of the people who either watch the news or read a newspaper daily tend to respond that “almost all government officials are corrupt” while only 37% of the more infrequent “once in a while” readers and viewers have similar views.

When it comes to party similarity, there is evidence to suggest that there are differences in terms of the two groups of parties and voters. Protest voters have higher averages on the party similarity index. 57% of these respondents had a mainstream party similarity score of 6 or higher, while only 23% of them scored that high on the similarity of non-mainstream parties. Of all respondents in the sample who scored 6 or higher on the mainstream similarity measure, 65% also had above average corruption perceptions. People who scored high on the mainstream party similarity scale also had lower institutional trust than people who perceive parties as more distinct. However, low scorers on the mainstream similarity scale exhibited higher social trust on one of the indicators. 67% of their group tended to trust “most people you know” but only 36% tended to trust “most people in this country”. Respondents who scored lower than average on the mainstream party similarity measure also had low institutional trust (mean of 3.8).

Results from the split-sample experiment are supportive of the theory presented in this study. Respondents who were presented with a list of mainstream political parties only and asked about the extent to which they agree with the statement “these political parties are all the same” averaged 7.5 on a 10 point scale. Their counterparts in the other half of the sample were presented with a list of mainstream and protest parties and asked the same question. The average score in their case was 4.5. A simple intuitive response to a non-invasive question thus shows that when thinking about protest-based parties, voters tend to automatically see greater differences than when thinking only about the

political mainstream. This finding confirms the existence of the party similarity phenomenon when it comes to citizens' perceptions.

Finally, in terms of their attitudes towards the European Union, protest voters do not differ substantially from mainstream voters. 65% of protest voters have a higher than average view of the EU's image and 68% of mainstream voters feel the same way. Mainstream voters have slightly higher scores on identification with Europe – 12% mention it as their first choice and 53% as their second; for protest voters the respective percentages are 7% and 46%. Less than 10% in each subgroup see unwanted consequences of EU membership as the largest or second largest problem facing the country at present. From the group of people who do not support EU membership or have a negative image of the EU, 67% say they know little about the EU (score of 5 or lower). Respondents opposing membership also tend to evaluate their economic situation in more negative terms than supporters, they support ethnic diversity to a smaller extent and, in the Bulgarian sub-sample, they tend to have more negative views of national minorities.

Testing H1-H4

Table 2 presents the results from the first two models designed to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 4. The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the respondent voted for a populist or a mixed party and estimations have been conducted using a logistical regression. As indicated by Model 1, there is strong support for hypotheses 1 and 2. The coefficients for mainstream party similarity and perceived corruption are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Citizens who perceive a higher degree of similarity between mainstream political parties are more likely to cast a vote for populist or mixed political parties. Similarly, the likelihood of voting for these types of parties increases as people perceive a higher degree of corruption among public officials in their country. Attitudes towards the EU, as measured by the composite scale, are not significantly correlated with the dependent variable, thus lending support to the theoretical proposition that voting for parties that have both populist and Eurosceptic strands in them is equivalent to voting for purely populist parties *and* caused largely by dissatisfaction with the domestic political system rather than a particular sentiment towards the European Union.

Table 2: Determinants of Voting for Populist and Mixed (Eurosceptic + Populist) Parties

	Model 1	Model 2
Mainstream Party Similarity	0.779 * (0.339)	0.078 * (0.082)
Perceptions of corruption	0.824*** (0.216)	0.698 * (0.427)
EU Attitudes	0.281 (0.185)	0.251 (0.164)
Democratic Values	0.159 (0.167)	0.139 (0.123)
Minority Attitudes	- 0.028 (0.042)	- 0.009 (0.047)
Ideology (nationalist)	-0.213 (0.265)	-0.202 (0.245)
Economic Satisfaction	-0.567*** (0.106)	-0.577*** (0.212)
Media Exposure	0.385 ** (0.132)	0.385** (0.134)
Religiosity	0.262 (0.358)	0.261 (0.348)
Institutional Trust	-0.262 * (0.108)	-0.258 * (0.103)
Social Trust	-0.682 *	-0.683 *

