

A Change of Heart?

Analyzing stability and change in European party systems

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Abstract

The dominant view of party competition is that political parties continuously and strategically alter their policy positions. Cleavage theory, however, posits that parties are ideologically rooted. This paper develops a unified framework to understand the co-existence of stability and change in European party systems. By expanding our models to account for multidimensionality and parties' historical legacies, we can analyze how parties compete on ideological dimensions with varying levels of salience. Specifically, a party's durable reputation on its *primary* dimension is expected to produce positional stability, while fewer constraints on its *secondary* dimension allow for strategic policy shifts. Cross-sectional time series analysis of party positions extracted from expert survey data from 1999-2014 across fourteen Western European countries supports my hypothesis. This finding has important implications for our understanding of both party strategy and democratic representation.

Political parties are the crucial mediator between citizens and their government. In order to properly relay the preferences of their supporters, parties ought to be responsive to changes in public opinion and update their programs accordingly. Undeniably, representative democracy implies a dynamic relationship (Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson 1995). Consequently, the current, dominant understanding of parties is that these are adaptive organizations that continuously alter their ideological positions (see Adams 2012).

Examples of such party shifts are plentiful. Observers have noted, for example, how the populist radical right has moved to the ideological center, as exemplified by its embrace of welfare chauvinism (De Lange 2007, Schumacher and Van Kersbergen 2016)—Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte even went so far as to claim that the anti-immigrant PVV was now more economically left-wing than the Socialist Party.¹ By contrast, many mainstream right-wing parties have moved in the opposite direction, away from the center, on cultural issues (Meguid 2005, Mudde 2013) and European integration (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2016) in response to the recent surge of these populist challengers. The British Conservative Party, notoriously divided on the European issue, has also grown considerably more Euroskeptic over time (Bale 2006). While Margaret Thatcher’s criticism of the European project once expedited her ouster as Prime Minister (PM) and party leader, PM David Cameron actively campaigned on the promise of a Brexit referendum because he saw no other alternative, stating “What else can I do? My backbenchers are unbelievably Eurosceptic and UKIP are breathing down my neck.”² All of these examples signal strategic action in a competitive environment that is ever in flux.

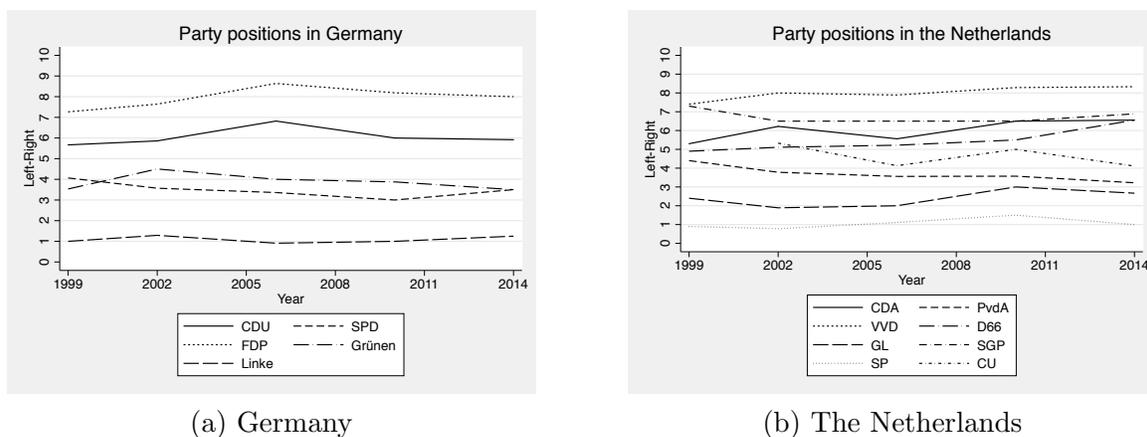
However, despite spatial theory’s assumption of “costless spatial mobility” (Adams et al. 2006), there is ample reason to believe that parties cannot always move freely. Consistent and reliable party labels are said to be an essential element of representative democracy, as well (McKelvey and Ordeshook 1986); they provide a crucial heuristic for vote choice (Downs 1957) and party identification (Campbell et al. 1960) in a context of uncertainty

¹“Rutte: kans op samenwerking met PVV is nul”, *NRC*, 15 January, 2017.

