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Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage

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ABSTRACT


This article argues that the perforation of national states by immigration, integration and trade may signify a critical juncture in the political development of Europe no less consequential for political parties and party systems than the previous junctures that Lipset and Rokkan detect in their classic article. We present evidence suggesting that (1) party systems are determined in episodic breaks from the past; (2) political parties are programmatically inflexible; and, (3) as a consequence, party system change comes in the form of rising parties.

KEYWORDS Political parties; cleavage; European integration; euro crisis; elections; immigration

Have the euro crisis and the migration crisis congealed a distinctive structure of conflict in Europe?¹ In this article we use the building blocks of a cleavage theory of party competition to argue that Europe has been transformed by a new divide. Cleavage theory claims that the issues that divide voters are connected in durable dimensions, that political parties make programmatic commitments on these issue dimensions, and that as a result of issue coherence and programmatic stickiness, change in party systems is a punctuated process that arises from shocks external to the party system.

Summarizing an extensive literature over the past decade, we describe the emergence of a transnational cleavage, which has as its core a political reaction against European integration and immigration. The perforation of national states by immigration, integration and trade may signify a critical juncture in the political development of Europe no less decisive for parties and party systems than the previous junctures that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) detect in their classic article. For challenging parties on the radical right these issues relate to the defense of national community against transnational shocks. The European Union (EU) is itself such a shock, because it introduces rule by those who are regarded as foreigners, diminishes the

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authority exercised by national states over their own populations, produces economic insecurity among those who lack mobile assets, and facilitates immigration. Immigration is perceived as a particular threat by those who resent cultural intermixing and the erosion of national values, by those who must compete with immigrants for housing and jobs, and, more generally, by those who seek cultural or economic shelter in the rights of citizenship.

We term this cleavage a *transnational* cleavage because it has as its focal point the defense of national political, social and economic ways of life against external actors who penetrate the state by migrating, exchanging goods or exerting rule. This conception has much in common with prior conceptions, but because we wish to outline its character, sources and consequences in ways with which other scholars might disagree, we adopt a distinctive label.

The emergence of a new cleavage reveals the causal power of social forces in the face of established institutions. Perhaps the most stunning consequences of the crises are the breakthrough of a radical right party in a country, Germany, that was perceived to be practically immune, and the rejection of EU membership in a British referendum. On both counts, the crises can be considered to have ushered in a new era. However, virtually every country contains its own surprises, and were we to follow them we would be lost in fascinating detail.

Our focus in this contribution is on the general character of conflicts that have arisen, their relation to the existing structure of party competition, and how they have reshaped party systems. The crises are critical junctures that reveal, in the open air, so to speak, the pressures that have built up over the past two decades. They suggest that party systems are subject to discontinuities rather than to incremental change, and that the response of a party system to exogenous change comes from voters rather than parties.

In the next section, we explain why we think cleavage theory can help us understand what has happened. We have no hesitation in dropping the presumption that political parties are expressions of already formed, densely organized and socially closed groups, while building on three fundamental claims of cleavage theory: party systems are determined in episodic breaks from the past by exogenous social forces; political parties are programmatically inflexible; and, in consequence, party system change comes in the form of rising parties.

The remainder of this contribution provides evidence that this has indeed happened. The following section conceives the rise of a transnational cleavage as a reaction to reforms that have weakened national sovereignty, promoted international economic exchange, increased immigration and exacerbated cultural and economic insecurity. We examine the effect of the economic and migration crises in raising the salience of Europe and immigration, and then show that the modal response of mainstream political parties

was to stay put on these issues. Voters changed, but mainstream parties did not.

We then present evidence that competition on European integration and immigration is structured on the new cleavage. The TAN pole of this cleavage is staked out by the radical right.² Radical right parties take more extreme positions on these issues, place more salience on them, and exhibit greater internal unity than mainstream parties. By virtue of their commitment to GAL values, green parties are located at the alter-pole. Just as the religious cleavage and the class cleavage were raised by Catholic and socialist parties on one side of the divide, so the transnational cleavage is mobilized by radical right parties at one extreme. As the transnational divide has become salient, mainstream parties have been compelled to compete on issues that lie far from their programmatic core.

Cleavage theory – then and now

Cleavage theory, originating in Lipset and Rokkan (1967), conceives a national party system as the expression of underlying social conflicts. Revealingly, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) ignore strategic interaction among parties in explaining the structure of contestation. Instead, they focus on the basic cleavages that undergird party support over the medium or long term: the national revolution that produced a cleavage between the central state and peripheral communities and between the central state and a supranational church; and the industrial revolution that produced an urban/rural cleavage, and later a worker/employer cleavage. In each case, the political parties that were eventually formed were instruments of self-conscious, socially closed groups. Conflicts between workers and employers, between those living in peripheral communities and central state builders, and between secularists and defenders of the Church were rooted in collective identities, grassroots movements and hierarchical organizations. The solidarity that existed in these groups was much more than an expression of the social or occupational location of any set of individuals. It was experiential, the outcome of repeated conflict which defined and solidified the composition of in-groups and out-groups (Bartolini 2000; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Marks 1989).³

Before we go any further, it is worth noting that the existence and subsequent decline of social closure are not all or nothing. Social closure was far from complete even in the immediate post-World War II decades. Recall that around one in three British manual workers voted Liberal or Conservative in the 1950s and 1960s (Stephens 1979: 404). A classic investigation of cleavage voting in its golden age finds that, for 15 advanced democracies, occupation explains just 4.9 per cent of the variance in party choice in the median country, France under the Fourth Republic, and religion explains just 8.0 per cent in the median country, Canada (Rose 1974: 17). Franklin (1992: 386)

provides extensive data suggesting that the median variance in left voting explained by social structure in 14 countries declined from around 20 per cent in the 1960s to around 12 per cent in the 1980s. Recent literature finds that around 10 per cent of the variance in radical right and green voting is associated with education, occupation, rural/urban location, sex and age (Bornschieer and Kriesi 2012; Dolezal 2010; Norris 2005; Oesch 2008).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) show little interest in the factors that bind individuals into collectivities (Bornschieer 2009: 2). What matters in their theory is that fundamental divisions in a society give rise to durable cleavages that structure party competition. The questions they put under the spotlight are: (1) What are the fundamental divisions in a society? (2) Which distinctions among a population become the bases for cleavages? (3) How do these cleavages interact to shape voter preferences? (4) How are voter preferences expressed in party formation and competition? (5) How are cleavages mediated by the rules of the game and by party strategies?