	(0.259)	(0.259)
Age	0.283 (0.291)	0.283 (0.291)
Gender	-0.026 (0.013)	-0.049 (0.046)
Education	0.056 (0.082)	0.054 (0.082)
Income	0.533 (0.488)	0.534 (0.488)
Party Similarity x Corruption Perceptions		0.028 *** (0.009)
Constant	5.481 (3.269)	5.397 (1.442)
N	1208	1208
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R ²	0.1973	0.1326
Log Likelihood	-133.25	-142.45

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

*indicates statistical significance with 90% or greater confidence

**indicates statistical significance with 95% or greater confidence

***indicates statistical significance with 99% or greater confidence

A few of the control variables also achieve statistical significance in Model 1. Unsurprisingly, economic satisfaction affects vote choice. The more satisfied a person is with their economic situation, the less likely he or she is to vote for a protest party. Institutional trust is negatively correlated with the dependent variable. As individuals tend to trust their political institutions less, they are also more likely to vote for protest parties of the populist and mixed type. This finding is largely consistent with the theoretical expectations outlined in this study. Interestingly, social trust – measured by the degree to which a respondent trusts their friends and other people in the country – is also statistically significant suggesting that people who trust their fellow citizens are less likely to cast a protest vote.

Finally, the media also seems to be influencing the protest vote. Results indicate that as media exposure increases, so does the likelihood of voting for a populist or mixed party. A possible way to account for this relationship is that the news media often tends to have sensationalist overtones and thus stresses the flaws in the system. Stories of corruption abound in both print and television. Therefore, it is possible that being exposed to a lot of this information increases one's belief that the political class is corrupt and incompetent.

Since logit models do not allow for substantive interpretation of the size of the coefficients, I have also estimated predicted probabilities for key variables. The probabilities for Model 1 are presented in Table 3 below. As we can see, both mainstream party similarity and corruption perceptions have a strong influence on the odds of voting for a populist or mixed party, all else being held constant. An individual who claims that “almost all public officials” are corrupt would, for example, have a nearly double the likelihood of choosing a protest party than an individual who chooses the previous category: “a few public officials” engage in corruption. Similarly, one standard deviation increase in the perception of mainstream party similarity raises the likelihood of voting for populist or mixed parties by 41%.

Table 3 Predicted Probabilities for Key Variables in Model 1

Situation ^a	% Probability of Voting for Populist or Mixed Parties		
	Min Value	Mean Value	Max Value
Mainstream Party Similarity	4%	42%	52%
Perceptions of corruption	5%	47%	68%
Media Exposure	12%	35%	44%
Institutional Trust	9%	19%	27%
Social Trust	12%	16%	21%
Media Exposure ^b	2%	12%	16%
Social Trust ^c	19%	43%	49%

a- All the variables are held at their means except the variables listed.

b- Perceptions of corruption held at 1 or 2, institutional trust held at 6 or higher.

c- Perceptions of corruption held at 1 or 2, institutional trust held at 6 or higher, mainstream party similarity held at 4 or lower.

From the control variables which achieve significance, it should be noted that media exposure does seem to be a stronger than expected predictor of voting for a protest party. A one point increase in level of media exposure raises the likelihood of voting for a protest party by an average of 35%. In order to better understand this effect, I estimated the predicted probability of media exposure when holding corruption perceptions at Low (variable = 1 or 2) and institutional trust at High (variable = 6 or higher). The predicted probability of voting for a protest party as a result of media exposure drops to 12% which lends some support to the idea that the media's focus on the negative "news-making" items has some priming effect on individuals' perceptions of the political system.

The second model in Table 2 creates an interaction term between mainstream party similarity and perceptions of corruption. For a more straightforward interpretation of the findings, I have collapsed these variables into fewer categories. Both Corruption Perceptions and Mainstream Party Similarity are divided into High and Low. Results from the model are, in general, similar to those of Model 1. However, the magnitude of the substantive effects differs. Mainstream party similarity and perceptions of corruption have an effect on the dependent variable both independently and as a joint factor.

The predicted probabilities presented in Table 4 show a slightly more nuanced picture. We see that when corruption perceptions are low, mainstream party similarity has a much smaller substantive effect. It increases the likelihood of voting for a populist or mixed party by 11%. When mainstream party similarity is held at low levels, however, perceptions of corruption still raise the odds of choosing a protest party by 39%. This suggests that the effect of mainstream party similarity is somewhat dependent on how citizens perceive these parties' behaviour. If corruption perceptions and institutional distrust were reduced to a lower level, the narrowing down of the political issue space as a result of mainstream party convergence would likely not be nearly as influential on vote choice. In terms of control variables, there are no notable differences between Model 1 and Model 2.

