

Against Europe? Untangling the Links between Ideology and Euroscepticism

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Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between Euroscepticism and ideology in Western European countries and focuses on how this relationship is mediated by party system characteristics and partisanship. Additionally, we explore some distinctive national patterns in the relationship between Euroscepticism and ideology by focusing on four South European countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece), which despite their similar historical and social trajectories, as well as common experiences during the euro crisis in relation to the other Western European nations, they deviate in different ways from the European-wide pattern of interaction between ideology and Euroscepticism. Using data from the European Election Study of 2014 and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, we show that the relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism can be heavily influenced by characteristics at the level of the party system, such as degree of party system polarization and the levels of supply of left-wing and right-wing Euroscepticism, as well as individual party legacies that can filter the ideology-Euroscepticism relationship through the influence of partisanship. Our findings highlight the importance of parties and party leadership in the future development of Euroscepticism within European polities as evidenced by the distinct national trajectories of Euroscepticism. Political entrepreneurs have the power to directly or indirectly politicize the issue of Europe and to help determine the overall level of Euroscepticism within a specific polity by providing cues to the electorate and mainly to their core partisans.

Keywords: euroscepticism; euro crisis; ideology; polarization; Southern Europe

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Introduction

Scholars in political science have argued that since the 1970s party and electoral competition is increasingly structured by a diversity of policy issues rather than long-established cleavages. Besides the growing importance of some non-economic issues – such as environment, law and order, immigration, etc. -, the European issue has gained salience over the last decades (Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Grande 2014). To date, a large body of literature exists that addresses how political parties and voters have adjusted their positions along this new dimension. To a large extent, this adaptation has concerned negative attitudes towards the European Union (EU), which have expanded significantly over the last decades, shifting from the margins to the mainstream of national political debates (Brack and Startin 2015).

The eurocrisis has redefined qualitatively the way citizens and parties perceive the EU and the integration process. On the one hand, the position of parties on European issues has become increasingly diversified. While most mainstream parties have usually shown pro-EU positions, during the crisis it can be seen that even moderate parties present more critical views, with some divergences emerging in critical ways. On the other, the salience of the EU has increased at the domestic level, making this dimension more likely to shape voters' attitudes and inter-party competition. In particular, macro-level events such as the enlargement of 2004, the immigration catastrophe and Eurozone crisis have put an end to the so-called 'permissive consensus' (Hutter et al. 2016).

A consistent body of studies have found that Euroscepticism has to be found more frequently at the ideological extremes of the party system, indicating that people in the center are least Eurosceptic, while people on the far right/left are somewhat more Eurosceptic. However, a recent study shows that, despite their common rejection of the European integration, parties and voters at the extremes of the ideological continuum present distinct critiques towards the EU (van Elsas et al. 2016). This means that the content and motivations of 'radical' Euroscepticism differ and these differences depend on the specific EU dimension under study. In particular, left-wing citizens present higher levels of dissatisfaction with the EU performance, while right-wing citizens are more prone to reject future strengthening of the EU. In addition, this work also shows that there are important differences between extreme ideological groups with regard to the determinants of Euroscepticism.

Despite these general patterns, van Elsas et al.'s study also suggests that there are important variations across countries. If we look at the party system level, we can observe distinct patterns of Euroscepticism. Why, for example, Euroscepticism – conceived in terms of both evaluation of institutional performance and rejection

of further integration - is confined to the left of the ideological spectrum in Portugal, while in other countries (e.g. Italy) criticism is mainly based on rightist positions? This paper addresses this issue by relying on data from the European Election Study (EES) and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), which allow us to consider the relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism taking into account party system characteristics, a neglected aspect in the study of Euroscepticism.

This study aims to move this debate one step forward by examining cross-national and cross-party variations. As a number of studies have noticed (e.g. Buhr 2012), despite the growing levels of Eurosceptic attitudes in the crisis-ridden Europe, Eurosceptic parties have not always benefited from this shift in public opinion. The strategy of party leadership and party system characteristics play an important role in shaping distinct trajectories. On the one hand, new or extremist parties have been successful in politicizing the European issue only when mainstream parties have converged on pro-integration positions. On the other, in some countries, while the structure of political opportunity provided fertile ground for this politicization, extremist parties have not benefited from public concern about EU integration. For example, the (Eurosceptic) radical right did not make any inroads into the national party systems of Ireland, Portugal or Spain, whereas the far left was incapable to gain any ground in Austria, Belgium and Germany. This structural variation points to the need to understand how the convergence (or lack thereof) between left and right-wing parties on European issues is associated Eurosceptic attitudes at the individual level.

The central argument of the study is that Euroscepticism is not only a strategic tool used by challenger parties to improve their electoral performance by responding to preferences in the electorate but that the causal arrow runs in the opposite direction as well. Historical national patterns of political supply and the ideological legacies of parties on the issue of Europe condition patterns of preference formation at the level of the electorate within national polities, due to the fact that Euroscepticism is bound to party identities and must fit the *raison d'être* of partisan core values. Overall this research complements the dominant debate by examining macro and micro political factors that have been hitherto disregarded in the study of Euroscepticism.

The contribution of this study is twofold. On the one hand, this study argues that a more complex pattern exists between ideology and Eurosceptic attitudes. On the other, we focus on alternative explanations that may better explain why distinct patterns emerge throughout Europe. Thus, the research proceeds in two steps. In

the first part, we perform multilevel analyses in the 15 older EU member states¹ in order to identify general patterns as well as national cases that deviate from the pattern that has been identified in the literature (e.g. van Elsas et al. 2016). These countries have been selected based on the assumption that political parties have had more time to establish a reputation and distinctive programmatic identity on the issue of European integration. In the second, we investigate specific case studies (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) in order to explore causal mechanisms behind the distinct patterns with an emphasis on the impact of partisanship. Drawing specifically on the example of countries in the South European periphery involving countries that have been hard-hit by the economic crisis, it will be possible to show that the impact of the eurocrisis is not homogeneous but it interacts with the national political context.