In coming to grips with these questions, we draw on cleavage theory to make the following moves:

- The strategic flexibility of a political party on major conflict dimensions is constrained to the extent it has a durable constituency of voters, a decentralized decision-making structure, a self-selected cadre of activists, a self-replicating leadership and a distinct programmatic reputation (Schumacher *et al.* 2013). Political parties can be flexible on particular issues, but efforts to shift position at the level of a conflict dimension are rare. That is to say, political parties are induced to seek *local* maxima in competing for votes (Laver and Sergenti 2012).⁴ In addition to shifting its issue position, a political party may seek to subsume an issue into the dominant dimension, blur its response, or ignore the issue (Lacewell 2015; Rovny 2015: 913). The problem for established parties is that a status quo response is more effective for a single issue than for a set of strongly related issues.
- Hence, the source of dynamism in party systems in response to major shifts in voter preferences is the growth of new political parties. The basic premises of cleavage theory are that exogenous forces shape democratic party systems; that change comes from voters, not established parties; that political parties are programmatically inflexible; and that, as a consequence, the response of a party system to a serious exogenous shock takes the form of challenging, rather than reformed, political parties.
- By the time mass political parties came on the scene, cleavages were already institutionalized. Now the sequence is reversed. Competitive party systems exist prior to the onset of any new cleavage. Hence, it makes no sense to believe that challenging political parties will be rooted in pre-existing, socially closed, groups. The connection between

rising parties and voters has changed because political parties are now formed alongside a new cleavage, rather than decades or centuries after. Political parties are actors, not subjects, in the formation of social divisions.

- Cleavage theory is about the interaction of cleavages rather than the replacement of one alignment by another. So instead of conceiving party system change as a process of realignment in which a new dimension of conflict comes to supersede a prior dimension, cleavage theory asks how the continued existence of one division affects the party-political expression of a subsequent one. In party systems that load the dice against new parties, a new cleavage can be expected to produce intense frictions *within* parties. In low-barrier multiparty systems, by contrast, a new cleavage can be expected to produce new challenging parties that exist alongside, without replacing, parties formed on prior cleavages.
- Lipset and Rokkan (1967) were alert to social changes that were corroding class conflict, but they had no idea that the containers – national states – were going to be transformed in the decades around the turn of the twenty-first century. Territorial identity as a motive for conflict was thought to be a thing of the past. Nationalism was viewed as the dead-end result of inter-war fascism, never to be repeated. Ethnic nationalism within states was considered an inert remnant of long-past peripheral resistance to nation building. In the absence of territorial identity – perhaps the most powerful source of mass political mobilization – domestic conflict was compressed to a left–right conflict about who gets what. When the political gorilla of nationalism left the room after World War II, domestic debate was narrowed to economic issues, i.e., the role of the state, taxes and welfare spending. Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 13) recognized that ‘Functional oppositions can only develop after some initial consolidation of the national territory,’ but they were unable to see that national territory might be deconsolidated in authoritative redesign.

A transnational cleavage

The institutional point of departure for a post-Lipset and Rokkan (1967) cleavage is a series of major reforms in the early 1990s that diminished the cost of international trade and migration while diffusing authority from central states to bodies within and among them. The Maastricht Treaty (1993) extended EU authority over wide ranges of public life, made it much easier for people to work in another EU country, created a common currency, and turned nationals into EU citizens. The dissolution of the Soviet empire in 1989 released more than one hundred million people to trade and circulate within the EU. The World Trade Organization (1994) was negotiated in the early 1990s, as were regional trade organizations, now totaling 35 in

number (Hooghe *et al.* [forthcoming](#)). The 1990s were the cusp of a rapid increase in international trade, international migration, and economic inequality that have their ideological roots in the Thatcher–Reagan years. However, the consensus on transnationalism encompassed the mainstream left as well the mainstream right.

The intellectual basis for transnationalism is broad and deep. The lower the transaction costs of international economic exchange, the greater the scope for specialization and economies of scale. A core premise of neoclassical economics is that introducing common standards and diminishing barriers to trade and investment increases economic growth. From a public goods perspective, national states are both too small and too large. Many of the most intractable problems that confront humanity – including global warming, failed states, species loss and environmental degradation – require ongoing co-operation among states and their populations. National sovereignty and its political expression, the national veto, are obstacles to problem-solving, which is why many international organizations pool authority among their member states in quasi-majoritarian decision-making. Functional efficiency in the provision of public goods calls for multilevel governance, both below and above the central state (Hooghe and Marks [2009, 2015](#)).

However, transnationalism proved to be highly contentious, particularly in Europe, where increased trade and intermingling of peoples went hand-in-hand with the creation of a supranational polity (Hurrelmann *et al.* [2015](#): 55–6). European integration raised fundamental issues of rule and belonging for those who wished to ‘defend national culture, language, community and national sovereignty against the influx of immigrants, against competing sources of identity within the state, and against external pressures from other countries and international organizations’ (Marks and Wilson [\[2000\]](#): 455; Prosser [\[2016\]](#): 748–9). Beginning in 1999, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) tapped the positions of political parties on a GAL versus TAN dimension which proved to be strongly associated with support for Europe.

Transnationalism also has transparent distributional consequences, biasing the gains from trade to those who have mobile assets. Losers who feel they are slipping with no prospect of upward mobility resent the dilution of the rights and protection of citizenship by a global élite that views national states and their laws as constraints to be finessed or arbitrated. As Wolf ([2016](#)) wrote in the *Financial Times*: ‘[t]he share of immigrants in populations has jumped sharply. It is hard to argue that this has brought large economic, social and cultural benefits to the mass of the population. But it has unquestionably benefited those at the top, including business.’ Resentment can be sharp among those who value national citizenship because they have few alternative sources of self-worth. Nationalism has long been the refuge of those who are insecure, who sense they are losing status, and who seek standing by identifying with the group. The promise of transnationalism has been

gains for all, but the experience of the past two decades is that it hurts many. Hence, opposition to transnationalism is for many a populist reaction against élites who have little sympathy for national borders (Inglehart and Norris 2016; van Kessel 2015).

