

# **Politicizing Europe in Hard Times**

## **Conflicts over Europe in France in a Long-Term Perspective, 1974-2012**

*Swen Hutter and Alena Kerscher*

University of Munich

*Accepted version*

### **Abstract**

This article examines whether and how the Euro crisis has affected the long-term trends of politicization of Europe in France. Has the crisis fuelled the extent of politicization? Do we observe shifts in specific aspects of Europe being politicized? Are the patterns of opposition changing? To answer these questions, the authors compare the electoral campaign in 2012 with all French campaigns since 1974. Additionally, France is put in a broader comparative perspective. Politicization is conceptualized as three inter-related dimensions: issue salience, actor expansion, and polarization. Methodologically, the article is based on a relational content analysis of newspaper articles. The findings show that the Euro crisis boosted the level of politicization, and economic policies as well as justification frames became more important. However, the degree of polarization was higher in election campaigns that focused more on constitutional conflicts over membership and were dominated by concerns with national identity and sovereignty. Keywords: Politicization, France, Euro crisis, presidential election

## **Introduction**

The spotlight has been on the *politics* dimension of European integration studies since the mid-2000s. In this context, the concept of politicization has become key to understanding recent transformations (see de Wilde 2011). This is most prominent in Hooghe and Marks' (2009) programmatic article that puts politicization center stage of a new post-functionalist theory of European integration. More specifically, Hooghe and Marks argue that Europe has become politicized in electoral and referendum campaigns, and that we witness a shift from "permissive consensus" to a period characterized by "constraining dissensus" in the post-Maastricht era. Similarly, Kriesi *et al.* (2012; 2008) show that conflicts over European integration have become more salient in party competition in Western Europe since the 1990s. This is part and parcel of a broader transformation of political conflict, which is caused by the on-going opening-up of economic, cultural, and political borders. In contrast with these arguments, other authors argue that European integration clearly has the potential to change domestic politics, but underscore that the issue has not yet been politicized by political parties (e.g., Green-Pedersen 2012; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004).

The current Euro crisis tends to refute the "skeptics" since European affairs have become more visible in the public sphere, and citizens are reminded, almost on a daily basis, of the enormous interdependencies among European economies and societies. Furthermore, earlier economic crises have been major drivers of politicization and political realignments (e.g., Gourevitch 1984). Thus, many observers see the current crisis as yet another major event fuelling the politicization of Europe, and bringing public contestation into the world of European decision making (e.g., Kriesi and Grande 2012; Statham and Trezn 2012b). In the words of Statham and Trezn (2012b) : "The

Eurozone crisis has an extraordinarily high potential for generating a deep and on-going politicization of the EU within national domestic politics across the region” (p.18f.).

By studying party contestation, this article adds to the previous contributions of this special issue that looked at public opinion only. These studies indicated a growing anti-European sentiment among citizens as reflected in increasingly negative evaluations of EU membership or distrust towards European institutions (see Braun and Tausendpfund, *this volume*; Clements *et al.*, *this volume*; Roth *et al.*, *this volume*). However, shifts in public opinion are only latent potentials as long as they are not mobilized by collective political actors and reflected in citizens’ behavior. That is why this article looks at how political parties publicly contest European integration in election campaigns. Obviously, the Euro crisis is a crucial moment in the history of European integration (see Tosun *et al.*, *this volume*), but we still lack sufficient information both on the magnitude of politicization induced by the crisis, as well as on the way the crisis has changed the existing conflicts over Europe.

More precisely, we contribute to the debate by studying how the Euro crisis has affected the long-term trends of politicization in France. While Schimmelfennig (*this volume*) is certainly right that the crisis has boosted politicization, we argue that more detailed studies are needed which focus not just on the extent, but also on the kind of politicization induced by the crisis. This will allow us to draw more precise conclusions about how citizens’ changing preferences and party contestation amidst the crisis may affect the future of European integration. This is because not all kinds of politicization may negatively influence further integration only.

This article takes a first important step by providing such an in-depth analysis for the French case. France is a paradigmatic case both because of its key role in the European integration project and because of earlier episodes of politicization. First,

besides Germany, France is seen as the motor behind the integration process in general and a key player in the Eurozone more specifically. Thus, increasing politicization in France may influence the political climate in the EU and future steps of integration more than if this happens in smaller and more peripheral states (Wilde and Zürn 2012, 149). A good example is increasing politicization related to the EU accession of Turkey in France (and Germany), which negatively affected the negotiation process (see, e.g., Koenig *et al.* 2006). Second, Eurosceptic mobilization in France shows the typical pattern of the inverted U-curve: This is because of economically based opposition from the far left and identity- or sovereignty-based opposition from the far right.

Empirically, we study the public debate among political parties as it unfolds during national election campaigns through relational content analysis of newspaper articles. Studying politicization during the heyday of domestic mobilization sets high stakes, as European issues have to compete with other domestic issues during the campaign. At the same time, it enables us to directly compare the mobilizing power of European integration with other issues (Green-Pedersen 2012, p.121f.; Hutter and Grande forthcoming). Most commentators on the French election in the Spring of 2012, which resulted in the victory of the Socialist contender François Hollande over the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy, emphasized that European issues played a significant role (e.g., Clift 2013; Drake 2013; Hewlett 2012; Lequesne 2012). This article puts the “snapshots” provided by the cited studies in a long-term perspective, which takes into account the years since the supposed end of the “permissive consensus” by comparing the latest campaign in 2012 with all campaigns since 1974.

This article is structured as follows. The next section presents the way in which we conceptualize politicization. Thereafter, we present the hypotheses. Here, we draw on general ideas about what drives politicization and on the findings for earlier episodes

of politicization in France. Next, the methods and data are introduced, which is followed by the empirical findings. We conclude with a summary and by coming back to the post-functionalist argument. More precisely, we emphasize what our results suggest in view of Hooghe and Marks's (2009) claim that politicization has a "constraining" effect on the elites involved in European decision making.