We begin the paper by presenting the existing literature on Euroscepticism and its relationship to the left-right dimension. This allows us to derive a series of expectations concerning the degree to which EU attitudes are linked to ideology and the impact of the party system. Thereafter, we discuss data and methodology and present an overview of the evolution of Eurosceptic attitudes across countries and party types. Finally, we test our predictions of what explains negative attitudes towards European integration. The conclusions summarize the findings and discuss some implications for democratic representation.

Euroscepticism, ideology and the role of political parties: theory and findings

The study of Euroscepticism has attracted a growing attention over past decades from different perspectives and fields of study. As several authors have already observed (Serricchio et al. 2013; Brack and Startin 2015), the shift from an elite-oriented project to the increasing involvement of citizens has attributed more relevance to the topic. More recently, the emergence and success of new actors opposing the European integration has raised deep concerns on the future of the EU and the divorce between EU political elites and voters.

Euroscepticism has been traditionally defined as ‘contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’ (Taggart 1998: 366). The literature has emphasized the complex nature of Euroscepticism and has deepened our understanding of this phenomenon by disentangling several dimensions (Mudde 2011; Serricchio et al. 2013). From this viewpoint, conventional wisdom on Euroscepticism has traditionally distinguished ‘political’ vs ‘instrumental’ Euroscepticism. While the first dimension focuses on the reduction of sovereignty

¹ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

of the nation-state in deciding on certain policy domains, the second gives emphasis on the benefits one member state receives from belonging to the EU (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Boomgarden et al. 2011; Deflem and Pampel 1996; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Hooghe and Marks 2005, Gabel 1998a, 1998b; Mahler et al. 2000; Marsh 1999; McLaren 2006; Steenbergen et al. 2007).

The empirical studies on the relationship between the left-right divide and Euroscepticism has provided inconsistent findings. Traditionally, Euroscepticism has been modelled as a curvilinear function of voters' left-right placement (Steenbergen et al. 2007; Lubbers and Scheepers 2010). However, other studies have found that left-wing parties are less skeptical towards the EU (Ladrech 2000; Tsebelis and Garrett 2000; Hix et al. 2007; McLaren 2007). According to the well-known theory of 'party-based' Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2005), voters' attitudes towards the EU are associated to the stances taken by political parties on this issue. Consequently, according to this theory we expect to find a differential impact of ideology on Euroscepticism, one that is contingent upon the psychological ties of individuals to particular political parties. One would also expect to see sudden and deep changes in voters' perception of the EU integration process during the crisis. This fact is due not only to the negative impact of economic performance², but also on the increasing distrust in national institutions, which is positively related to Euroscepticism (Anderson 1998; McLaren 2007).

Existing research has shown not only that attitudes towards the EU vary across countries, but also that they show different patterns over time (Lubbers and Scheepers 2010). From a dynamic point of view, neither economic indicators nor the stances adopted by political parties seem to be important determinants to trends in Euroscepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers 2010). As far as the impact of the left-right divide is concerned, these scholars found that its effect is contingent upon the context, i.e. the effect on Euroscepticism is positive for contributor countries, while for those countries benefiting most from the EU budget the traditional U-shaped pattern is found, meaning that Euroscepticism is more frequent on the far right and far left of the political spectrum. Most of this variation is accounted for individual-level variables, but extant research fail to take into account variables related to the party system.

Other studies have also emphasized the fluid nature of party-based Euroscepticism, both over time and across policy dimensions. Even from the functional point of view, the fact that the right-wing has showed an unconditional

² See in particular, socio-economic explanations (e.g. Eichenberg and Dalton 1993) and 'egocentric utilitarianism' (e.g. Gabel 1998; Gabel and Hix 1997). For a review on the determinants of Euroscepticism see Loveless and Rohrschneider (2011).

opposition to the EU presents substantial variance, with numerous exceptions across countries and at different points in time (Conti and Memoli 2012). A recent study has also confirmed the changing evolution of Euroscepticism, showing that party positions are now influenced by stances on social issues, while in the past economic issues were mainly responsible for party support towards European integration (Prosser 2016).

Why do distinct patterns of the relationship between left-right and Euroscepticism emerge across Europe? As a number of works have shown, the way ideology interacts with criticism towards the EU has evolved depending on the specific phase of the process of European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008; Conti and Memoli 2012). We contend that with the euro-crisis these divergences across countries have increased as the consequence of two main effects. On the one hand, the problem of the sovereignty of the nation-state has definitively gained more traction after the eurocrisis, when several countries had to follow the rules imposed by external actors, among which European institutions played a central role. Although this is one of the main controversies of the process of European integration - as the referendums on the European Constitutions held in the early 21st century have shown -, the politicization of this topic in some countries has increased negative perceptions of EU institutions, which are one key determinant of Euroscepticism (McLaren 2007). This means that differences between member states, such for example between lender and debt countries, are also likely to intensify given the power (and economic) asymmetries of EU governance.

On the other, the crisis has also led to a redefinition of the meaning of the left-right divide. This happened not only because new cleavages have emerged in terms of socio-economic issues, but also because there has been a growing polarization of the political spectrum (Kriesi 2014; Hobolt and Tilley 2016). The emergence of new political formations has widened the political space, making also less stable and predictable previous patterns of electoral alignment.

In our perspective, there are two main factors that have hitherto been neglected in the studies on Euroscepticism and that may significantly improve our understanding of this phenomenon. The first is partisanship, while the second is party system polarization. Both factors are related not only to the legacy of mass-party linkages, but also to the structural alignments that have shaped party competition over EU politics. The underlying idea is that political parties are decisive in cueing the public, and the stronger their attachments to citizens and the wider their disagreement, the easier is mobilization against European integration. In the following, we specify the dynamics and mechanisms of the impact these factors play on Eurosceptic attitudes.