The social basis

From the late 1990s, several writers began to consider European integration from a cleavage perspective.⁵ Explaining the rise of the vote for the radical right in Switzerland, Kriesi (1998: 180) pointed to ‘the emergence of yet another new cleavage – the cleavage opposing the new middle-class winners of the transformation of Western European societies to the group of losers of the very same process’. In these years, a flow of publications suggested that conflict over Europe cut across the left–right divide, that Europe was part of a larger cultural conflict, and that this conflict was socially structured. In a chapter titled, ‘Europe: A New Electoral Cleavage?’ Evans (1999: 220) made the case that Europe had ‘the potential to cross-cut and restructure partisan divisions in the British electorate’. Marks and Wilson (2000: 433) suggested that European integration amounts to a ‘constitutional revolution’, which they analyze from a cleavage perspective. Hooghe *et al.* (2002: 979) went on to argue that ‘nationalism, anti-immigration, and traditionalism go hand in hand’ and constitute a distinct dimension of conflict driven by radical right parties. And in his influential book, Bartolini (2005: 395, 404) asserted that European integration was a process of fundamental territorial re-articulation that could produce a new cleavage ‘rooted in ... life chances and material opportunities’ that would ‘cut heavily across, reshuffle, and reshape’ national political parties. Kriesi *et al.* (2006, 2012) have explored how European integration and immigration have structured preferences and political conflict in Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Austria by pitting the winners of globalization who favor transnational integration against losers who seek demarcation. ‘[T]wo of the most important groups on the winners’ side, highly educated people and socio-cultural specialists, are far more supportive of opening borders than are those with lower levels of education and those who are unskilled workers’ (Kriesi *et al.* 2012: 73).

At its nationalist pole, this cleavage connects the defense of national culture to national sovereignty, opposition to immigration and trade skepticism. These are reinforcing issues for those who feel they have suffered transnationalism – the down and out, the culturally insecure, the unskilled, the de-skilled, i.e., those who lack the education needed to compete in a mobile world. Education emerges as a powerful structuring factor with a double effect. Education is necessary for those who rely on their own talents to live an economically secure life in a world with low barriers to trade. Just as

importantly, education shapes the way a person looks at the world and their fellow humans. Education allows a person to see things from the other side, a key to empathy for those who have a different way of life (Bornschieer and Kriesi 2012; Kuhn *et al.* 2016: 38).

Education is strongly associated with attitudes on trade, immigration and globalization (Bechtel *et al.* 2014; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006, 2007; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014).⁶ This became evident when political economists investigating the economic undergirding of trade attitudes found a powerful and unexpected educational effect that could not be reduced to economic interest (Mayda and Rodrik 2005; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2002). Individuals with limited education are much more likely to have an exclusive national identity which predisposes them to Euroskepticism (Polyakova and Fligstein 2016: Table 5; Hakhverdian *et al.* 2013: 534). Panel data suggest that a powerful selection effect may be at work (Kuhn *et al.* 2017; Lancee and Sarasin 2015). Individuals who go to university are predisposed to having cosmopolitan attitudes.

The euro crisis and the migration crisis

Just as the Bolshevik revolution was a critical juncture in the expression of the class cleavage, so the euro crisis and the migration crisis can be considered as critical for the emergence of a transnational cleavage. These crises have raised the salience of Europe and immigration in public debate, intensified divisions within mainstream parties, and have led to an upsurge of rejectionist political parties (Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Hobolt and Tilley 2016). At the very least, it is 'tempting' – to adopt a word that Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 47) use in a similar context – to say that something fundamental is taking place, namely the generation of a distinct, rooted and durable conflict that will overlay and disrupt the existing structure of party competition.

The crises themselves provide some clues regarding their larger significance. The first, economic, crisis transmuted into a distinctly European crisis when Chancellor Merkel declared soon after the Lehman Brothers collapse that every country must act separately to defend its financial institutions. Under intense pressure from German public opinion, which was vehemently opposed to eurozone bailouts, Merkel committed her government to preserving Article 125 of the Maastricht Treaty, the anti-bailout clause prohibiting shared liabilities or financial assistance. Eurozone governments were trapped in a postfunctionalist dilemma. On the one side they were impelled by an unrelenting functional logic toward fiscal union. On the other they were unnerved by tenacious domestic resistance.

The result was a series of incremental reforms that staved off disaster while prolonging the agony of austerity. Fearing open debate, parliamentary votes and popular participation, national governments reverted to conventional

diplomacy which had the intended effect of empowering national executives and, at least temporarily, bypassing EU institutions (Jones *et al.* 2016).⁷ The European Stability Mechanism was based on a treaty modification which, ingeniously, avoided referendums by requiring only a two-line amendment to the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. Since 2012, the European Central Bank, a technocratic institution insulated from popular pressures, has been instrumental in providing much needed liquidity. Piecemeal reforms, alongside banking union and upgraded financial surveillance, did just enough to save the eurozone and avert the default of heavily indebted countries. National governments have taken the path of least political resistance, keeping the euro afloat with regulatory measures, while avoiding populist pressures that would arise in major treaty reform (*cf.* Börzel and Risse 2017).

The outcome was a North–South rift between creditor and debtor nations (Laffan 2016; Tsoukalis 2014). Discursive analysis reveals that this rift has sharp national edges and feeds on simplistic national stereotypes (Mylonas 2012). The net result was to raise the salience of European integration in domestic debate, particularly among groups and parties taking extreme positions (Hutter *et al.* 2016; Risse 2014).

Expert estimates summarized in Figure 1(a) show that the salience of European integration has increased markedly since 2006, from a mean of 4.60 in that year to 5.93 in 2014, a difference that is highly significant ($p = .000$). Figure 1(a) also reveals that salience is skewed to Euroskeptical parties, which is what one might expect on an issue that has become polarized. Northern imposition of *ordo-liberalism* and fiscal austerity backed by a system of sanctions prolonged the euro crisis while it failed to contain the rise of nationalist political parties. Ironically, radical right parties gained in the very countries where national interest shaped government policy. In the South, by contrast, austerity and currency inflexibility produced economic misery and resentment which was mobilized chiefly by the radical left.