²“The downfall of David Cameron: a European tragedy”, *The Guardian*, 24 June, 2016.

and limited information. Moreover, cleavage theory stresses the resilience of mass-elite linkages and the long-term commitments of parties (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Finally, the notion of stability also permeates party competition research because Downs' contemporary successors share his implicit expectation, or even desire, to identify an equilibrium in party positions (Adams 2012, Adams, Merrill and Grofman 2005, De Sio and Weber 2014). In fact, voter and expert placements of party positions have proven remarkably stable (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011, Dalton 2016, Dalton and McAllister 2015). For example, Figure 1 depicts party change in Germany and the Netherlands, two systems with differing levels of party system fragmentation.³ Despite Rutte and Cameron's observation of shifting party positions, the absence of dramatic fluctuations demonstrates that, in the minds of political scientists, party profiles are relatively durable.

Figure 1: Expert placements of German and Dutch parties on left-right, 1999-2014



Can these opposing perspectives be coalesced? This paper posits that we can explain this apparent contradiction between stability and change in European party systems by looking at the salience of the ideological dimensions on which parties compete. Specifically, I argue that, when expanding our analytical models to account for the multidimensionality of the policy space and parties' historical legacies, positional stability is most likely observed on

³Party positions taken from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015, Polk et al. 2017).

a party's *primary*, salient dimension, while party change is confined to issues *secondary* to its core agenda. Building on cleavage theory, I assume that parties are born out of, and rooted in, underlying social conflicts and have historically come to represent specific issues *and* voters. As a result, they have a reputation to uphold and defend on the ideological dimension deemed most salient to them and their supporters. At the same time, by remaining ideologically true to their voters' primary concerns, parties are able to strategically shift on issues of lesser salience. These shifts allow parties to maximize their vote share without alienating core constituents. Indeed, many of the aforementioned transformations of parties' ideological stances arguably concern issues and dimensions that are less important to them, from the populist radical right's economic agenda to the mainstream's position on European integration.

I test my hypothesis that positional change is more likely on a party's secondary dimension by using cross-sectional time series analysis on novel trend file data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) covering fourteen Western European countries from 1999-2014 (Bakker et al. 2015, Polk et al. 2017).⁴ Manifesto data (MARPOR) is used to develop a ratio measure that gauges the relative salience of an ideological dimension to a party (Volkens et al. 2015). The results confirm my expectations, indicating that party change increases as an ideological dimension's party-level salience decreases, and vice versa. Alternative operationalizations of the dependent and independent variables, which rely on various configurations of manifesto and expert survey data, produce similar results (see Appendix). Although this paper focuses on Western Europe for reasons of data availability, my findings should travel to any established democracy that has a history of programmatic politics.

Given the pivotal role of political parties for democratic governance, it is essential to accurately map the ideological profiles of these political actors. For example, how do ideologically constrained parties respond to discontent among their supporters or the rise of new populist challengers? This paper advances our theoretical understanding of party strat-

⁴Countries included are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

egy and democratic representation by moving away from unidimensionality, thus enhancing our spatial models with realistic insights from both salience and cleavage theory. If party positions are indeed more constrained than commonly assumed, this has important implications for our understanding of mass-elite linkages, especially in a time when public disaffection is believed to be widespread and at an all-time high across Western Europe (e.g. Hay 2007, Mair 2008, Putnam 2000).

A Theory of Party Change and Stability

The study of how political parties compete has a rich and impressive tradition in the field of comparative politics. Since Downs' (1957) seminal work on the median voter theorem, political scientists have made major advances in understanding how parties locate themselves in the political landscape and what factors lead them to alter their ideological positions. Spatial models—which view party competition through a positional lens, with parties offering alternative policy proposals to the electorate—have become increasingly sophisticated and comprehensive (see, e.g., Adams, Merrill and Grofman 2005, Budge 1994, Lin, Enelow and Dorussen 1999, Schofield 2007). Similarly, recent empirical studies now account for a wide range of phenomena, including the office and policy-seeking behavior of parties, the multifacetedness of voter preferences, and the transformative nature of the policy space (Bélanger and Meguid 2008, Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002, Kriesi et al. 2006, Meguid 2005).

The causes and consequences of party change remain contested, however. Which factors explain when and why parties move and, equally importantly, with what magnitude? Recent studies argue that party positions are highly flexible and volatile, with parties being responsive to a plethora of endogenous and exogenous changes, such as electoral defeat (Budge, Ezrow and McDonald 2010, Somer-Topcu 2009), governing status (Bawn and Somer-Topcu 2012), economic conditions (Haupt 2010), and the policy moves of their competitors (Laver 2005, Williams and Whitten 2015). Though seemingly diverse, what these theories

share is an implicit and fundamental belief in the continuity of party *change* (Adams 2012). And this view is not exclusive to academic literature; in popular media, too, we are used to reading about flip-flopping politicians, increasingly polarized legislatures, and an ever-growing gap between parties and their (alienated) supporters.