Table 4 Predicted Probabilities for Key Variables in Model 2

Situation ^a	% Probability of Voting for Populist or Mixed Parties		
	Min Value	Mean Value	Max Value
Mainstream Party Similarity ^b	4%	11%	19%
Perceptions of Corruption ^c	22%	38%	44%
Perceptions of Corruption when Mainstream Party Similarity set at High	33%	58%	71%
Mainstream Party Similarity when Perceptions of Corruption set at High	36%	51%	63%
Media Exposure	16%	32%	39%
Institutional Trust	910%	25%	31%
Social Trust	6%	14%	19%

a- All the variables are held at their means except the variables listed.

b- Perceptions of corruption held at Low (1 or 2)

c- Party Similarity held at Low (4 or smaller)

The next set of tests presented in Table 5 aims to test the likelihood of voting for a purely Eurosceptic party. The dependent variable is again a dichotomous estimator of whether an individual voted for this type of party or not. The exact same set of explanatory factors is used to model the determinants of a Eurosceptic vote. Model 1 indicates that there is support for hypothesis 3 as attitudes towards the EU are this time statistically significant and negatively correlated with the dependent variable. The higher an individual's support for the EU and European integration, the lower the probability that they would cast a vote for a purely Eurosceptic party. The other key independent variables – Mainstream Party Similarity and Perceptions of Corruption also achieve statistical significance and, much like in the previous set of models, are positively correlated with a protest vote.

From the predicted probabilities reported in Table 6, however, we can see that their effect is much smaller than before. A one point increase in corruption perceptions, decreases the likelihood of voting Eurosceptic by 17%, while the same increase in mainstream party similarity raises the odds by 13%. A person whose support for the EU goes up by 1 point, on the other hand, becomes 38% less likely to pick a purely Eurosceptic party. This effect is further boosted when one holds corruption perceptions and mainstream party similarity at their low levels. In this case, a one unit increase in negative evaluations of the EU raises the likelihood of voting Eurosceptic by 59%. This suggests that the underlying motivations of voting for a purely Eurosceptic party are indeed based upon views of the EU, but their effect is often muted by domestic considerations.

Table 5 Determinants of Voting for a Eurosceptic Party

	Model 1	Model 2
Mainstream Party Similarity	0.311 * (0.155)	0.589 (0.491)
Perceptions of Corruption	-0.723 * (0.337)	-0.456 (0.392)
EU Attitudes	-0.540 * (0.234)	-0.543 * (0.232)
Democratic Values	0.303 (0.312)	0.347 (0.312)
Minority Attitudes	-0.389 (0.392)	-0.297 (0.392)

Ideology (nationalist)	0.219 (0.199)	0.223 (0.205)
Economic Satisfaction	-0.766* (0.521)	-0.789* (0.510)
Media Exposure	-0.488 * (0.212)	-0.442 * (0.210)
Religiosity	-0.674 (0.529)	-0.675 (0.532)
Institutional Trust	0.773 (0.754)	0.763 (0.764)
Social Trust	-0.873 * (0.432)	-0.846 * (0.421)
Age	0.092 (0.073)	0.111 (0.094)
Gender	0.274 (0.166)	0.274 (0.167)
Education	0.969 (0.901)	0.992 (0.912)
Income	0.737 (0.625)	0.736 (0.640)
Party Similarity x Corruption Perceptions		0.757* (0.320)
Constant	11.348 (3.162)	13.186 (5.638)
N	1208	1208
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0048
Pseudo R ²	0.1009	0.2326
Log Likelihood	-698.212	-745.564

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

*indicates statistical significance with 90% or greater confidence

**indicates statistical significance with 95% or greater confidence

***indicates statistical significance with 99% or greater confidence

Table 6 Predicted Probabilities for Key Variables in Model 1

Situation^a	% Probability of Voting for Eurosceptic Parties		
	Min Value	Mean Value	Max Value
Mainstream Party Similarity	4%	13%	22%
Perceptions of Corruption	5%	17%	21%
EU Attitudes	47%	38%	23%
Media Exposure	7%	29%	36%
EU Attitudes ^b	69%	59%	23%
Social Trust ^c	36%	24%	11%

a- All the variables are held at their means except the variables listed.