Figure 1(b) reveals that the salience accorded to immigration is similar to that for European integration. Political parties taking extreme positions on immigration tend to emphasize the issue more than those taking moderate positions. And, similar to party salience on Europe, the U-curve is tilted up for parties that take strong rejectionist positions. Party salience on immigration in 2010 (Figure 1(b)) is considerably higher in North-western and Southern Europe than in Central/Eastern Europe (6.63, 6.23 and 4.09 respectively, on a 0 to 10 scale). Whereas countries in the North-west and South were recipients in the flow of population within Europe, those in the East were donors. A regional breakdown of the salience data suggests that even before the migration crisis of 2015, immigration was perceived to be a major issue in the North-west and South.

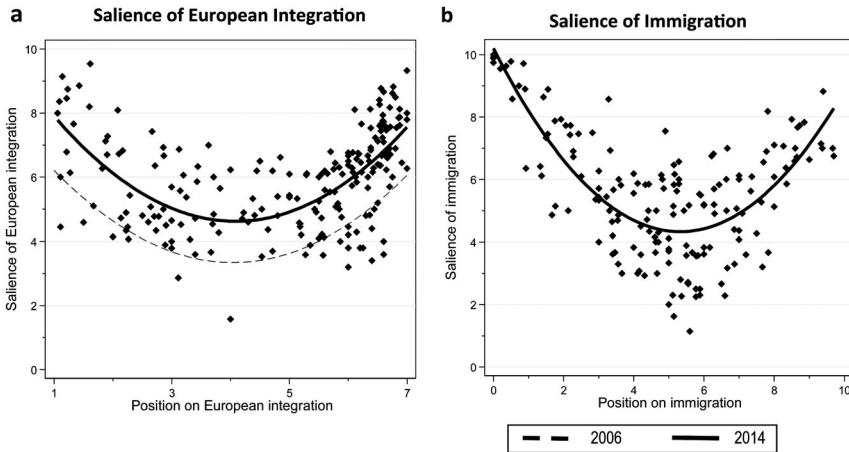


Figure 1. (a) Salience of European integration. (b) Salience of immigration. Source: 2010 data from the CHES trend file. (b) Salience is estimated on an 11-point scale ranging from 'not important at all' (0) to 'extremely important' (10). $N = 157$. Source: 2010 data from the CHES trend file.

Note: (a) Salience is estimated on an 11-point scale ranging from 'no important at all' (0) to 'extremely important' (10). The continuous line is the fit line for 2014 ($N = 208$); the dashed line is the fit line for 2006 ($N = 158$).

The party salience question on immigration was asked to experts only in 2010, so we cannot assess change. However, mass surveys suggest that the migration crisis, which became acute from August 2015, ratcheted up public concern. In spring 2014, prior to the crisis, 15 per cent of those surveyed by Eurobarometer selected immigration as 'one of the two most important issues facing [our country] at the moment'. In no Eastern country was immigration flagged as important by 10 per cent of the respondents, while nine Northern or Southern countries registered double-digit figures. In spring 2016, the overall figure had increased to 28 per cent, a level of concern second only to unemployment (33 per cent) and greater than for the economic situation (19 per cent), health (16 per cent), or terrorism (16 per cent). Central and Eastern European countries were no longer insulated. Immigration was a top-two issue in all Eastern countries except Romania.

Sticky political parties

Cleavage theory is a theory of discontinuity in the response of party systems to serious exogenous shocks. Change comes chiefly in the form of new political parties that challenge existing parties on a new cleavage (Rovny 2012; de Vries and Hobolt 2012). The positional maneuverability of political parties

established on prior cleavages is constrained by self-selected activists, self-replicating leaders and embedded reputations. Political parties can be considered to be satisficers with ‘their own “bounded rationality” that shapes the way in which [they] come to terms with new challenges and uncertainties’ (Dalton and McAllister 2015; Kitschelt *et al.* 1999; Marks and de Vries 2012; Marks and Wilson 2000: 434). Complex organizations, in general, adapt well to gradual change, but are challenged to respond to major change in their environment (Aldrich 2007).

The evidence is in line with this. Political parties in Europe appear to be sticky, as a cleavage perspective would lead one to expect. Party systems have responded to concerns about European integration and immigration, but this has not happened because political parties have shifted position. Figure 2 displays kernel density estimations (KDE) on party positioning on European integration for 215 national political parties in 24 European countries (Bakker *et al.* 2015). Each curve represents the probability distribution for a change in party positioning across two consecutive waves of the CHES survey. Negative numbers on the X-axis denote a decline in

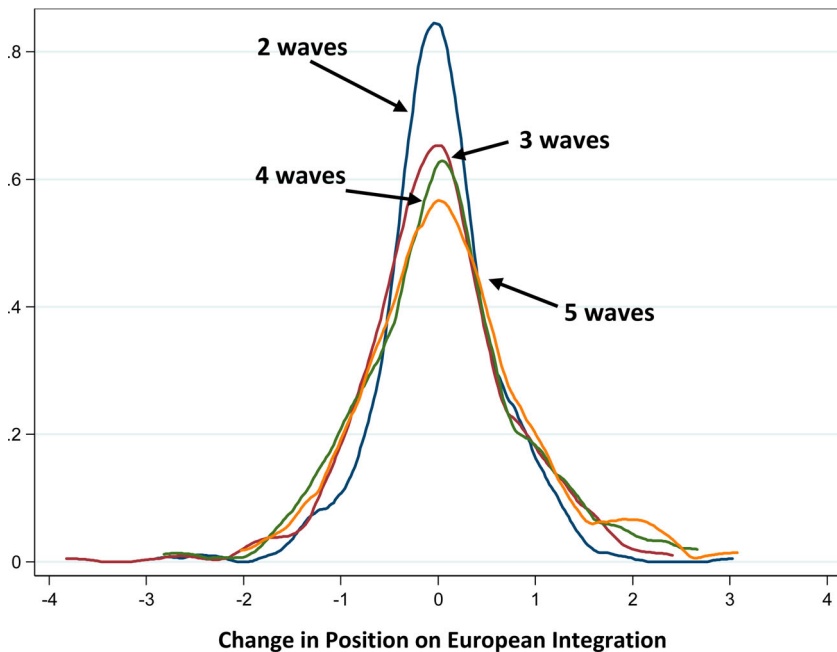


Figure 2. Kernel density curve for change in party position on European integration, 1999–2014. Source: 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 data from the CHES trend file.