### **A Multi-Dimensional Concept of Politicization**

We adopt a broad understanding of politicization and take seriously its multi-dimensional character (see also de Wilde 2011). More precisely, we follow Hutter and Grande (forthcoming) by conceptualizing politicization as three inter-related dimensions: issue salience, actor expansion, and polarization.

The first dimension takes into account that only topics that are frequently raised by political actors in public debates can be considered politicized. Thus, *salience* refers to the visibility of a given issue in public debates. If an issue is not debated in public, it can be politicized only to a very limited extent if at all. This mirrors recent proposals by Green-Pedersen (2012) and by Guinaudeau and Persico (2013), who suggest looking at politicization through the lens of salience. The second dimension is the *expansion of the actors* involved in a public debate. With respect to European integration, this dimension assesses the degree to which the dominant executive actors are joined by other actors in the public debate. The assumption is that, as long as only executive politicians publicly debate European integration, the issue is not fully politicized (see Statham and Trez 2012a, p.79ff.). This article focuses on election campaigns, in which political parties compete for votes. Therefore, the expansion of the scope of actors refers to the degree to which not only party-affiliated actors in government but also party actors without a government function emphasize European issues (e.g., opposition leaders or

spokespersons in parliament). Finally, the third dimension of politicization refers to the degree of *polarization*, i.e., the intensity of conflict over an issue among the various actors. Thus, to speak of a highly politicized constellation, actors need to put forward differing positions and we must find strong opposing camps.

To get an *overall* measure for the level of politicization, we combine the three dimensions with the help of an index. Following Hutter and Grande (forthcoming), this index of politicization emphasizes the key importance of salience by multiplying it with the sum of the other two dimensions:  $politicization = salience \times (actor\ expansion + polarization)$ . As in any index, the proposed measure clearly hides some of the nuanced findings based on the three individual dimensions. However, the index helps us in not overemphasizing high levels of actor expansion and polarization when the salience is low because the two dimensions are actually not visible to the public in this case.

### **Politicizing Europe in the French Context**

France is a paradigmatic case with respect to the key driving forces behind the politicization of Europe. In the following, we illustrate this by referring to the literature and earlier episodes of politicization in France. Generally speaking, the literature focuses on two sets of variables to explain differing levels and forms of politicization over time and across contexts. First, authors highlight that the increasing *level and scope of integration* is a key force that drives the politicization process. As de Wilde and Zürn (2012) argue, “the rising politicization of European integration is *primarily* a reaction to the increasing authority of the EU over time” (p.140). The more European institutions exercise authority over citizens, the more they become the object and addressee in political controversies. Hooghe and Marks (2009) add that the effects of

these authority shifts have been amplified because they are embedded in a broader breakdown of national boundaries and because of peoples' fairly stable (and, for a large part, exclusively national) identities (see also Kriesi *et al.* 2008; 2012).

Second, the role of *political actors and their mobilization strategies* is stressed. While the processes described so far may give rise to potentials and focal points for contestation, actors need to mobilize these tensions so that they become politically manifest. Thus, as Hooghe and Marks (2009) aptly state, "As European integration has grown in scope and depth, it has proved ripe for politicization. But there is nothing inevitable about this. Whether an issue enters mass politics depends not on its intrinsic importance, but on whether a political party picks it up" (p. 13). The question then is which parties are most likely to politicize Europe. Here, the literature emphasizes radical parties – particularly those on the right (see Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2013).

More precisely, three party strategies have been stressed in this context: "position taking", "selective emphasis", and "framing". To put it simply, the literature indicates that radical right-wing parties have been successful in politicizing Europe because they challenge the pro-European consensus of mainstream parties, put the issue high on the agenda, and emphasize its consequences for national sovereignty and identity. By doing so, they have been able to map European issues onto a second non-economic conflict dimension in West European political spaces, which cross-cuts the traditional economic left/right divide.

Previous episodes of politicization in France illustrate these points. Set in motion by the rise of the populist right, the "redefinition of cultural conflicts as well as the emergence of the issue of European integration on the political agenda has produced far-reaching changes in the structure of oppositions in the French party system"

(Bornschieer and Lachat 2009, p. 361). More importantly, it has given rise to a tri-polar conflict constellation, composed of the left, the moderate right, and the populist right (e.g., Grunberg and Schweisguth 2003). The Front National (as the main radical right-wing challenger) has become the strongest opponent of integration and heavily relies on cultural-identitarian arguments in its discourse. The Front National belongs to the key cases where the radical right party and its voters are the most Eurosceptic in the country, and there is a statistically significant party-voter linkage with respect to European issues (Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2013).

In addition, the French case demonstrates that politicization comes in waves that follow critical events and thresholds of the integration process. Major steps of integration, such as treaty reforms and enlargement rounds, serve as focal points of controversies, since they both accentuate the tensions induced by integration and constitute opportunities for challengers to raise their critique. In France, the conflicts over the ratification of the Maastricht treaty and the European Constitution were most important. Not by chance, Guinaudeau and Persico (2013) observe a very high salience of Europe in the party manifestos in France during the 1990s and no pronounced decline thereafter.

However, the French story is more complex than this because it is characterized by Eurosceptic mobilization both on the right and on the left. This can be traced back to the strength of the traditional class cleavage and the resulting fragmentation of the party system. Moreover, the politicization is not just driven by radical actors but also by conflicts within mainstream parties. A recent example for conflicts on the right is the split of the anti-European *Debout la République* (DLR) from the UMP in 2008. In the case of the debate over the European Constitution, the radical left and right were most

critical, but conflict within the Socialist party was decisive for the overall level of politicization (Statham and Trezz 2012a).