In political sociology, partisanship is a key concept that influence individuals' political attitudes and behavior. Partisan attachments are usually formed through

group identities, based on social location or psychological processes (Campbell et al. 1960). Through the process of primary socialization, partisan identities develop according to the social characteristics of the context and the process of identity-building. However, the nature and origin of partisanship is controversial. While sociological theories emphasize that party attachments are rooted on deep social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), more 'rational' approaches argue that partisanship is a by-product of short-term preferences, a 'functional' device used by citizens to orientate their preferences on the basis of issue preferences or performance evaluations (Bartle and Bellucci 2008). While the first perspective highlights the stability of partisanship and the constraints on individuals' attitudes, according to the revisionist theory partisan identities oscillates significantly as a reflection of weaker linkages between citizens and parties. Some studies have found that in more recent democracies partisanship oscillates in the short-term (Rose and Mishler 1998; Lisi 2014) and this may also explain why some countries experience different patterns of Eurosceptic attitudes.

Regardless of the approaches adopted to explain the nature of partisan attachments, we claim, following Steenbergen et al. (2007), that mass-elite linkages have a reciprocal nature and their position towards the EU is a dual process, whereby party elites both respond to and shape the views of their supporters. Therefore, our first hypothesis is that the stronger the degree of partisan identities, more likely is that individuals will follow the cue of the party leadership (H1).

As far as polarization is concerned, our hunch, derived from what we know about the left-right divide, is that the more divided a country's elite, the more citizens mobilize against European integration. Previous studies on the politicization of the European issues have found that there is nothing deterministic in the way public opinion frames the European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2004). In addition, Ray (2003) found that top-down effects are more prominent if there is inter-party dissent, that is, when the distance between parties is significant. This means that when there is a consensus on European integration (or performance) the top-down effect is weaker, and the cues from party elites to their supporters will tend to be subdued. Given this, we hypothesize that higher levels of inter-party dissent (i.e. polarization) weakens the applicability of left/right ideology for explaining EU policy positions (H2).

Distinct trajectories of Euroscepticism? The case of Southern European countries

Until the explosion of the eurocrisis, Southern Europe was arguably the most pro-European' region in the Union (Hooghe and Marks 2007). Its publics were

regarded as 'among the most euro-enthusiast' in Europe (Llamazares and Gramacho 2007, p. 212). In political debates within South European societies, there was a tendency to link European integration not only with economic prosperity and high levels of transfers from the EU budget, meaning that the European project enjoyed high output legitimacy (Verney 2017, p. 169), but also with democratic consolidation and good governance as the prospect of membership in the EU has been one of the driving forces of democratic consolidation for Southern European countries. Traditionally the main political parties have supported the process of European integration, and there has been a high level of consensus among the main political actors about the need to play a positive role in the European context (Verney 2011).

This has also led this issue to a marginal position in the public debate and party competition, as the salience of EU integration has remained quite low during the democratic period. On the other hand, opposition to EU was largely a leftist phenomenon. In other words, one specificity of Southern European countries is the relative absence of a legacy of right-wing Euroscepticism. However, it is worth noting the emergence of eurosceptic stances also among some rightist forces since the 1990s, with the notable cases of Greece (Laos) and Italy (Northern League). All in all, as a general rule the main eurosceptic actors in Southern Europe were located in a marginal position towards the left end of the political spectrum (Verney 2011).

Yet, the economic and financial crisis has significantly changed this situation, putting an end to the overwhelmingly pro-European orientation of publics and political forces in the region. The crisis has reshaped the way in which European integration is experienced in Southern Europe, as previous narratives about the benefits of European integration seemed to be contested from across the political spectrum and not just fringe leftist forces. In place of economic prosperity, the EU has become increasingly associated with tough economic reforms and the never-ending project of austerity that Southern Europe has been experiencing since the beginning of the 2010s. Rather than a promoter of South European democracy, the EU has also become linked to diminished sovereignty and what Krastev (2002) has called 'a democracy without choices' (Verney 2017, p. 178). In the case of Greece, the country worst affected by the crisis, the austerity measures attached to the loan deals and the protracted recession are widely construed as externally imposed by European Union institutions and Germany, with the latter becoming a synonym for the EU at large in the minds of most Greeks. The interpretative frame of a German-controlled EU that imposes punishing measures on Greece, not only fuels the pool of nationalist and anti-European sentiment in the country but, in extreme cases, also gave rise to a narrative that presented the EU as a form of German-led foreign occupation reminiscent of the Nazis (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014, p. 227; Michailidou 2016). Therefore, it has been noted that, across the

region, the linkage between austerity policies and the EU have fostered not only a growing instrumental Euroscepticism, but it has also transformed the soft Euroscepticism into a hard one, leading to the alienation of a considerable portion of the electorate from the EU (Magone 2014).

[Figure 1 about here]

Even though the levels of Euroscepticism in Southern Europe have increased overall beyond any doubt (Verney 2017), the ways in which the patterns of Euroscepticism deviate from the wider European pattern carry to a large extent the legacy of the party system of the period prior to the onset of the crisis. As we see in Figure 1, only Italy mirrors to a large extent the pattern of mass-level Euroscepticism across the left-right spectrum that we observe when we use the entire sample from the 15 European countries (the predicted values are obtained through a multilevel regression analysis of the 15 national samples). Greece and Portugal deviate from the European pattern, projecting a mostly leftist Eurosceptic profile, even though in Greece there are signs of more fully realized U-shaped interaction between Euroscepticism and left-right ideology at the level of the electorate. In Spain, conversely, the pattern is completely reversed. Spain projects the lowest levels of Euroscepticism than any Southern European country and an inverse pattern when it comes to the extremes of the left-right spectrum. The respondents located at the latter appear even less Eurosceptic compared to those that are located closer to the center of the political spectrum.

Our contention is that the deviations from the European pattern have a lot to do with the interaction between the party legacies in each country, the advent of new (mostly but not exclusively) Eurosceptic parties, and the filter of partisanship towards both older and newer parties at the individual level that mediate the impact of ideology on Eurosceptic attitudes. With the exception of Portugal, Southern European countries have seen a sharp rise in the electoral relevance of Eurosceptic parties. In Italy the success of the 5 Star Movement (M5S) in the 2013 elections has considerably reshaped the format and dynamic of the whole party system (Tronconi 2015). In Greece Euroscepticism has assumed a primary importance on the domestic political scene and contributed to the emergence of a new political cleavage around the issue of the EU/IMF bailouts (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Verney 2015). Also in Spain, the rise and success of Podemos in the seismic elections of 2015 has abruptly changed the pattern of a stable and high consensus towards EU integration.