b- Perceptions of corruption held at Low, Mainstream Party Similarity held at Low

c-

The control variables in this model also produce some interesting results. Similar to before, social trust reduces the likelihood of a protest vote. The media again seems to have an influence on vote choice, but in the opposite direction. Increasing one's media exposure by 1 point *reduces* the

likelihood of voting Eurosceptic by 29%. While I do not have a detailed explanation of this effect, one possibility is that the European Union is, on the whole, much more positively portrayed in the media than are domestic institutions. The negative effect that the media has on how one views the national government may automatically translate into support for the EU as citizens need an alternative to what they may perceive as an inadequate domestic political class.

Model 2 in Table 5 adds some additional clarity to the picture. Here I have included the interaction variable between mainstream party similarity and corruption perceptions. Through this model specification, we see that the independent effects of each of these two factors disappear. In other words, when corruption levels are held at Low, mainstream party similarity does not systematically affect a Eurosceptic vote. When mainstream party similarity is held at Low, perceptions of corruption are not a significant determinant of a Eurosceptic vote either. However, from this model and its associated predicted probabilities in Table 7, we see that each of these variables preserves its effect when the other is set at high levels. Thus, when mainstream party similarity is seen as high, perceptions of corruption increase the likelihood of a Eurosceptic vote by 23%. When corruption perceptions are high, mainstream party similarity raises the odds of voting Eurosceptic by 17%. The effect of EU attitudes remains almost the same as in the previously discussed model.

Table 7 Predicted Probabilities for Key Variables in Model 2

Situation ^a	% Probability of Voting for Eurosceptic Parties		
	Min Value	Mean Value	Max Value
EU Attitudes	53%	40%	12%
Media Exposure	9%	30%	38%
Perceptions of Corruption when Mainstream Party Similarity set at High	4%	23%	31%
Mainstream Party Similarity when Perceptions of Corruption set at High	6%	17%	23%
EU Attitudes ^b	71%	59%	9%
Social Trust	38%	25%	11%

a- All the variables are held at their means except the variables listed.

b- C Perceptions of corruption held at Low, Mainstream Party Similarity held at Low

What these results suggest is that when it comes to electoral Euroscepticism and populism, domestic considerations are indeed a key explanatory factory. Both of the key independent variables were found influential, to varying degrees, on vote choice for protest parties. Nonetheless, the findings also demonstrate that this effect is sometimes conditional – mainstream party similarity, in particular, seems to increase the odds of a protest vote mostly when combined with high corruption perceptions. Results also point to the existence of underlying views on the EU, the effect of which becomes much stronger when domestic dissatisfaction is reduced to a lower level. Finally, social and institutional trust, as well as exposure to the media, were all found to be among the determinants of a protest vote.

While the previous models were concerned with electoral Euroscepticism, the final part of the individual-level section looks at value-based Euroscepticism. The theory developed here argues that these two do not operate in the same way and have different determinants. The dependent variable in this case is support for the EU, ranging from 1 to 10. Given the nature of this variable, a standard OLS model can be used. Findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 Determinants of Attitudes towards the European Union

Independent Variable	OLS Estimates
Mainstream Party Similarity	0.033 (0.027)
Perceptions of Corruption	0.243 * (0.111)
Knowledge of the EU	0.523 * (0.234)
Democratic Values	-0.052 (0.157)
Minority Attitudes	-0.250 (0.204)
Media Exposure	0.102* (0.049)
Religiosity	-0.003 (0.007)
Institutional Trust	0.214 (0.165)
Social Trust	0.094 * (0.043)
Age	-0.036 * (0.012)
Gender	0.354 (0.344)
Education	0.202 * (0.099)
Income	0.119 (0.121)
Economic Satisfaction	0.156 * (0.073)
Ideology (Nationalist)	-0.289 ** (0.103)
Constant	12.934 ** (2.213)
N	1208
Adjusted R ²	0.0000
F	17.06

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

*indicates statistical significance with 90% or greater confidence

**indicates statistical significance with 95% or greater confidence

***indicates statistical significance with 99% or greater confidence

Breusch-Pagan test = 6.03 (critical value for 95% = 10.14)

The theory predicted that citizens' perceptions of mainstream party similarity and political corruption will not be systematically related to the existence (or absence) of Eurosceptic views. Mainstream party similarity is indeed not significantly related to the explanatory variable. This result suggests that value-based Euroscepticism and electoral Euroscepticisms are largely a product of different underlying causes and that voters do not tend to attribute to the EU the faults that they find in

domestic political parties.