The French case also illustrates that conflicts over Europe are not just about questions of identity and national sovereignty (mainly raised by the right) but also about the economic and social consequences of integration (mainly raised by the left). For example, Kriesi (2007) shows that the positions of French parties on European integration barely correlate with their positioning on other key issues mapping onto the cultural dimension. This casts doubt on the assumption that Europe is part of this cultural dimension in France. By de-composing the issue of European integration, Guinaudeau and Persico (2013) support this hunch since French political parties very often emphasize *economic* aspects when they talk about Europe in their manifestos. This focus on social issues and questions of solidarity is also visible when looking at how the dissenting Socialists justified their opposition to the Constitution (Statham and Trezz 2012a, p.134).

Based on the general expectations and earlier episodes of politicization, we propose two hypotheses. Generally speaking, we conceive the Euro crisis and the measures taken to cope with it as constituting yet another critical event and threshold within the integration process (Tosun *et al.*, *this volume*). As indicated above, such thresholds have been key moments of politicization. They accentuate the tensions induced by integration and draw public attention to European affairs. Furthermore, the way the crisis and the management of it unfold has given rise to many focal points for contention. Amongst others, European leaders have met not just for a few but for many “critical” European summits and have adopted a range of measures to cope with the crisis. In a comparative perspective, the increase in politicization is expected to be more pronounced in Eurozone member states, countries economically hit by the crisis, and

key states within the European decision-making arena. All this holds for the French case.<sup>1</sup>

Our expectation that the crisis fuels the politicization process is quite straightforward, but has it also affected the conflict constellation? Statham and Trezz (2012b) argue that it is crucial to understand that the new wave of politicization is “driven by redistributive conflicts both within and across member states, and this is how it has expressed itself through public contestation” (p. 18f). Likewise, Serricchio *et al.* (2013) expect that economic considerations have a stronger effect on individual attitudes towards Europe in times of crisis (see also Braun and Tausenpfund, *this volume*). Following this argument, we expect that the economic nature of the crisis may well accentuate a trend that has already been visible in France. As stated, France is a paradigmatic case with respect to both types of Euroscepticism: economic- and identity-based. Thus, we expect that conflicts over economic issues, as well as framing strategies referring to the economic and social consequences of Europe, may become more important in times of crisis. Since the focus on economics is not exceptional in the French context, we do not expect pronounced changes regarding the patterns of opposition among political parties. Concerning the party constellation, the situation should be similar to the debate over the European Constitution; the moderate right in government is challenged by the Socialists in opposition, as well as by radical parties from both left and right. Thus, the left is expected to follow its earlier critique based on economic and social justifications while the populist right is expected to be the only political force that fundamentally opposes the European integration project by justifying its critique with reference to national sovereignty and identity.

In summary, we formulate the following two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: Because of the current Euro crisis, European integration is expected to have become more politicized in the 2012 French election campaign when compared to previous campaigns.*

*Hypothesis 2: Because of the current Euro crisis, economic issues and framing strategies are expected to have become more salient, but we expect no pronounced differences in the patterns of opposition in the 2012 French election campaign when compared to previous campaigns.*

### **Media Data and the Core Sentence Approach**

Methodologically, this article adopts the approach used by Kriesi *et al.* (2012; 2008) to study the transformation of political conflict in Western Europe.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the source, we think that *media data* are especially well suited for our purpose as they provide information about all three dimensions of politicization already introduced. As Statham and Trezn (2012a) state, “Politicization requires the expansion of debates from closed elite-dominated policy arenas to wider publics, and here the mass media plays an important role by placing contesting political actors in front of a public” (p.3). Media data allows us to study systematically how the various parties compete with each other, who is actually speaking as a party representative, as well as which thematic aspects related to European integration are debated and how parties justify their positions.

More precisely, we focus on debates among French political parties during the campaigns for the six presidential elections in the period 1974 to 2012. The period of observation is the two months before the first round of each election. The content analysis rests on all articles (except commentaries) published in *Le Monde* that report on

the electoral contest in particular or on national politics more generally. Out of all the articles related to national politics, we then identified those articles that cover a “European integration issue” – broadly defined as ranging from general orientations and constitutive issues to policy issues.

In a second step, we coded the articles with the help of the so-called *core sentence approach*. In this type of quantitative content analysis, the unit of analysis is not the whole article but the “core sentence”, which consists of the most basic pieces of information of a grammatical sentence. More precisely, we focus on relations between two actors (at least one being a party actor) with a thematic reference to European integration (*actor-actor sentences*) as well as on relations between an actor and a European issue (*actor-issue sentences*). The direction of the relationship between the two is quantified using a scale from -1 to +1 with three intermediary positions. With respect to actor-issue sentences, we also coded the *frames* used by the actors to justify their position towards a given European issue.

The labor-intensive manual coding of the newspaper articles resulted in 2,872 core sentences related to European integration with a share of 82.9 percent actor-issue statements and 17.1 percent actor-actor sentences. Furthermore, we can draw on 2,077 coded frames in the following analyses.

The three components of politicization are operationalized as follows: salience is measured by the share of sentences on European integration as a percentage of all sentences related to any issue. For the expansion of actors, we look at the share of non-executive actor statements as a percentage of all sentences on European integration. The indicator for polarization of party positions is based on Taylor and Hermann’s index for ideological polarization and ranges from 0 (not polarized at all) to 1 (most polarized). In a final step, we combine the indicators in an index as described above. Obviously, such

an index raises the question of how to interpret these values. Following Green-Pedersen (2012), we compare the politicization of Europe with a broader set of issues. More precisely, we calculated a *benchmark* by relying on the data of the Kriesi *et al.* project (2008; 2012). This data is based on the same coding strategy as the one used in this article, but it covers twelve issues (e.g. welfare, budget or cultural liberalism). To ease interpretation, the following graphs show the mean and maximum values for all twelve issues, as well as for immigration as yet another new key issue of party contestation in France.