Therefore our expectation is that partisanship will mediate the relationship of (left-right) ideology with Euroscepticism within each country (H3), a hypothesis that constitutes a variation of H1. Partisanship for Eurosceptic old and new parties such as KKE, Podemos, BE and CDU (on the left) or LN and Golden Dawn on the

right will tend to boost the association between left and right ideology respectively with Eurosceptic attitudes when compared to the attitudes towards Europe of citizens that share a similar ideological orientation but are either identified with more pro-European parties or are non-partisans.

Data and methods

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, we use data from two different sources. The Chapel Hill dataset offers information on party positions over time for all European countries (Bakker et al. 2014). The database provides a nuanced measurement of party orientations towards a wide range of dimensions related to the process of European integration. For our analysis, we rely on the question about orientation towards European integration, that in our opinion corresponds well to the classic question fielded in European comparative mass-level surveys on whether European integration should be pushed further or if it has already gone too far. In particular, country experts were asked to place the political parties in their nation on a seven-point scale ranging from complete opposition to European integration (1), to complete support (7).

As the paper focuses on how party system features impact Euroscepticism at the individual level, we use several variables at the macro level. The first variable is party system polarization, which is based on Dalton's (2008) operationalization. We use data exclusively from 2014 relying on calculations that are available on the ParlGov website (Döring and Manow 2015). The second set of variables are two indicators that capture party system Euroscepticism at the two ends of the left-right ideological spectrum. The two indices are constructed by taking party scores reported in the CHES dataset, weighted according to their electoral size across 4 time points that capture a period from 2002 to 2014. We chose a more diachronic approach to measure party system Euroscepticism as our goal was to capture primarily the legacy of party system Euroscepticism and not just rely on a snapshot. Our contention is that the influence of parties on citizens on core dimensions of competition builds up slowly across time and does not easily fluctuate from one political cycle to the next.

We thus calculate the average of Euroscepticism for left-wing and right-wing parties, providing a more general measurement of Euroscepticism across distinct ideological parties and within ideological blocs. Specifically, the party system left-wing or right-wing Euroscepticism scores for country k are calculated as follows:

$$LEurosc_k = \frac{\sum_{y=1}^4 (\sum_{j=1}^n p_j \bar{e}_j)}{4} \text{ if LR party position } \leq 3$$

$$REurosc_k = \frac{\sum_{y=1}^4 (\sum_{j=1}^n p_j \bar{e}_j)}{4} \text{ if LR party position } \geq 7$$

where y corresponds to one of the four points in time used in the CHES dataset (2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014), n is the number of parties whose position on the left-right axis according to CHES data is equal or less than 3 (for left-wing party system Euroscepticism) or equal or more than 7 (for right-wing party system Euroscepticism) in time point y , p_j is the electoral share of party j , and \bar{e}_j is the mean position of party j on the issue of European integration based on CHES expert judgements.

The second source of data is based on the European Election Survey conducted in 2014 in each of the EU's 27 member states (Schmitt et al. 2016). Our dependent variable is based on the question regarding support to further European Union integration, recoded in a way that higher values reflect opposition to further integration. The dataset also includes some key variables that can be added to our statistical model as independent variable. First, we test the effect for political ideology, measured by self-placement on a 11-point scale ranging from left to right. Second, we also test the impact of party identification measured as a dummy variable. As for control variables, we include gender, age, education, and self-placement on the social staircase, all rescaled from 0 to 1.

For the examination of H1 and H2, due to the nested nature of our data we perform multilevel regression analysis that includes country-level fixed effects using attitudes towards European integration as our dependent variable. Besides individual and structural-level independent variables, we also include interaction terms between the two levels, namely between partisan attachments and ideology, on the one hand, and party system Euroscepticism, on the other, including all constitutive terms of the interactions in order to avoid biased estimates of the higher order interaction terms (Brambor et al. 2006, p. 66). For the examination of H3, we perform linear regression analysis of each of the four national samples on the same dependent variable, employing gender, age and education as controls and examining the impact of ideology and partisanship (and their interaction) on Eurosceptic attitudes.

Findings

Table 1 shows the model that tests whether our key indicators that measure individual and macro-level characteristics impact the degree of Euroscepticism. First, we see that left ideology is negatively associated and that right ideology is positively associated with Euroscepticism in Europe, a pattern that is the opposite of what happens in Southern Europe with the exception of Italy. Left and right-

wing party system Euroscepticism are positively associated with Euroscepticism (as expected) but their direct effects are non-significant. However, in terms of the interaction between partisanship and ideology, we see that H1 is confirmed for respondents that are located at the right part of the spectrum. The impact of right-wing ideology on Eurosceptic attitudes is positive and significant for partisans in party systems that are marked by high levels of right-wing Euroscepticism, whereas the relationship is the inverse for non-partisans. For left-wingers, the influence of left-wing party system Euroscepticism appears to be similar for both partisans and non-partisans contrary to H1. Although more sophisticated techniques are needed in order to disentangle the mechanisms behind it, our results lend some support to the proposition that parties are important cues for voters when they have to decide their position about the EU, especially for voters with right-wing ideological dispositions. Even if causality is difficult to prove using cross-sectional data, there are strong indications that Euroscepticism at the party system level impacts the way individuals perceive the European integration.

[Table 1 about here]

Moving on to the impact of party system polarization on Eurosceptic attitudes, a first interesting and counterintuitive finding is that polarization appears to have a negative direct effect on Eurosceptic attitudes. However, when looking at the interactions between party system polarization with ideology and partisanship (see Figure 3), we see that this relationship holds true primarily for non-partisans. At both ends of the political spectrum, more party system polarization increases or at least maintains the positive effect of left-wing and right-ideology on Eurosceptic attitudes whereas the effect for non-partisans turns negative. That means that for left-wing and right-wing partisans party system polarization has indeed a positive impact on Eurosceptic attitudes. The hypothesis that higher levels of inter-party dissent (i.e. polarization) strengthens the applicability of left/right ideology for explaining EU policy positions (H2) is mostly supported by the data. The main implication is that parties can also indirectly politicize and polarize the electorate on the issue of Europe even if they adopt more polarizing positions on the main (but potentially unrelated) axis of competition, namely the left/right axis. This “top-down effect” operates through the influence of partisanship and can be seen as a potential spill-over effect of polarization across dimensions of party competition.