Note: Change in support for European integration on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favor) over two waves ($N = 566$); three waves ($N = 388$); four waves ($N = 230$); and five waves ($N = 98$).

support on a seven-point scale, and positive numbers an increase in support.⁸ The probability distribution is strongly peaked: 90.1 per cent of the political parties surveyed move less than one point in either direction across consecutive surveys. There is a bit more movement across longer time spans, but not much. Just 17.2 per cent of the parties shift more than one point over three CHES waves, and 20.0 per cent shift more than one point over four CHES waves. This is consistent with Rohrschneider and Whitefield's (2016: 145) finding, based on their expert survey, that parties 'do not change their integration stance to any great degree'.

Expert evaluations of party positioning on immigration go back to 2006. Over the period 2006 to 2014 we detect similar stability (see Table 1). Of 140 parties that we track over the period, only three shift more than two points in any one direction on immigration. The average absolute change over this period is 0.59 on immigration and 0.55 on European integration, both on a seven-point scale.⁹ Parties tend to switch back and forth over time. The average raw change over this eight-year period is just -0.02 points on immigration and +0.05 points on European integration.

Before we move on, we need to assess the validity of this finding. Party manifestos, in general, reveal greater change than expert judgments (Dalton and McAllister 2015: 767ff). There are several possible reasons for this. One is that coding of party manifestos at the level of an individual issue might produce greater change than expert evaluation at a more general dimensional level. This would be the case if political parties were able to maneuver on specific issues, but were more constrained on bundles of issues. A second possibility is that experts think along cleavage lines in 'recording the longstanding core principled positions of parties', which might lead them to downgrade efforts by parties to shift their positions (Marks *et al.* 2007; McDonald *et al.* 2007). This would happen if manifestos

Table 1. Change in party positioning on immigration and European integration, 2006 to 2014.

Change over three waves	Absolute change		Directional change	
	Immigration	European integration	Immigration	European integration
Mean value	0.59	0.55	-0.02	0.05
Median value	0.49	0.35	0.05	0.07
Min; max change	0; 2.30	0; 2.79	-2.30; +1.80	-2.79; +2.41
# parties moving ± 2 points	3	6	3 more restrictive	3 more oppositional, 3 more supportive
Standard Deviation	0.50	0.53	0.78	0.76
Number of parties	140	143	140	143

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker *et al.* 2015).

Notes: European integration is scaled from strongly opposed (1) to strongly in favor (7). For comparability we rescale the original 11-point scale for immigration to a seven-point scale ranging from restrictive (1) to liberal (7).

record attempts by parties to shape *how* they are perceived, while experts evaluate how political parties are *actually* perceived. If so, one would expect experts to use manifestos as one source among others to estimate party positioning. Experts can plausibly be regarded as Bayesians who use party manifestos alongside other indicators, such as speeches made by party leaders, to update their judgments (Steenbergen and Marks 2007).

One might expect voters to be Bayesians too. Given the time and cognitive constraints on their political attention, voters tend to rely on generalized conceptions of party identity (Green *et al.* 2002). These tend to be stable over time. The European Election Survey (EES) asks voters to place political parties on European integration, and the results are similar to those using CHES data (Adams *et al.* 2016; Online Appendix). Dalton and McAllister (2015: 768) find striking consistency across time for the left–right positioning of parties, with associations from election to election around 0.96. Remarkably, the consistency in party positioning appears to decay little across three or even four elections. On this evidence, one must look beyond party positioning to explain how party systems respond to exogenous shocks.

This is a scenario for disruption. If existing parties cannot radically shift their issue positions, one would anticipate: (1) sharp tensions within mainstream parties on a new dimension, particularly in high barrier systems; and (2) the growth of challenging parties, particularly in low barrier systems. The evidence we have is in line with this. Figure 3 reveals that serious internal dissent is highest among political parties that take a middling position on European integration in 2014. In response to a new cleavage, moderation does not produce consensus. Dissent is lower among parties that take polar positions.

Conservative parties may be particularly prone to internal dissent because they combine neoliberal support for transnationalism and nationalist defense of sovereignty (Marks and Wilson 2000). Four of the six parties with a dissent score higher than 5.5 in 2014 are conservative: the British Conservative Party (dissent = 7.3); Lithuania's Order and Justice (6.0); Italy's Forza Italia (5.9); and France's UMP (5.8). Institutional rules play a role here. Britain and France, the European democracies with the highest barriers to party entry, have had exceptional levels of intra-party dissent in 2014 and over the 1999 to 2014 period as a whole (Adam *et al.* 2017: 11). The British Conservative party has been more deeply riven than any other party, and in the wake of the Brexit referendum is more bitterly divided than ever (Hobolt 2016; Tzelgov 2014).

The rise of parties on the transnational cleavage

Moderate political parties based in the cleavages described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have declined across Europe. On average, the vote share for

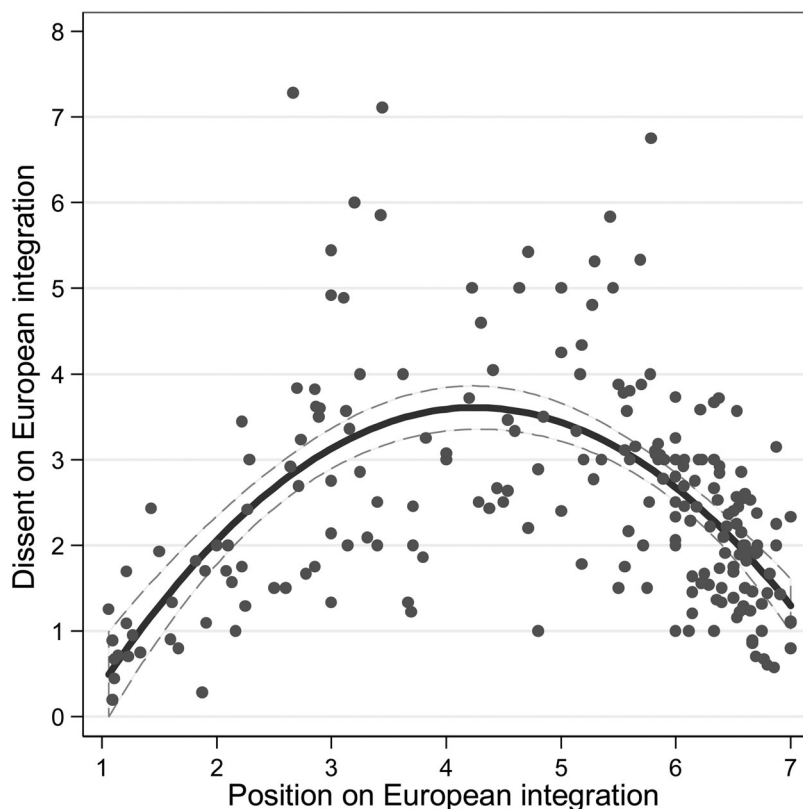


Figure 3. Dissent on European integration.