### **Empirical Results**

To begin with, we test our hypothesis that the crisis has increased the extent of politicization in French elections. For this purpose, Figure 1 shows how the level of politicization, as measured by our index, has developed from 1974 to 2012. This measure indicates a clear upward trend in the long-run, and we observe by far the highest level in the latest election. In other words, the campaign amidst the crisis is characterized by a boost in the extent of politicization. Our benchmark based on all types of issues has been met only in 2007 and 2012. Furthermore, in 2012, Europe was even more politicized over immigration than ever. This supports our first hypothesis and confirms the claims of those who saw the latest election as being fought in the “shadow of the crisis” (e.g., Clift 2013; Drake 2013; Hewlett 2012; Lequesne 2012).

That Europe was highly politicized in the 2012 French campaign is underscored both when looking back at the last two French elections and when putting France in a comparative perspective. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen made it to the second ballot and tried to mobilize voters by using anti-Europeanism and fears about the future of “French identity”. The 2007 campaign, by contrast, was still amidst the discussions about how to

proceed after the no-vote in the referendum on the European Constitution. Thus, both campaigns saw major European questions on the agenda, but these issues did not boost politicization as much as the current Euro crisis. In their comparative study for the pre-crisis period, Hutter and Grande (forthcoming) observed only two campaigns with a higher level of politicization in a sample of forty-nine elections in five West European countries (i.e., Austria, Britain, Germany, France, and Switzerland). This was in Britain in 1997 and in Switzerland in 1999. Again, this highlights that the 2012 campaign in France is a case of high politicization.

[Insert Figure 1]

Figure 2 shows the development based on the three indicators used to construct the index. In general, all three measures show that Europe has become increasingly politicized since the 1970s, and that the 2012 election campaign is an exemplary case for this trend. However, the three measures point also to interesting differences. Generally speaking, Europe is a fairly salient issue in French electoral campaigns, but it tends to be both relatively executive-dominated and not as polarized as other issues (this most obvious when comparing Europe with immigration).<sup>3</sup> These differences become very noticeable in 2012. The crisis has brought about a more salient debate over Europe. It is not related to such a strong increase in the share of non-executive actors and in the degree of polarization. Thus, while all indicators point to a politicized situation in 2012, the campaign is clearly not as exceptional with respect to the second and third politicization dimensions.

Again, it is interesting to compare 2012 with 2007 when Europe was less salient, but far more polarized. A detailed look at the 2007 campaign shows that this was due to

the combined effect of struggles over the failed Constitution and over Turkish accession. Thus, the European issues raised in 2012 were less polarizing than those of 2007 when key questions related to both widening and deepening ranked high on the agenda. This is underscored when comparing the French campaign in 2012 with the pre-crisis elections in the five West European countries. Whereas the French 2012 campaign is the third most salient campaign, it ranks only eighth and eleventh regarding actor expansion and polarization. Higher polarization was mainly observed in campaigns that centered on membership conflicts (be it related to a country's own accession or to EU membership of another state) (Hutter and Grande forthcoming).

[Insert Figure 2]

The previous findings support the hypothesis that Europe has become more politicized in the course of the crisis, but we do not yet know whether and how the crisis has changed the way conflicts over Europe are fought. To test our second hypothesis, Table 1 presents more detailed results on the issues, frames, and political parties found when we focus on the statements related to European integration. To ease interpretation, we divided the period in three phases: pre-Maastricht (until 1992), post-Maastricht (until 2007), and Euro crisis (2012).

Let us briefly explain how we categorized the many coded issues and frames for the analyses. Regarding *issues* of European integration, we distinguish four categories: (a) general orientations, (b) deepening and intervention in economic policy fields, (c) deepening and intervention in non-economic policy fields, and (d) widening. The typology combines information on the nature of European issues and the more substantive contents being discussed. Regarding *frames*, we adopt Helbling *et al*'s

(2010) typology and distinguish between “utilitarian frames” and “cultural frames”. The first type consists of arguments referring to particular interests, as well as to efficiency and cost-benefit calculations. Most importantly for this article, economic considerations belong to this type. The second type of frame refers to ideas and values that are considered by the actors to be inherent to a particular community.

The results in Table 1 confirm the first part of our second hypotheses since *economic considerations* are on the rise during the Euro crisis. *First*, the trend towards economic policy fields may seem unsurprising due to the nature of the crisis, but the magnitude of the changes certainly is. In 2012, more than 70 percent of statements reported focus on economic aspects. By contrast, general orientations towards integration and proposals on how to reform the EU system more generally have become far less salient, and topics related to enlargement completely disappeared from the debate. A detailed look at the economic issues being debated in 2012 underscores the impact of the crisis. Almost all statements under the label “economic deepening and intervention” refer to measures related to solving the crisis in the Eurozone (for details, see Figure 3). *Second*, the figures in brackets show the polarization scores by issue category. This indicates that issues focused on economic integration are more polarizing in 2012 than before. Since these issues are most salient, they are responsible for the ongoing polarization of European integration in France. However, as suggested, the polarization of these economic issues did not reach the high levels recorded for the struggles over Turkish accession and the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. *Third*, the shift towards economics can also be seen when looking at the frames used by the parties to justify their positions. Although economic and other utilitarian frames were always more important than cultural-identitarian ones, the latest campaign differs to the post-Maastricht phase. Unsurprisingly, there is a close linkage between economic issues and

frames – for example, when Nicolas Sarkozy pleads for the “Buy European Act” to support the prosperity of European companies. However, populist right-wing parties were successful in framing economic issues in a cultural way in the past (see Helbling *et al.* 2010). Therefore, it is very significant to note that even the Front National shifted away from a culturally-based critique.