[Figure 2 about here]

[Figure 3 about here]

Turning into our analyses of the four South European countries, we find indeed in most cases that the influence of partisanship mediates to varying extent the relationship between left-right ideology and Eurosceptic attitudes (see Figure 4;

Tables A1 through A4 in the Appendix for the full models). For Portugal, even though the EES data do not allow us to gauge the impact of identification with the CDU coalition (CDU or PCP are not coded in the dataset as a possible response for this particular item), of which the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) is the main party, we can examine the influence of partisanship between the more mildly Eurosceptic *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE) and the pro-European *Partido Socialista* (PS) on the left-side of the political spectrum. From the center to the extreme left of the spectrum, identification with BE returns positive marginal effects with Eurosceptic attitudes and identification with PS negative ones. On the right side of the political spectrum identification with the pro-European PSD does little to influence the impact of ideology as extreme right-wing partisans are more likely to be associated with Eurosceptic attitudes.

[Figure 4 about here]

In Spain a similar problem as in Portugal is the absence of identifiers with *Izquierda Unida* (IU) in the dataset, which limits us to a comparison of identifiers with the socialist party (PSOE) and with the new party *Podemos*. However, the results portray a similar picture, with partisans of the more Eurosceptic *Podemos* more likely to hold Eurosceptic attitudes across the left-to-center ideological spectrum in relation to their PSOE counterparts. On the right side of the political spectrum we also witness the mediating effect of identification with the pro-European *Partido Popular* which dominates the right-of-center political space in the country. The more we move to the right-end of the political spectrum the more likely are PP partisans to be less Eurosceptic in comparison to non-partisans right-wingers, which one can attribute to the influence of the party position on the issue of European integration. Conversely, in the case of Italy, the country which follows a pattern of Euroscepticism across the ideological spectrum that matches the pan-European one more closely in relation to the rest of the region, the influence of partisanship appears the weakest. Partisanship seems to have no discernible effects on Eurosceptic attitudes. Respondents who identify with the center-left pro-European *Partito Democratico* (PD) as well as with the more left-wing and more Eurosceptic (even if mildly so) SEL are less likely to hold Eurosceptic attitudes but there is no obvious pattern of differentiation between them despite the different positions of their parties on the issue of Europe. The same holds true on the right side of the political spectrum, where the soft Euroscepticism of *Forza Italia* does not really mediate the impact of ideology, whereas the hard Euroscepticism of the *Lega Nord* also appears to not have an effect on LN partisans. The case of Greece is perhaps the most in line with the expectations deriving from H3. There are clear mediating effects both on the left and on the right side of the ideological spectrum. Left-wing partisans of PASOK are less likely to hold Eurosceptic attitudes than partisans of the soft-Eurosceptic SYRIZA and much less likely than partisans of the hard-Eurosceptic Greek Communist Party (KKE). On

the other side of the spectrum, partisans of the pro-European center-right are increasingly less likely (the more one moves towards the right end of the spectrum) to hold Eurosceptic attitudes than identifiers with the hard-Eurosceptic neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. The effect for identifiers with the new right-wing populist ANEL is less clear due to the higher dispersion of ANEL partisans on the issue of Europe.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have focused on Euroscepticism and its interaction with ideology, with specific reference to Western European countries. In doing so, we have provided some original contributions in terms of both the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis.

First, unlike the most recent research focusing on a party-level approach, we have adopted a party system-level perspective to achieve a comprehensive assessment of how the different configuration and characteristics of party systems have affected Eurosceptic stances. In particular, we tested the impact of polarization and we found support for our argument that the ideological distance interacts significantly with ideology, increasing or decreasing the level of Euroscepticism. Political legacies, in particular overall levels of left and right-wing party euroscepticism also shape individual attitudes on European integration.

The second original contribution of this paper refers to the assessment of the distinct trajectories of Euroscepticism in Western Europe. The analysis shows that even Southern European countries have followed distinct patterns of Eurosceptic stances, confirming that the picture of attitudes towards the EU is far from uniform, being instead quite diversified.

Our study has, of course, some limitations. We have analyzed cross-sectional data, while a more comprehensive analysis needs also to consider the longitudinal evolution of political attitudes towards the EU. Moreover, we have not addressed the link of causality between party stances and individual-level orientations. From this viewpoint, it would be interesting to better investigate the impact that intra-party dissent has on party system competition (i.e. salience of European issues) and the linkage between masses and elites. Finally, there may be some problems of endogeneity in the models we tested. These issues need to be addressed in future research.

Despite these limitations, these findings have interesting implications for 1) research on public opinion support regarding the process of European integration and 2) research on party system change and the success of challenger parties to

politicize European issues. On the one hand, we maintain the view that parties and party leaders are key factors that influence the overall level of Euroscepticism. The legitimacy of future integration depends on the maintenance of an effective mass-elite linkage. Political parties have a role to play in this process by formulating clear positions, communicating their stances to voters and to build efficient connections to voters through elections (e.g. through ideological congruence). On the other, we believe these findings also bear implications for understanding future developments of Euroscepticism in Western Europe and its impact in the transformation of party competition. The growing level of polarization experienced during the crisis is likely to foster not only a higher salience of European matters, but also the politicization of this (relatively new) dimension of competition. Political entrepreneurs might thus exploit this issue and to trigger party system change or innovation.