Unsurprisingly then, change is the rule in contemporary models of party competition, not stability. Especially in longitudinal work, theory and data come together to paint a picture of party systems operating in a constant state of flux.

On the formation of party systems and legacies

Yet, for all the attention given to what makes parties move, relatively few studies have been devoted to what makes them stay put.⁵ An alternative perspective exists, however, that stresses the durability of party-voter commitments. Cleavage theory is based on the assumption that party systems reflect the underlying social conflicts in society, shaped (and upset) only by infrequent critical historical junctures. While not addressing party competition directly—at least not in the way we typically think of it, as a dynamic system of action and reaction in a competitive environment—this framework nevertheless raises valuable insights for the study of party strategic behavior, in particular by highlighting the causal factors that promote stability and constraint in party positions.

In their pivotal work, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) trace the origins of party system development to persistent tensions in society between socio-economic, religious, and political groups, produced by the transformative nature of the national and industrial revolutions. Although not all of these divisions proved equally resilient, or shaped national politics to the same degree across Western Europe, their theory crucially points our attention to the underlying structure of party competition.

Indeed, most scholars of European politics now agree that “multidimensionality cannot

⁵Despite the fact that Downs himself acknowledged that parties experience serious constraint on their room to maneuver, as moving too much and too often would undermine their ideological integrity and responsibility (1957, 122).

be evaded in political practice” (De Sio and Weber 2014, 870).⁶ A second—or even third—dimension needs to be added to the ubiquitous economic left-right divide.⁷ While going by many different labels, the meaning of this second dimension typically encompasses cultural issues, including (though not limited to) immigration, law and order, and environmental politics (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002, Inglehart 1990, Kitschelt 1994, Kriesi et al. 2012).⁸

As such, cleavage theory draws two major conclusions, namely that (1) the political space in Western European democracies is arguably best described by more than one dimension, and (2) parties emerge from specific cleavages in society and are, thus, the primary representatives of distinct voter groups. Parties develop meaningful and lasting issue reputations over time, and these historical legacies can produce strong linkages with their supporters. In the words of Lipset and Rokkan, “parties do not simply present themselves *de novo* to the citizen at each election; they each have a history and so have the constellations of alternatives they present the electorate” (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, 2). What is more, such reputations can be revived or strengthened over time, be it through a party’s track record in office or otherwise, and these long-standing images can crucially shape party competition (Bélanger and Meguid 2008).⁹ In fact, salience theory argues that competence can become the fundamental criterion by which parties compete for the electorate’s vote (Stokes 1963; see also Budge and Farlie 1983, Egan 2013, Petrocik 1963).

Nevertheless, whether it is by virtue of deeply-rooted societal divisions or less distant track records in office, both cleavage and salience theory shed light on the importance of historical reputations for political contestation. By shaping a party’s public profile, party

⁶For a counter-argument, see Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009).

⁷Different cleavages have been said to constitute a third dimension of political contestation, e.g. on the inclusiveness of polity (or ‘group’) membership (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014), or European integration (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012), but these three-dimensional accounts of party alignments are less common.

⁸It is important to note, however, that the cleavage structure of party competition is ultimately national in nature, and additional dimensions may come to shape politics in a given country—in fact, the dominant dimension might be of a third kind, such as the center-periphery cleavage. In countries such as Belgium and the United Kingdom, for instance, territorial issues have increasingly come to shape domestic politics. But my focus is on the two dimensions that can be found in every Western European country, namely the economic and the cultural axes of contestation.

⁹Arguably, it is the very nature of political conflict itself that perpetuates and reinforces an ideological dimension’s collective identities (Bornschieer 2010).

legacies can inform expectations among (potential) supporters and influence their voting behavior. In contrast to the strategic interactions in a Downsian framework, these party-voter linkages are expected to be durable and to foster stability over multiple election cycles.

Party strategy in a multidimensional environment

How can we integrate these opposing perspectives of party change and stability? I propose an ontology of party competition that unites the two schools in a unified framework and accounts for the limitations on parties' strategic actions. Rather than seeing the two approaches as mutually exclusive, the Downsian and Rokkanian models of party behavior can complement each other. In a multidimensional competitive environment, parties encounter ideological dimensions with varying levels of salience. In the words of Schattschneider, a party is "a coalition of inferior interests held together by a dominant interest" (1960). This salience differential produces a *primary* and a *secondary* dimension, and will inevitably inform a party's strategic behavior.