[Insert Table 1]

In addition, the findings in Table 1 show that challengers from the left and from the right have gained in visibility in the post-Maastricht period. In 2012, we need to add the “others” category to the share of radical parties because it covers statements by *Debout la République*, the Eurosceptic split-off from the UMP. The party drew considerable attention in the public debate, as it vehemently raised more general questions of European integration by suggesting withdrawal from the EU and other far-reaching institutional reforms in order to guarantee greater national sovereignty. This contrasts with all other parties – even with the Front National – that predominantly focused on more specific measures related to solving the crisis.

Finally, we use multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) to uncover the patterns of opposition in 2012. MDS is a flexible method and allows for a representation of (dis-)similarities between pairs of objects. We focus on the representation of parties and issues in a common space. This gives us a condensed view on the actors’ positions. To disentangle the economic issues, we re-grouped them in five sub-categories: Euro (in general), national efforts, ESM/ESFS, Growth+, and deepening (Figure 3).<sup>4</sup>

First, we observe a *two-dimensional structure*, which mirrors the patterns found for earlier periods in France. The dominant “horizontal” dimension is due to conflicts

about the right economic policies to cope with the crisis, whereas the secondary “vertical” dimension is about more fundamental questions of membership and sovereignty. More specifically, the first dimension highlights the conflict between the moderate and radical left on the one side and the moderate right on the other. The left strongly criticizes the measures already decided upon (especially the ESM) and demands shifts towards more growth-oriented and interventionist measures. The moderate right-wing UMP, by contrast, defends the measures already taken, for which it was one of the main promoters on the European level. However, the UMP’s central position indicates that the French political right is not utterly against protectionist and interventionist policies (Hewlett 2012, p.419).

The second dimension is less important, as indicated by the salience of the respective issues. The conflict centers on questions about deepening (in general) and, to a smaller degree, about how much the countries hit by the crisis should bear the costs themselves. As expected, this dimension is due to the positioning of right-wing Eurosceptic parties (this time, the Front National and DLR), which vehemently oppose further deepening and demand the maintenance of national sovereignty. While the radical left is also fairly critical regarding deepening, this was not a salient issue for them. Thus, the second dimension underscores the conflict between the radical right and the mainstream parties from left and right.

[Insert Figure 3]

Finally, the close integration of the two spatial dimensions needs to be emphasized. This mirrors that we did not witness a strong increase in the polarization of party positions. The integration of the dimensions is mainly because the right-wing

Eurosceptics shared the left's opposition to the current rescue measures and because no factions within the mainstream parties questioned the Euro/EMU per se. This contrasts with earlier campaigns when there was quite a high share of dissenting voices within the Socialists and the RPR/UMP. Furthermore, even the radical challengers from left and right focused more on the current measures adopted than a fundamental critique of the European project.

## **Conclusions**

While we can only speculate about what the crisis implies for the future of European democracies (e.g., Streeck 2013), we can already describe how it has affected the long-term trends of politicization of Europe. By doing so, we move closer to understanding the mechanisms that may translate the increasing anti-European sentiment among EU citizens into the world of European decision-making. In this article, we took an important step in this direction by answering the questions of whether and how the crisis affected the politicization of Europe in France, i.e., in a key member of the Eurozone.

Methodologically, we relied on a relational content analysis of newspapers to study the debates as they unfolded during all election campaigns from 1974 to 2012. This allowed us to study systematically how the political parties compete with each other over Europe, who is actually speaking as a party representative. As well as which thematic aspects are emphasized and how the actors justify their positions.

Overall, our results confirm that the crisis led to an increasing politicization in the French electoral arena (see Clift 2013; Drake 2013; Hewlett 2012; Lequesne 2012). Thus, the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy set the stage for the whole campaign when he announced his candidacy by emphasizing that France “cannot act as if the crisis did not

exist [...] as if Europe did not exist [...] as if the world did not exist.” (cited in Drake 2013, p.125). The crisis fuelled politicization, but it did not fundamentally change the way conflicts over Europe are fought. Moreover, the crisis mainly boosted the salience of European issues.

The degree of polarization, by contrast, was clearly higher in 2007 when key questions related to deepening and Turkish accession were on the agenda. In 2012, economic issues and justification frames prevailed. This was less polarizing than a debate focused on identity- and sovereignty-based claims. The mainstream parties fought essentially about the right policy solutions to cope with the crisis, whereas it was almost exclusively the radical challengers from the right who addressed more fundamental questions related to the European project and opened-up a second conflict dimension. However, it is significant to note that even the Front National shifted away from a predominantly cultural discourse.

We share Schimmelfennig’s (*this volume*) view that post-functionalists have so far failed to show how such politicization decisively affected the policies and institutional reforms adopted during the crisis. Yet, we would like to add that more evidence on the extent and especially the kind of politicization induced by the crisis is needed to definitely answer whether and how politicization affects the future of European integration. Politicization may not be per se lead to ever tighter constraints on transfers of political authority to the EU and the accession of new member states. The specific mobilization strategies adopted by political parties may be crucial in this regard. Our results are instructive: The French 2012 campaign was very focused on economic policies and justifications. This led to a salient but less polarizing constellation as compared to previous campaigns in France and other European countries that focused on constitutive conflicts over membership. And they were more dominated by concerns

about national identity and sovereignty. This is the type of “identity politics” Hooghe and Mark’s (2009) emphasized when they speculated about the negative consequences of politicization for further integration. Our results rather point in the direction suggested by Börzel and Risse (2009, p.219f.): politicization could also be beneficial for the future of European integration if political actors reframe European issues along the economic left-right cleavage and start debating the direction of European *policies* instead of focusing on integration and constitutionalization as such.