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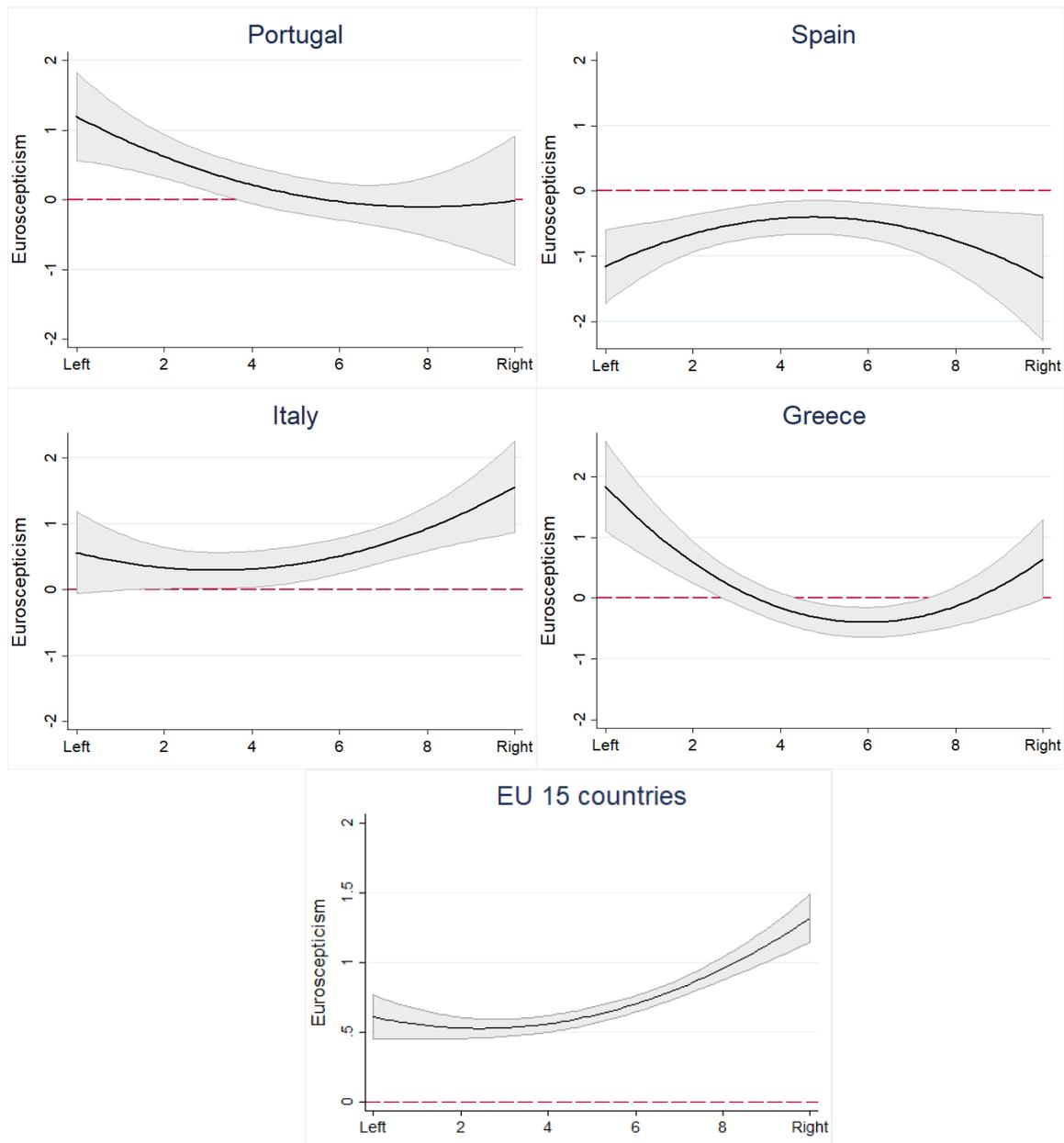
Tables and Figures

Table 1. Multilevel explanatory models of Euroscepticism

| <i>Fixed effects</i> | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Baseline | With Interactions |
| | <i>B (s.e.)</i> | <i>B (s.e.)</i> |
| Intercept | 6.76 (.378)*** | 6.92 (.336)*** |
| Gender (Female=1) | .049 (.093) | .048 (.092) |
| Age | .443 (.244)* | .429 (.235)* |
| Education | -1.21 (.337)*** | -1.23 (.314)*** |
| Social staircase (self-placement) | -.694 (.155)*** | -.720 (.149)*** |
| Ref=Center (4-6 self-placement) | | |
| Left (0-3 self-placement) | -.334 (.080)*** | -.352 (.143)** |
| Right (7-10 self-placement) | .533 (.225)** | -.065 (.259) |
| Party identification | -.148 (.135) | -.306 (.135)** |
| Party system Left euroscepticism | .162 (.153) | .144 (.266) |
| Party system Right euroscepticism | .170 (.218) | .185 (.166) |
| Party system polarization | -8.80 (4.13)** | -9.87 (4.99)** |
| Left*Party_Id | | .082 (.169) |
| Right*Party_Id | | .712 (.284)** |
| Party_Id* Left_Party_System_Eurosc | | .000 (.114) |
| Left* Left_Party_System_Eurosc | | .358 (.138)*** |
| Party_Id* Right_Party_System_Eurosc | | -.070 (.093) |
| Right* Right_Party_System_Eurosc | | -.277 (.218) |
| Party_Id* Polarization | | 1.65 (2.30) |
| Left*Polarization | | -5.12 (4.24) |
| Right*Polarization | | -7.58 (8.74) |
| Left*Party_Id*Polarization | | 4.17 (3.60) |
| Right*Party_Id*Polarization | | 9.39 (7.69) |
| Left*Party_Id*Left_Party_System_Eurosc | | -.284 (.134)** |
| Right*Party_Id*Left_Party_System_Eurosc | | .548 (.217)** |
| sc | | |
| <i>Random-effect parameters: Country level</i> | | |
| Variance (intercept) | .420 (.174) | .383 (.173) |
| Variance (Party id) | .143 (.074) | .090 (.062) |
| Covariance | -.057 (.077) | -.003 (.062) |
| N (individuals) | | 11866 |
| N (countries) | | 15 |