In the case of corruption perceptions, we see that they do still play a role. As individuals tend to perceive domestic politicians as more dishonest and blame-worthy, they evaluate the EU more positively. A one unit increase in perceived corruption domestically increases one's support for the EU by 0.23 points. It should be noted, however, that for this relationship splitting the sample revealed that the substantive effect of corruption perceptions on Eurosceptic views is much smaller in the Czech Republic which joined in 2004 than in Bulgaria which joined in 2007 and was still regularly monitored. The more vocal the EU is as a corruption "watch-dog", the more citizens tend to see it as an alternative to the inefficiencies of domestic governments.

These findings clearly paint a picture where value-based Euroscepticism is a different phenomenon than electoral Euroscepticism. Socioeconomics, cost-benefit analysis, attachment to the nation-state are all factors found to be unrelated to electoral Euroscepticism but as the above tests demonstrated, they are all predictors of value-based Euroscepticism. On the other hand, factors related to the domestic political system such as perceptions of corruption, mainstream party similarity, institutional trust all have much stronger and more systematic effects on vote choice but not necessarily on support for the EU.

Conclusion

This paper tested a series of hypotheses regarding the individual-level determinants of two varieties of Euroscepticism. The first type of Euroscepticism manifests itself electorally in the platforms of either mixed or purely Eurosceptic parties. The second is simply the genuine views and attitudes of citizens towards the EU and European integration. The survey analysis revealed a lot about the nature and motivations of protest voters. I was able to confirm my key prediction that electoral Euroscepticism is, to a large extent, a factor of attitudes towards the domestic political system. These factors include dissatisfaction with corruption among public officials, with the convergence of mainstream political parties to the point of being too alike, and with the national political institutions.

This finding has implications for both the general literature on voting behaviour and for the study and practice of European politics. In terms of electoral behaviour, the East European protest voters can be conceived as 'insincere' voters sending a message to their political elites. Insincere voting has been found to occur in three cases – when citizens want to avoid wasting their vote on small parties (Cox, 1997; Duch and Palmer, 2002), when they want to moderate policy outputs through split ticket voting (Fiorina, 1992; Alesina and Rosenthal, 1995), and when they want to send a message to candidates by voting insincerely in low-profile elections (Meiowitz and Tucker, 2007). The type of insincere Eurosceptic voters presented here, however, do not fall neatly into these categories. In fact, they are more likely to vote for initially small parties with fringe agendas and their votes are likely to polarize rather than simply moderate policy. This behaviour is exhibited in high profile as well as low profile elections and serves as punishment aimed at the whole class of mainstream parties rather than simply a message to the current office-holders.

Insincere Eurosceptics represent both good and bad news for European integration. The type of Eurosceptic voters examined here are not actively seeking to undermine the European project and often have favourable views of European integration. They pick protest parties because of their populist anti-mainstream appeal rather than the European dimension. Future EU enlargements, however, would benefit from a more politicized approach to accession as moderate Euroscepticism among mainstream formations would diminish public perceptions that parties have grown too similar in their race to membership. Ironically, the more EU policies are contested in their nascence, the less likely a future backlash of protest-based Euroscepticism becomes. Contestation brings legitimacy to the political system regardless of the policy eventually enacted and decreases the options of fringe actors for capturing dissatisfied voters. Contestation, of course, comes at a price, as it makes policies more difficult to implement but the appeal of EU membership is still large enough for the public in most (potential) candidate states to be permanently swayed by a hard Eurosceptic stance. The "insincere" Eurosceptics want to be part of European integration but they also want political parties to give them the option to say 'no' to a given policy.

In addition, the study's findings on a number of control variables pose some interesting new

questions. Understanding whether and why people who have higher interpersonal trust tend to be less susceptible to populist and Eurosceptic messages has important social psychological implications for the study of the relationship between personality and mass political behaviour. Similarly, media effects have recently become the subject of growing interest as people are constantly exposed to a variety of conflicting information. Given the complex legal and decision-making structure of the European Union, citizens are even more likely to count on media shortcuts for informing their views. This study provides some preliminary findings that media effects are present when it comes to affecting the popularity of non-mainstream parties as well as attitudes towards the European Union.