In this article, we only made a first cut at this complex question and more comparative evidence is needed because the extent and kind of politicization may depend on a number of contextual factors (e.g., the party system, the integration level or the severity of the crisis). For example, the German election campaign in 2013 points to a deliberate depoliticization by the mainstream parties even if Germany saw the rise of a new Eurosceptic challenger, i.e., the new Alternative for Germany party. There seems to be no feasible strategy for political parties in those Eurozone member states that are economically hardest hit by the crisis and whose economic policy making capacity is most heavily constrained by European and international policy measures. Furthermore, we need to wait and see because a more identity-based critique of integration may break through when the debate shifts from crisis management to more general questions about the future setup of the European Union.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although France is a creditor country and did not have to adopt austerity programs, its economic conditions were judged to be worrisome by many commentators at the time of the election (e.g., *The Economist* 31/3/2012)

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the methods and data, we refer the reader to the methodological chapters of the two volumes and an online appendix for this article published on [personal website].

<sup>3</sup> The trends for our salience measure mirror those based on party manifestos (e.g., Guinaudeau and Persico 2013, 153). However, the differences between the three dimensions of politicization highlight that we should not just focus on salience.

<sup>4</sup> The issue category *Euro (general)* covers general statements about the Euro and “solving the Euro crisis” (10.0 % of all coded statements); *National efforts* covers statements about more efforts by the “debtor” countries or calls for certain countries to leave the Eurozone (10.6%); *ESM/ESFS* covers the two main measures adopted at the time of the election campaign (15.0%); *Growth+* covers all statements for or against more support from Europe to the countries hit by the crisis or for more protectionist measures (e.g., Hollande’s call for more growth-oriented measures) (27.2%); *Deepening (general)* covers statements for/against more fundamental reforms of EU institutions, and statements related to national sovereignty or the withdrawal from the EU (22.4%).

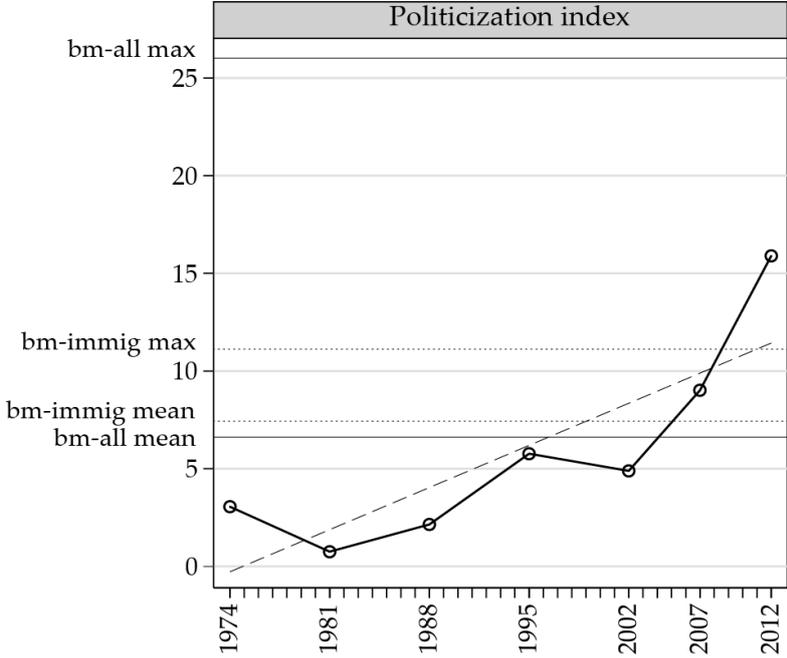
## References

- Bornschier, S., and R. Lachat. 2009. The Evolution of the French Political Space and Party System. *West European Politics* 32, no. 2: 360-383.
- Börzel, T.A., and T. Risse. 2009. Revisiting the Nature of the Beast – Politicization, European Identity, and Postfunctionalism. A Comment on Hooghe and Marks. *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1: 217-220.
- Clift, B. 2013. Le Changement? French Socialism, the 2012 Presidential Election and the Politics of Economic Credibility amidst the Eurozone Crisis. *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1: 106-123.
- de Wilde, P. 2011. No Polity for Old Politics? A Framework for Analyzing the Politicization of European Integration. *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 5: 559-575.
- de Wilde, P., and M. Zürn. 2012. Can the Politicization of European Integration be Reversed? *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no. 1: 137-153.
- Drake, H. 2013. Everywhere and Nowhere: Europe and the World in the French 2012 Elections. *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1: 124-141.
- Gómez-Reino, M., and I. Llamazares. 2013. The Populist Radical Right and European Integration: A Comparative Analysis of Party–Voter Links. *West European Politics* 36, no. 4: 789-816.
- Gourevitch, P.A. 1984. Breaking with Orthodoxy: The Politics of Economic Response to the Depression of the 1930s. *International Organization* 38, no. 1: 95-129.
- Green-Pedersen, C. 2012. A Giant Fast Asleep? Party Incentives and the Politicisation of European Integration. *Political Studies* 60, no. 1: 115-130.
- Grunberg, G., and E. Schweisguth. 2003. French Political Space: Two, Three or Four Blocs? . *French Politics* 1, no. 3: 331-347.
- Guinaudeau, I., and S. Persico. 2013. EU politicization through the lens of salience: How the EU enters the French, British and German electoral agenda (1986-2009). *French Politics* 11, no. 2: 143-168.
- Helbling, M., D. Hoeglinger, and B. Wüest. 2010. How Political Parties Frame European Integration. *European Journal of Political Research* 49, no. 4: 495–521.
- Hewlett, N. 2012. Voting in the Shadow of the Crisis: The French Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2012. *Modern & Contemporary France* 20, no. 4: 403-420.
- Hooghe, L., and G. Marks. 2009. A Postfunctionalist Theory of European integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1: 1-23.
- Hutter, S., and E. Grande. forthcoming. Politicizing Europe in the national electoral arena: A comparative analysis of five West European countries, 1970-2010. *Journal of Common Market Studies*.
- Koenig, T., S. Mihelj, J. Downey, and M. Gencel Bek. 2006. Media framings of the issue of Turkish accession to the EU. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 19, no. 2: 149-169.