Note: *p<0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

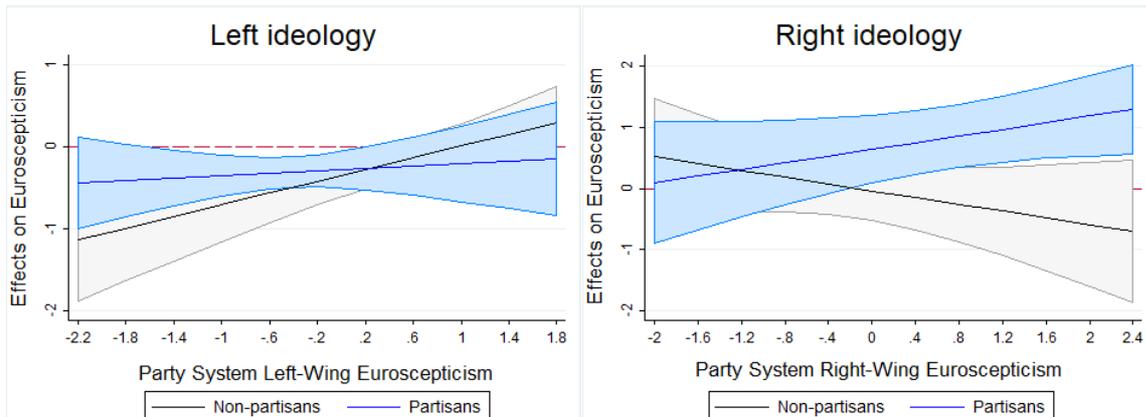
Figure 1. Euroscepticism by Left-Right Ideology in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece and 15 European countries in 2014



Data: European Election Study 2014

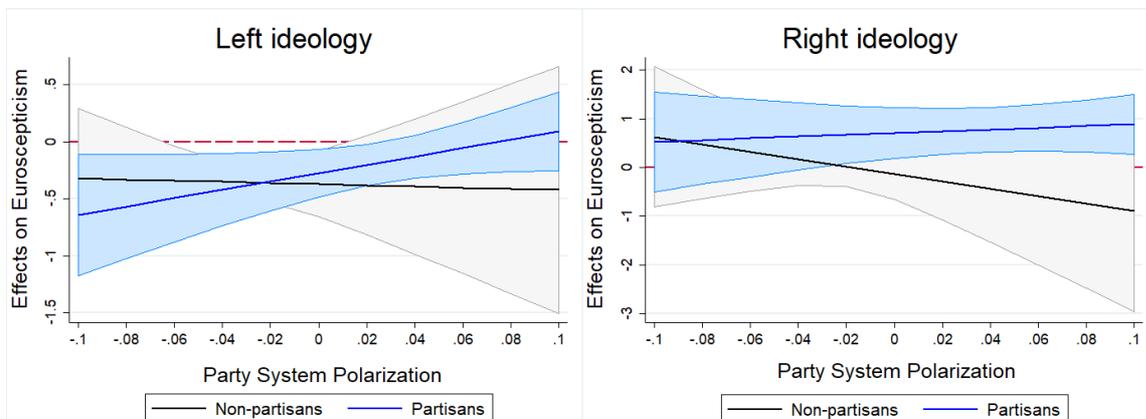
Note: Lines represent fitted values; shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals

Figure 2. Marginal Effects of Left and Right Ideology on Individual-level Euroscepticism by Party System Left-Wing and Right-Wing Euroscepticism



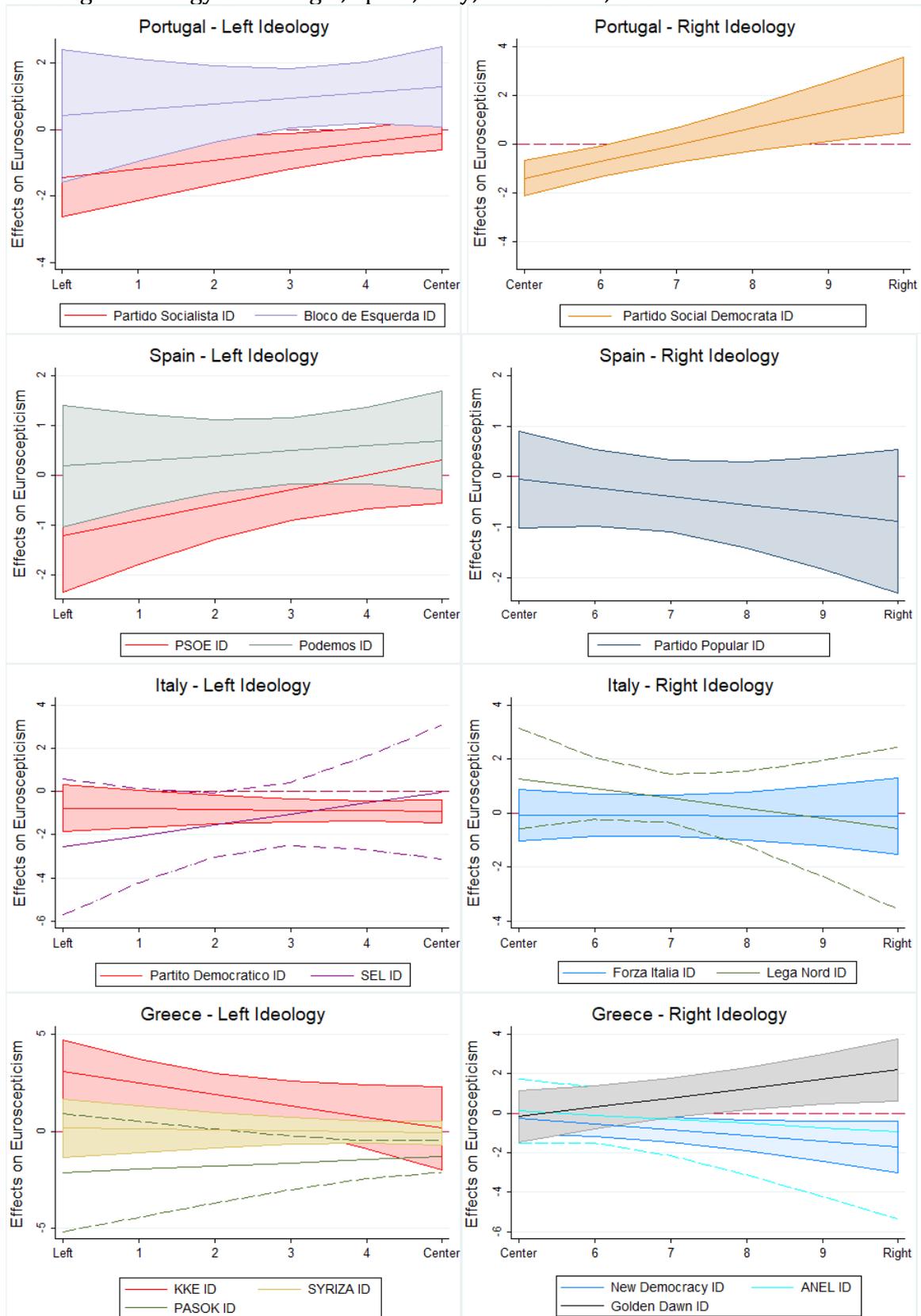
Data: European Election Study 2014
 Note: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals

Figure 3. Marginal Effects of Left and Right Ideology on Individual-level Euroscepticism by Party System Polarization



Data: European Election Study 2014
 Note: Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals

Figure 4. Marginal effects of party identification on Euroscepticism by party and Left-Right Ideology in Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece, 2014



Data: European Election Study 2014

Note: Shaded areas and dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals

Appendix

Table A1. Explanatory model of Euroscepticism, Portugal 2014

| <i>Variable</i> | Baseline | With interactions |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | <i>B (s.e.)</i> | <i>B (s.e.)</i> |
| Intercept | 5.82 (.482)*** | 6.36 (.477)*** |
| Gender (Female=1) | .563 (.204)*** | .546 (.203)*** |
| Age | .590 (.364) | .571 (.357) |
| Education | -.230 (.444) | -.260 (.432) |
| Left-Right self-placement | -.189 (.057)*** | -.310 (.068)*** |
| PSD party identification | -.401 (.340) | -4.84 (1.17)*** |
| PS party identification | -.368 (.222)* | -1.47 (.606)** |
| BE party identification | 1.00 (.588)* | .382 (1.01) |
| PSD_Id*Left-Right | | .691 (.185)*** |
| PS_Id*Left-Right | | .271 (.135)** |
| BE_Id*Left-Right | | .183 (.267) |
| R ² | .060 | .086 |
| N | | 696 |

Data: European Election Study 2014

Note: *p<0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table A2. Explanatory model of Euroscepticism, Spain 2014

| <i>Variable</i> | Baseline | With interactions |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | <i>B (s.e.)</i> | <i>B (s.e.)</i> |
| Intercept | 5.06 (.524)*** | 5.20 (.553)*** |
| Gender (Female=1) | .236 (.193) | .255 (.192) |
| Age | -.318 (.368) | -.293 (.370) |
| Education | -1.39 (.417)*** | -1.38 (.420)*** |
| Left-Right self-placement | .086 (.057) | .046 (.072) |
| PP party identification | -.443 (.347) | .700 (1.34) |
| PSOE party identification | -.334 (.304) | -1.20 (.578)** |
| Podemos party identification | .507 (.332) | .188 (.622) |
| PP_Id*Left-Right | | -.147 (.193) |
| PSOE_Id*Left-Right | | .303 (.162)** |
| Podemos_Id*Left-Right | | .102 (.181) |
| R ² | .024 | .031 |
| N | | 879 |

Data: European Election Study 2014

Note: *p<0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table A3. Explanatory model of Euroscepticism, Italy 2014

| <i>Variable</i> | Baseline <i>B (s.e.)</i> | With interactions <i>B (s.e.)</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Intercept | 5.61 (.519)*** | 5.55 (.600)*** |
| Gender (Female=1) | .209 (.201) | .208 (.201) |
| Age | .256 (.361) | .255 (.362) |
| Education | -.116 (.427) | -.102 (.427) |
| Left-Right self-placement | .004 (.056) | .015 (.079) |
| PD party identification | -.875 (.235)*** | -.807 (.544) |
| FI party identification | -.072 (.373) | -.055 (1.28) |
| LN party identification | .447 (.482) | 3.13 (3.17) |
| SEL party identification | -1.41 (.700)** | -2.58 (1.60) |
| PD_Id*Left-Right | | -.014 (.122) |
| FI_Id*Left-Right | | -.006 (.183) |
| LN_Id*Left-Right | | -.370 (.460) |
| SEL_Id*Left-Right | | .517 (.575) |
| R ² | .031 | .033 |
| N | | 743 |

Data: European Election Study 2014

Note: *p<0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table A4. Explanatory model of Euroscepticism, Greece 2014

| <i>Variable</i> | Baseline <i>B (s.e.)</i> | With interactions <i>B (s.e.)</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Intercept | .401 (.587) | .331 (.697) |
| Gender (Female=1) | .077 (.199) | .060 (.197) |
| Age | .099 (.367) | .093 (.364) |
| Education | -.602 (.424) | -.632 (.423) |
| Left-Right self-placement | -.007 (.064) | .013 (.099) |
| KKE party identification | 1.98 (.515)*** | 3.06 (.832)*** |
| SYRIZA party identification | -.051 (.280) | .154 (.761) |
| PASOK party identification | -1.33 (.425)*** | -2.13 (1.55) |
| ND party identification | -.872 (.304)*** | 1.21 (1.15) |
| ANEL party identification | -.074 (.717) | 1.14 (3.04) |
| GD party identification | .987 (.501)** | -2.53 (1.57) |
| KKE_Id*Left-Right | | -.582 (.310)* |
| SYRIZA_Id*Left-Right | | -.049 (.168) |
| PASOK_Id*Left-Right | | .169 (.308) |
| ND_Id*Left-Right | | -.293 (.170) |
| ANEL_Id*Left-Right | | -.208 (.510) |
| GD_Id*Left-Right | | .471 (.211)** |
| R ² | .057 | .076 |
| N | | 866 |

Data: European Election Study 2014

Note: *p<0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.