Note: $N = 208$ political parties. Dissent is estimated on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (party was completely united) to 10 (party was extremely divided) in response to 'What about conflict or dissent within parties over European integration over the course of 2014?' Source: Data for 2014 from the CHES trend file.

social democratic, Christian democratic, conservativ, and liberal parties fell from 75 per cent in the first national election after 2000 to 64 per cent in the national election prior to January 2017. With few exceptions, these parties have continued to support European integration at a time of increasing skepticism. In 2014, just 7 of 112 mainstream parties took a position on the negative side of our European integration scale.

Consensus on Europe among mainstream parties did not matter much when the issue was marginal. Mainstream parties sought to de-emphasize the issue to 'retain the current dimensional competition' (de Vries and Hobolt 2012: 263; Green-Pedersen 2012: 126–7). Prior to the euro crisis, Peter Mair (2007: 12) could write that the famed European giant described by Franklin and van der Eijk (1995) 'is not only sleeping, but has been deliberately sedated, so that Jack – in the shape of the mainstream parties – can run up and down the European beanstalk at will'. No longer. The giant has

awakened in an era of constraining dissensus when attitudes over Europe are expressed in national elections, European elections and national referendum campaigns which escape mainstream party control (Grande and Hutter 2016: 40; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Treib 2014).

In much of Europe the crises have reinforced a new transnational cleavage that has at its core a cultural conflict pitting libertarian, universalistic values against the defense of nationalism and particularism (Bornschieer and Kriesi 2012; Golder 2016: 488; Höglinger 2016). Recent literature has spawned a variety of concepts to describe this: demarcation vs integration (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2012); libertarian-universalistic vs traditionalist-communitarian (Bornschieer 2010); universalism vs particularism (Beramendi *et al.* 2015; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015); cosmopolitan vs communitarian (Teney *et al.* 2014); and GAL vs TAN (Hooghe *et al.* 2002).

Europe and immigration – issues that have risen sharply in salience as a result of the crises – are flashpoints in the generation of this cleavage. What matters from a cleavage perspective is how issues that might otherwise be unconnected form a coherent program, how political parties gain a reputation around such programs, how those programs are differentiated from those of existing parties on prior cleavages, and how parties on a new cleavage are polarized in response to those issues.

Europe and immigration are perceived from diametrically opposing standpoints by TAN and GAL political parties. Whereas social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative and liberal parties are similarly positioned on these issues, TAN parties and GAL parties take distinct positions that place them at the polar extremes. The coefficient for variation among TAN and GAL parties is 0.53 on European integration and 0.96 on immigration. For mainstream parties it is 0.19 and 0.38 respectively in 2014 (Polk *et al.* 2017).

Whereas political parties formed on prior cleavages conceive of Europe and immigration as weakly linked, TAN and GAL parties conceive them as intimately connected (March and Rommerskirchen 2015). The association between the positions that mainstream parties take on Europe and immigration is 0.33; for radical right and green parties it is 0.82 in 2014. Transnationalism in the form of support for European co-operation and free movement is strongly consistent with the social libertarian, cosmopolitan and universalist values of green parties. Equally, but in the opposite camp, rejection of European integration and immigration lie at the core of TAN defense of the nation against external forces (Tillman 2013). TAN and GAL parties take more extreme positions on Europe and immigration than mainstream political parties; they tie these issues into a tightly coherent worldview; they consider them as intrinsic to their programs; and, correspondingly, they give these issues great salience.

Every country in Europe has been deeply affected by the political fallout of the crises, but the way in which party systems have responded varies widely.

Cleavage theory suggests that this reflects the party-political expression of prior cleavages and the character of the crises (Casal Bértoa 2014). Figure 4 reveals some territorial patterns. TAN and GAL parties have grown alongside radical left parties in Northern Europe. The ellipse at the center of Figure 4 encompasses eight countries with a pronounced transnational cleavage, mobilized chiefly by the radical right, alongside radical left parties which conceive transnationalism as an extension of economic left–right distributional conflict (Brigeivich and Edwards 2016; van Elsas *et al.* 2016; Hobolt and de Vries 2016: 7). Radical left parties reject European integration on the ground that it hurts those who cannot take advantage of transnational mobility, but they retain a commitment to working-class internationalism and do not take a strong position against immigration.

In Eastern European countries located within the tall ellipse in Figure 4, the predominant response to the crises has been the growth of radical right parties. Radical left parties are weak or absent. In these countries, leftist distributional concerns have been absorbed by radical right parties in their nationalist/traditionalist agenda. Historically, communist rule combined economic

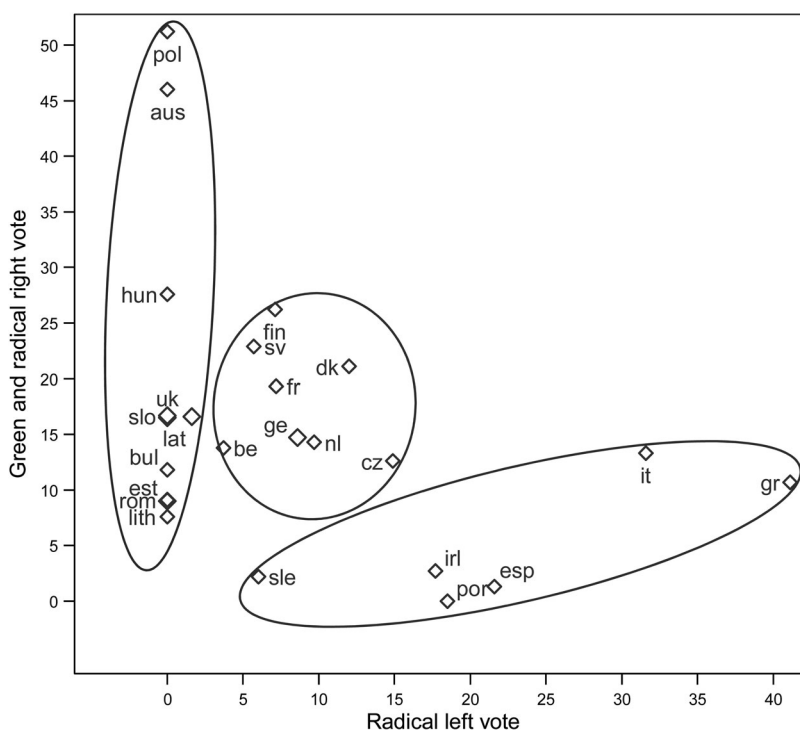


Figure 4. Green, radical right, and radical left vote.