- Kriesi, H. 2007. The Role of European Integration in National Election Campaigns. *European Union Politics* 8, no. 83-108.
- Kriesi, H., and E. Grande. 2012. The Euro-crisis: A Boost to Politicization of European Integration? Paper prepared for the EUDO 2012 Dissemination Conference on 'The Euro Crisis and the State of European Democracy', Florence. no.
- Kriesi, H., E. Grande, M. Dolezal, M. Helbling, D. Hoeglinger, S. Hutter, and B. Wüest. 2012. *Political conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kriesi, H., E. Grande, R. Lachat, M. Dolezal, S. Bornschieer, and T. Frey. 2008. *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lequesne, eds. 2012. *La Campagne Présidentielle française de 2012 au Prisme de l'Externe. Dossier du CERI*, accessed at <http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/la-campagne-presidentielle-francaise-de-2012-au-prisme-de-lexterne> on 12/07/2013. Paris: CERI - CNRS.
- Serricchio, F., M. Tsakatika, and L. Quaglia. 2013. Euroscepticism and the Global Financial Crisis. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 1: 51-64.
- Statham, P., and H.-J. Trenz. 2012a. *The Politicization of Europe: Contesting the Constitution in the mass media*. London: Routledge.
- Statham, P., and H.-J. Trenz. 2012b. The Politicization of the European Union: From Constitutional Dreams to Euro-Zone crisis Nightmares. Paper prepared for the 3rd International Conference on Democracy as Idea and Practice, Oslo, 12-13 January 2012. no.
- Streeck, W. 2013. The Crisis in Context: Democratic Capitalism and its Contradictions. In *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, ed. Armin Schäfer and Wolfgang Streeck, 262-286. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- van der Eijk, C., and M.N. Franklin. 2004. Potential for contestation on European matters at national elections in Europe. In *European Integration and Political Conflict*, ed. Gary Marks and Marco R. Steenbergen, 32-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