Appendix A: Coding of Variables

Attitudes towards the EU

The following four survey questions were used to construct the index:

1. On a scale of 1-10, would you say that your country's membership in the EU is a:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Bad thing							Good thing		

2. On a scale of 1-10, does the EU invoke for you a positive or negative image?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very negative			Moderate				Very positive		

3. With which of the following do you most closely identify yourself? And which do you identify with secondly?

- a. My ethnic group
- b. Local community or city in which I live
- c. Region
- d. Country:
- e. Europe
- f. Other

4. To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions to look after your interests? Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 for no trust at all and 10 great trust.

1. Courts
2. Political Parties
3. Army
4. Parliament
4. Police
5. President
6. Trade Unions
7. Church
8. Media
9. Most people in this country
10. Most people you know.
11. European Union

The first two questions have both been used by previous Eurobarometer surveys and have established validity for estimating overall support for European integration. I used both of them in the survey because support for membership has been criticized to underestimate the degree of Euroscepticism as individuals can generally support their country's membership but nonetheless feel strongly dissatisfied with the direction of European integration or specific policies of the EU. Therefore, asking about the general "image" of the EU can provide a more nuanced picture. The final index ranges from 1 to 10 where 1 indicates the least support and 10 indicates the highest.

Control Variables

Knowledge of the EU: The study also uses a measure of self-reported level of knowledge on the EU to capture the possibility that a Eurosceptic vote is a function of the distant and complex nature of the EU and the difficulty ordinary citizens have in understanding its institutions and policies. Studies have theorized that "since the EU's institutions and agendas are neither easily understood nor easily embraced by the media, national leaders and communities in the new EU Member States, the people face serious problems if they want to identify themselves with the European project"(Butora, 2007). Respondents' perceptions of how well they know the EU are thus used in the analysis to control for these effects.

On a scale of 1 to 10 how much do you feel you know about the European Union?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A great deal					Nothing at all				

Attitudes towards Minorities: instituting stricter minority protection laws has been a key aspect of EU conditionality. Studies have shown that European institutions “have been significant, active participants in shaping domestic policy on ethnic issues” (Kelley, 2004). Consequently, many of the mixed Eurosceptic-populist movements subscribe to a far-right nationalist anti-minority agenda. While this variable is measuring, at its core, a nationalist sentiment, its effects can also be more readily ascribed to the direct anti-EU ideology. As government compliance with minority rights criteria has been a visible and politically contentious issue, voters are likely to conceive the extension of extra benefits to allegedly unworthy minorities as an EU-imposed reform.

The following three survey questions are used to measure citizens’ attitudes towards minorities:

1. Do you think any of these pose a real threat to peace and security in this society?

1. National minorities in our society
2. Immigrants from other societies.
3. Neighbouring countries.
4. Other countries (ask “which one(s)” if respondent picks this option)
5. Terrorist groups.

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, please indicate your position on the following issues:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ethnic diversity erodes a country’s unity					Ethnic diversity enriches life				

3. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing the country at present? And what is the second most important problem facing the country at present?

1. The poor economic situation
2. The spread of corruption in society
3. The spread of crime in society
4. The loss of decision-making power and erosion of national identity after entry into the EU
5. Increasing influence of minority groups
6. Rise of radical religious movements
7. The poor condition of the environment
8. Decay of moral values in society
9. Other (please name).

As far as the first question is concerned, for the purposes of this variable, respondents are coded 1 if they selected national minorities as a source of threat for the country and 0 otherwise. The second question is a straightforward scale ranging from 1 to 10 as to respondents' general sentiments on ethnic diversity. In the case of the third question, respondents are coded 1 if they picked “increasing influence of minority groups” as either their first or second choice of the biggest problem facing the country. Since these 3 questions all provide ways to get at individual’s perceptions of and attitudes towards minorities, the variables are aggregated into an additive scale of minority attitudes for the rest of the analysis.