Note: Vote totals for green/radical right and radical left party families in the national election prior to January 2017. See Online Appendix for details.

left ideology and TAN values, and this generated subsequent opposition from right-GAL parties campaigning for market reform, liberal democracy, and EU membership (Coman 2015: 3; Marks *et al.* 2006; Vachudova and Hooghe 2009: 188).¹⁰

The political fallout from the crises came later to Eastern Europe than to other parts of Europe. All but Slovenia and Slovakia were outside the euro-zone, and were shielded from the bitter distributional conflicts that took place in Southern Europe.¹¹ Moreover, Eastern Europe supplied, rather than received, EU migrants (Allen 2015: 8–10; Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009; Koev 2015; Rovny 2014b). Immigration became a hot issue only from May 2015 following the European Commission's distribution scheme.¹²

The United Kingdom (UK) is located among the countries of Eastern Europe in Figure 4 with a radical TAN party and no radical left party. The UK's plurality electoral system raises the barrier to party entry in response to a new cleavage and exacerbates conflict within the major parties. The transnational cleavage has been expressed outside the party system in the Brexit referendum and by the flash rise of the UK Independence Party. The Conservative party is riven by conflict between its nationalist and neoliberal factions, and in the absence of a radical left party, the Labour party has shifted to the left.

Southern European countries have seen the rise of radical left parties in response to the crises. Largely as a consequence of austerity, the euro crisis reinforced rather than challenged economic left–right conflict centered on distribution and welfare. This has sharpened the economic case against European integration (Otjes and Katsanidou 2016). Whereas TAN parties in the North strive for the ethnic homogeneity of the nation, radical left parties, predominant in the South, emphasize civic nationalism and territorial control (Halikiopoulou *et al.* 2012). The distributional framing of the euro crisis also explains why, in the South, radical right parties have so far not been the chief beneficiaries of mainstream disaffection. In Portugal, Spain and Ireland, conservative parties have long had a strong TAN inclination (Alonso and Kaltwasser 2015). The same is true in Slovenia, where experts estimate the mainstream conservative party, the Slovenian Democratic party, in 2014 as 8.4 on the 10-point TAN scale. Slovenia, which joined the eurozone in 2007, is the only former communist country where the radical left gains more electoral support than the radical right.¹³ Only in Italy and Greece did radical right parties have more than 2 per cent of the vote prior to the crisis (Ignazi 2003). In Italy, radical TAN support has remained just above 10 per cent, while in Greece it increased from 3.7 per cent in 2007 to 10.7 per cent in the 2015 national election (Ellinas 2015; Lamprianou and Ellinas 2016). However, in both countries, the radical left has won the major share of the discontented vote.

Conclusion

The experience of the past 10 years following the economic crisis and migration crisis leads us to reconsider the research program initiated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The reasons for the rejection of the program from the 1980s are several, and they remain persuasive. Party systems have unfrozen as new political parties have risen and old parties have declined. More fundamentally, the organizations that tied voters to parties – including churches for confessional parties and unions for socialist parties – encompass a smaller share of the population and have less influence on those they do encompass. Finally, the life-long attributes that structured political preference – chiefly social class and religion – have lost some predictive power.

However, we believe that these developments do not exhaust cleavage theory. Cleavage theory hypothesizes that the response of a political party to a new social division is constrained by its location on a prior social division. Just as it was difficult for a party based on religious conflict to subsume class conflict, so it is difficult for a political party based on class conflict to subsume conflict over transnationalism. Hence, cleavage theory explains party system change as a disruptive process rather than an incremental process. Extant political parties are in constant motion as they seek to adapt their positions to the preferences of voters. However, their efforts are constrained by the policy commitments of self-selected activists and leaders, by brand reputations embedded in the expectations of voters, and by the interests and values of their social base.

Hence, the dynamics of long-term and short-term change appear to be different. Up close, one can detect almost continuous adjustment by political parties to the preferences of voters. Over longer reaches of time, they appear to be moving in quicksand. The crises reveal this starkly, and provoke a theoretical challenge: how can one put short-term strategic response and long-term cleavage constraints on the same page?

Cleavage theory implies that party system change is discontinuous. It is characterized by periods of relative stability as political parties jostle to gain support and by periods of abrupt change when new political parties rise up in response to a critical juncture. The evidence presented here suggests that the crises of the past decade may be such a critical juncture for Europe. In a Downsian model of issue competition, one would expect existing political parties to respond to voter preferences by supplying appropriate policies. However, as cleavage theory predicts, the positional flexibility of political parties is heavily constrained. Change has come not because mainstream parties have shifted in response to voter preferences, but because voters have turned to parties with distinctive profiles on the new cleavage. These parties raise issues related to Europe and immigration that mainstream parties would rather ignore. Radical TAN parties set the frame of competition

on these transnational issues, and green parties take diametrically opposite positions. Both parties give these issues much greater salience in their appeals to voters than mainstream parties, and they are less handicapped by internal divisions.

The result, according to cleavage theory is not realignment, but accretion. The shaping power of prior cleavages diminishes over time, but few die completely. The territorial cleavage, the religious cleavage, and the class cleavage have each lost bite, but none has been extinguished. Cleavage theory conceives layers of partisan attachment rather than the replacement of one dimension of contestation by another. The party system of a country reflects its history of prior struggles as well as its current divides.