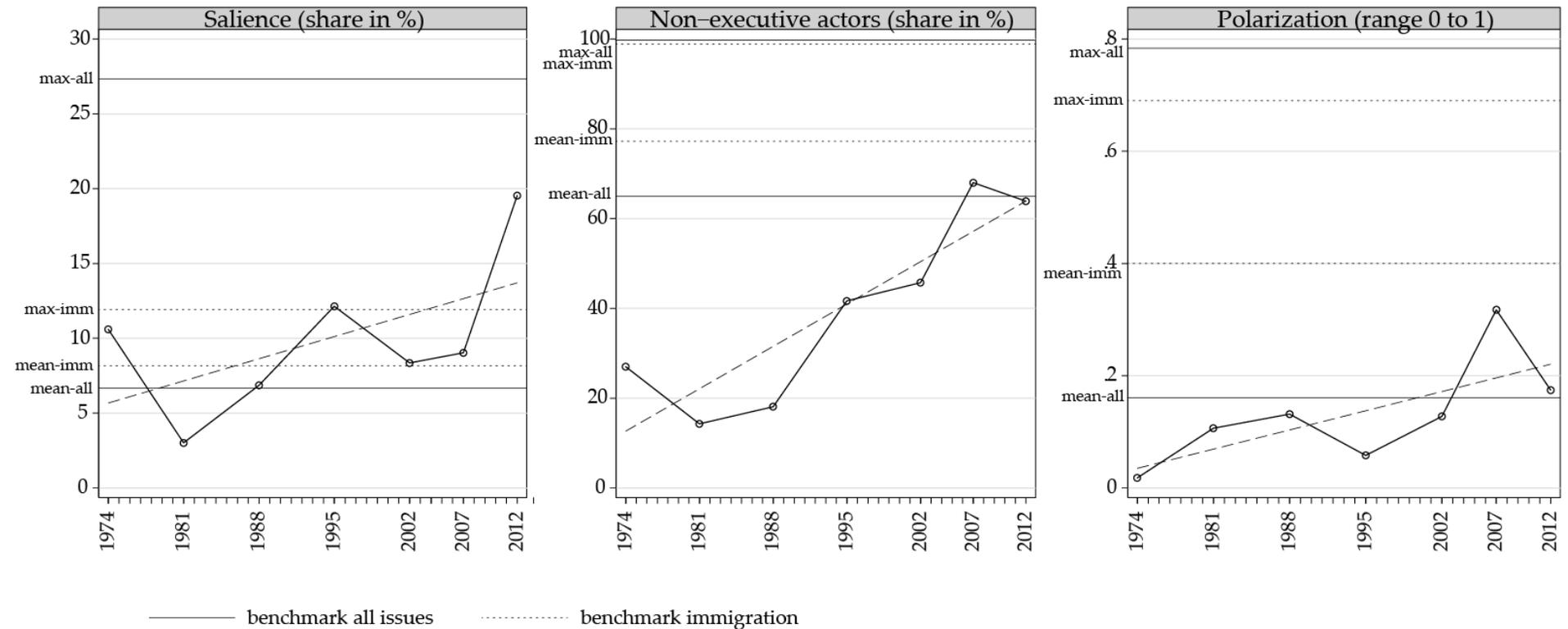
**Tables and Figures**

Figure 1: Politicization index by year, France 1974 to 2012



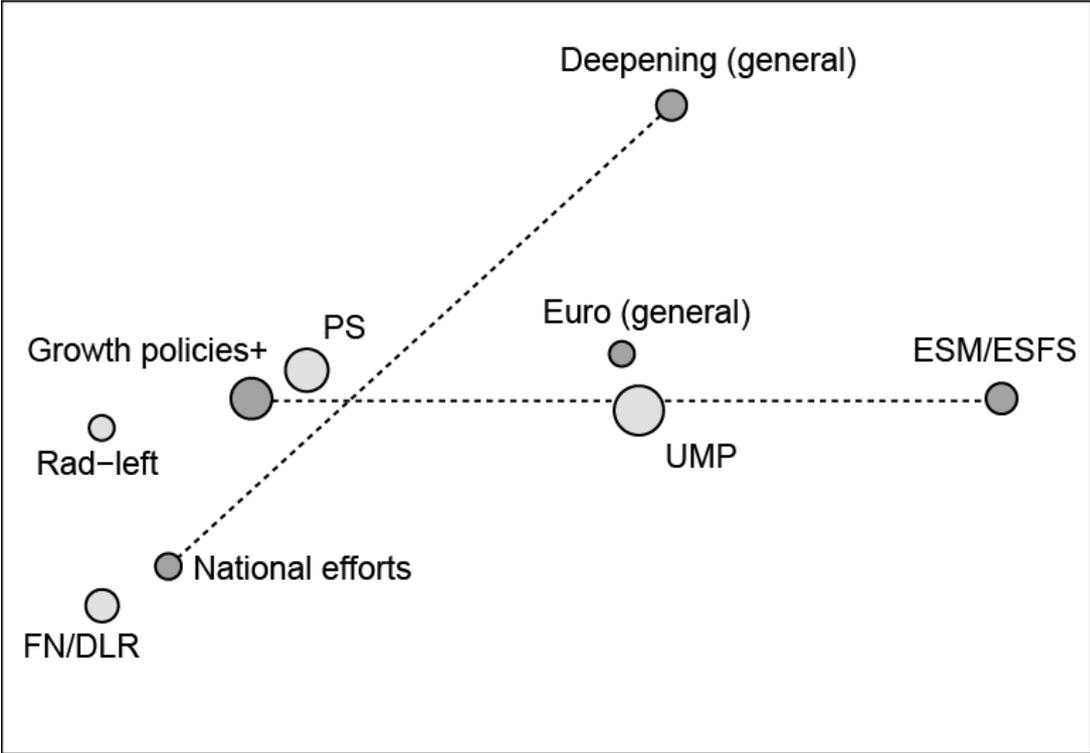
Note: the figure shows the value of the politicization index by election. The grey dashed line shows the linear trend, while the additional horizontal lines show the average and maximum index for a set of twelve issues (solid lines) and immigration (dotted lines).

Figure 2: The three politicization measures by year



Note: the figure shows the values of salience (percentage of all core sentences), actor expansion (percentage of non-executive actors) and polarization (range 0 to 1) by election. The grey dashed lines show the linear trends, while the additional horizontal lines show the average and maximum value for a set of twelve issues (solid lines) and immigration (dotted lines). The correlation coefficients  $r$  between the three variables is 0.32 for salience-actors, 0.44 for salience-polarization, and 0.56 for actor-polarization.

Figure 3: The political space of the Euro debate, France 2012



Notes: the figure presents the results of a weighted multi-dimensional scaling procedure (Stress-1 = 0.29). The size of the circles indicates the share of the respective issue or actor category in percent of all core sentences used for the analyses. The analyses was done for parties with more than 20 observations and for issue categories with at least five statements by more than one party: the radical left (*rad-left*), the Socialist Party (*PS*), the Union for a Popular Movement (*UMP*), as well as the cluster of Front National and Arise the Republic (*FN/DLR*).

Table 1: Issues, frames, and actors by period, France 1974-2012 (in %)

		1974-1988	1995-2007	2012
<b>Issues</b>	General orientations	18.2 (0.01)	18.3 (0.20)	5.6 (0.36)
	<b>Deepening &amp; intervention in economic policy fields</b>	<b>34.7 (0.11)</b>	<b>31.8 (0.11)</b>	<b>73.9 (0.20)</b>
	Deepening & intervention in non-economic policy fields	38.9 (0.06)	46.5 (0.20)	20.5 (0.07)
	Widening	8.2 (0.00)	3.5 (0.30)	0.0 (-)
<b>Frames</b>	Cultural	9.1	27.9	11.2
	<b>Economic</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>37.2</b>
	Political efficiency	40.0	14.5	34.9
	Other utilitarian	31.6	29.3	16.7
<b>Party families</b>	<b>Challenger parties</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>31.4</b>
	Radical left: Front de Gauche, PCF	1.6	8.5	9.8
	Greens: Les Verts	0.0	4.0	4.3
	Radical Right: FN	1.6	7.7	8.0
	Others : DLR	0.0	0.0	9.3
	<b>Mainstream parties</b>	<b>96.8</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>68.2</b>
	Social democrats: PS	18.8	31.6	27.7
	Liberals: MoDem	18.9	9.8	3.5
Conservatives: UMP	59.2	38.5	37.5	
N (core sentences/frames)		810/573	1,666/1,246	396/258

Note: the table presents the share of issue, framing, and party families in percent of all core sentences and frames, respectively. The figure in brackets shows the degree of polarization per issue. The most important figures with respect to our second hypotheses are highlighted in bold. The list of party families is supplemented with important examples for a given category in 2012.