Democratic Values: another possible explanation for voting for a protest party can be based upon values such as authoritarianism. People who possess these values would be much more likely to oppose the European Union on principled grounds. Thus, opposition to democratic norms may be the driving force to explain the outcome of interest. Respondents were presented with two questions related to

authoritarian values. These are: “Some people say that we would be better off if we get rid of Parliament and elections and have a strong leader who can decide everything. What do you think” and “With which of the following statements do you agree the most? 1. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government 2. Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one 3. For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime”. Following previous studies (Ehin, 2001) an index was created to capture the effect of authoritarian values.

Political Ideology: the question presents respondents with 7 choices: pro-market, social democratic, communist, national traditions, environmentalist, other, or none. People who subscribe to either communist or the “national traditions” type of self-described ideology could be more likely to vote Eurosceptic since EU values are in complete contradiction with the former ideology and somewhat incompatible with the latter. Moreover, Eurosceptic parties frequently also have a nationalist dimension and call for stronger representation of the national interest in negotiations with Brussels. The variable has been split into dummy variables for each category and in the interest of brevity only the category of nationalist ideology has been presented in the results tables as this is the only category that reached significance in one of the models.

Media exposure: this measure aims to capture the possible influence that the news media has on political views of citizens. The media exposure variable is a scale achieved by multiplying exposure to the media by trust in the media in order to capture a more comprehensive media effect. As previously discussed, the salience of the corruption problem in the media has increased over the last decade at a faster rate than the actual corruption levels as measured by official statistics. The mass media’s preoccupation with corruption issues is likely to induce a “priming” effect upon individuals receiving the message.

Institutional and social trust: the institutional trust measure averages the level of trust indicated by respondents in the key institutions of the political system – courts, political parties, army, parliament and president. These are the main political bodies comprising the political system of a modern democracy and an indication of low overall trust in those could imply a greater disillusionment with the political process. The social trust variable has a similar function when it comes to people instead of institutions. Respondents were asked the extent to which they trust “most people in this country” and “most people you know”. There does not seem to be a straightforward reasons why social trust should be related to either Euroscepticism or populism but it is possible that people who extend their trust to strangers in their own country would be more likely to extend this trust to strangers outside of their country and thus be more open to the idea of European integration. Alternatively, however, a strong trust in one’s fellow citizens may indicate the opposite trend – that the respondent identifies with, and is strongly attached to, his or her nationality and is more likely to be suspicious of anyone falling outside the national in-group.

Religiosity. while there are no immediate reasons to assume religion may be associated with higher or lower support for populist parties, a few studies have explored the connection between religious denomination and Euroscepticism. Boomgaarden and Freire (2009)’s comprehensive analysis concludes that religion matters for explaining Euroscepticism at the macro-level but has little, if any, impact at the individual level. In addition to simply subscribing to a given denomination, it is possible that the level of an individual's involvement with religious activities has a greater influence on their views towards the EU. In these cases, higher religiosity may be related to anti-immigrant or anti-minority views which could indirectly affect views on the European Union. In order to control for these effects, a measure of religious denomination and religiosity is included in the analysis. For the sake of parsimony, the results reported in the tables further below will only include the religiosity control variable. However, all the models have additionally been estimated substituting religiosity with religious denomination. Whether one is an Orthodox Christian, Catholic or non-believer did not have a significant impact on any of the outcomes analyzed in this study.

Socioeconomic factors (Age, Gender, Income, Education). Previous studies have hypothesized that younger people, as well as the more educated are more likely to express support for their country's membership of the EU since they possess more pronounced post-materialist values (De Graaf, 1996; McLaren, 2002). Therefore, if support for the EU is a predictor of both purely Eurosceptic and mixed vote, we should see age and education being positively related to these categories. Other work has highlighted the existence of a "gender gap" in support for the EU (Nelsen and Guth 2000), and a dummy variable for gender will be included.

Controlling for level of income, on the other hand, is designed to capture a more utilitarian aspect of attitudes towards EU membership. Theories explaining individual-level variation in attitudes towards the EU have argued that people who are worse off under the current political conditions are more likely to be doubtful about EU membership. Most existing studies have used standard socio-economic characteristics, such as income and education, as proxies for individual competitiveness (Anderson and Reichert 1996, Gabel 1998). This effect should manifest itself through a significant relationship between individual economic situation and voting Eurosceptic. While the study does include a self-reported measure of how the respondents perceive their personal economic situation and the state of the national economy, controlling for income accounts for objective effects of class differences.

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