Because the expression of a cleavage depends on the institutionalization of prior conflicts, a uniform response to a new cleavage is unusual. The one exception in Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) account is the class cleavage, rooted in the industrial revolution, which produced major socialist parties across the board.¹⁴ The transnational cleavage has had distinctly different expressions across Europe. This reflects the contrasting effects and differential timing of the economic and migration crisis in the different regions of Europe which play out in the context of prior cleavages. The outcome, in broad terms, is that the South has seen radical left parties mobilize on the class divide. In most former communist countries, by contrast, the radical right has catalyzed the transnational cleavage and the radical left is weak or absent. Most Central and Northern countries have seen radical right parties mobilize on the transnational cleavage, with green parties at the opposite pole and radical left parties pressing distributional issues.¹⁵

Lipset and Rokkan would not be surprised to find that a period of transformative transnationalism has given rise to an intense political reaction. Viewed from the present, the cleavage structure of Europe begins with one sweeping jurisdictional reform, the rise of the national state, and finishes with another, the internationalization of economic exchange, migration and political authority. The cleavage arising from national state formation is still very much in evidence in minority communities that continue to resist national assimilation (Hooghe and Marks 2016). The cleavage arising from transnationalism may also endure. It is grounded in educational opportunities that have persistent effects over a person's life and which are conveyed to offspring. However, the functional pressures that have given rise to transnationalism are perhaps even more durable. Transnational exchange and supranational governance reflect the benefits of scale in human affairs. Even if the EU were to fail, immigration stop and trade decline, the forces that have led to transnationalism are likely to persist.

Notes

1. We would like to thank David Attewell for research assistance. Earlier drafts were presented at a workshop, Theory Meets Crisis, organized by the authors at the Schuman Centre, European University Institute, 30 June–1 July 2016, at the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 1–3 September 2016, at a conference, ‘Stein Rokkan’s Heritage to Contemporary Political Science: Understanding Representational and Policy-Making Challenges in Multi-Jurisdictional Polities,’ University of Bergen, 20–21 September 2016, the 26th PhD Summer School of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Parties at the University of Nottingham, 23 September 2016, and the Comparative Working Group at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 18 October 2016. We thank participants at these events, and especially Jan Rovny and Frank Schimmelfennig, for comments and suggestions. This research was co-funded by the EUENGAGE HORIZON grant #649281 and by the Center for European Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. We also thank the Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute, for hosting us as Fellows in June–July 2016 and for financing and hosting the conference ‘Theory Meets Crisis’ in June 2016, where a first draft of this paper was presented.
2. TAN refers to the tradition/authority/national pole of a cultural dimension with GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) at the opposite pole.
3. This has affinities with Marxism. Karl Marx regarded class consciousness as the outcome of collective struggle in which individuals would come to see their fate as bound to that of their class. Objective class location had to be activated in conflict before one could speak of class as a political category.
4. It is simply not possible, on strictly logical grounds, to identify a vote maximizing strategy for any party in a populated two-dimensional space (Laver and Sergenti 2012: 43).
5. Inglehart (1971: 992) detected a post-industrial cleavage in which a young, educated section of the middle class would realign on libertarian values and workers would be potential recruits for conservative parties. In his early formulation, Inglehart made the connection with internationalism:

[t]he libertarian position seems linked with internationalism. This follows from the fact that, according to our analysis, the post-bourgeois groups have attained security in regard to both the safety and sustenance needs; insofar as the nation-state is seen as a bulwark protecting the individual against foreign threats, it is less important to post-bourgeois respondents (1971: 997).

6. Access to higher education shapes a person’s life-long attitudes (Triventi 2013: 499). Controlling for socioeconomic status and attitudinal variables, Coffé and Voorposte (2010: 442) find that ‘young people whose parents vote for the SVP [Swiss People’s Party] are significantly more likely to support the SVP’. Longitudinal survey research suggests that attitudes underpinning right-wing extremism are rooted in early childhood, persist over a person’s life, and are transmitted inter-generationally. Analyzing 19 waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), Avdeenko and Siedler (2015) find that a male whose parents express affinity toward a right-wing party is 13 per cent more likely to support a radical right party, controlling for income, education and unemployment.

7. In June 2010, these governments set up a limited liability company under Luxembourg law with 17 national shareholders to provide emergency loans to Greece, Ireland and Portugal. In September 2012, they set up an intergovernmental organization, the European Stability Mechanism, again in Luxembourg, this time under international law, to provide a financial firewall for distressed countries. As Schimmelfennig (2015: 179) notes, 'asymmetrical interdependence resulted in a burden-sharing and institutional design that reflected German preferences and its allies predominantly'.
8. Kernel density estimation is a non-parametric method in which the data are treated as a randomized sample and the distribution is smoothened. We use Stata's default, the Epanechnikov estimator, which selects a smoothing bandwidth of 0.123 for the two-wave kernel function and a bandwidth of 0.171 for the three-wave function.
9. Positioning on immigration is estimated on an 11-point scale ranging from 'strongly opposes tough policy on immigration' (0) to 'strongly favors tough policy on immigration' (10). For comparability, we rescale the variable 0 to 7, and reverse the scale so that a higher value indicates a pro-immigration stance.
10. This pattern is less pronounced in the communist periphery (the Baltic countries, Croatia and Slovenia), where the communist federation had protected ethnic minorities. As a result, the successor parties to the communist parties tend to be more open to multiculturalism and GAL values, while the nationalist agenda has been captured by mainstream right-wing parties (Rovny 2014a, 2014b).
11. Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2016: 142) note that in Central and Eastern Europe 'party reputations are less strongly embedded in the electorate'. Cross-national variation in the ideological space is also greater (Rovny and Polk 2016; Savage 2014) and there is a larger role for non-ideological issues concerning corruption, good governance and populism. This has produced political parties combining moderate agendas on economic and sociocultural issues with a radical anti-establishment rhetoric (e.g., Res Publica in Estonia, New Era in Latvia, SMER in Slovakia and TOP09 in the Czech Republic). The phenomenon is described as 'centrist populism' (Pop-Eleches 2010) and 'mainstream reformism' (Hanley and Sikk 2016: 523).
12. In 2010, the salience of immigration for radical right parties in Eastern Europe is 6.56 on a 0 to 10 scale, compared to 9.40 in Western Europe.
13. The United Left was founded in 2014 by a group of activists inspired by Occupy Wall Street.
14. Though not in the United States for reasons explored in Lipset and Marks (2000).
15. These general patterns require refinement in comparative national and subnational analysis.

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