Building on cleavage theory, parties are expected to be rooted on their primary dimension. Not only does a party have a core constituency of voters with whom they are connected through a given cleavage, but also the durability of this linkage is self-enforcing (Hooghe and Marks 2017).¹⁰ Party activists and future leaders are recruited from this very cadre of supporters, they share a common sense of belonging, and they are part and parcel of the intra-party decision-making process. To the extent that they are policy-seeking, party change could be perceived as "selling out" the party's policy objectives for short-term electoral gains (Adams et al. 2006). The degree of 'rootedness' may vary, but every party will experience relative immobility on its primary dimension, which at best allows it to seek out local maxima to secure votes. Parties have a reputation to uphold and defend, and this makes positional change far more risky, undesirable, and, thus, less likely.

¹⁰This should be true even in an era of cleavage decline (Knutson 2005, Thomassen 2005), party detachment (Mair 2008, Mair and Van Biezen 2001), and increased issue voting (Green-Pedersen 2007). As Hooghe and Marks (2017) note, cleavage voting is not all or nothing. Rather, dealignment is coupled with realignment, as can be seen when explaining support for Green and radical right parties.

But how do parties act on their secondary dimension? Interestingly, most studies of party competition today still rely on a unidimensional framework (e.g. Ezrow et al. 2011, Tomz and Houweling 2008), not only to aid in the parsimoniousness of their models but, like Downs, in order to abstract an equilibrium in party positions (Adams, Merrill and Grofman 2005, De Sio and Weber 2014). Yet, as mentioned before, a simple, unidimensional model of party competition does not capture and explain the positional differences between parties. Moreover, recent research has shown that the use of a two-dimensional strategy is commonplace in Western Europe, as most parties actively engage with their secondary dimension (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber 2015, Rovny 2015).

Hence, in recent years a growing number of studies has come out that analyzes party change in a context of multidimensionality (e.g. Rovny 2012, Rovny and Edwards 2012).¹¹ While parties are undeniably more rooted and vested in their primary cleavage, they cannot fully ignore the other dimensions of the policy space. That said, they are not without agency, either (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber 2015). Specifically, one would expect fewer positional constraints on a party's secondary dimension, as it is not burdened by long-lasting party-voter linkages. As Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber put it (2015: 841), "a party's reputation and its goal to gain and defend issue ownership limit its strategic flexibility on its primary dimension. In contrast, parties have more strategic flexibility on their secondary dimension" (see also Alonso 2012).

Consequently, this leaves room for parties to strategically maximize votes. A range of strategies has been identified in the literature, such as moderating one's position, zigzagging ideologically, changing course only when faced with electoral losses, or approaching and

¹¹ Although a connection can be made here with the literature on position blurring (Rovny 2012, Rovny 2013), this study's contribution is distinctly different. The two accounts are similar in that both emphasize the interaction between position and salience in multidimensional party competition, but blurring is a strategy used primarily by extremist parties. My theory, on the other hand, applies to mainstream and challenger parties alike. Additionally, it is important to note that the strategic positional shifts described in this paper are not meant to produce ambiguity about a party's position. On the contrary, they are often explicit and intended to strengthen a party's electoral appeal, such as in the aforementioned case of populist radical right parties moving to the center on the left-right dimension.

capitalizing on the largest party's gains (Laver 2005).¹² All these alternatives ultimately serve to maximize electoral support and alleviate internal and external pressures on the party leadership.¹³ A party could, for instance, approach the median voter on its secondary dimension in an attempt to broaden its appeal to include more centrist voters. Moreover, if parties are not unitary actors but rather are internally factionalized, party change can be used to assuage intra-party dissent (Budge, Ezrow and McDonald 2010).

Taken together, the above theoretical framework asserts that the constellation of parties is neither invariably volatile nor persistently static. The party systems of Western Europe are certainly not frozen, and change is possible, both through the entry of new parties and the (strategic) positional shifts of existing ones. However, neither should we expect the complete fluidity and inevitability of disequilibria that is so often assumed to stem from multidimensionality (Arrows 1951, De Sio and Weber 2014, Laver and Sergenti 2012). This leads me to formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: The greater the relative salience of a party's position on its focal dimension, the less flexible its position on that dimension.

Method & Data

The above hypothesis is tested using pooled time-series analysis on novel trend file data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) spanning five waves from 1999-2014 (Bakker et al. 2015, Polk et al. 2017). The ideological positions of close to one hundred parties from fourteen Western European countries are included here: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden,

¹²Typically, only one of the identified strategies has stability at its core. So-called "stickers" are not interested in the dynamic interactions with voters or rival parties, and they will stay true to their original position.

¹³It is possible that a party will attempt to assimilate or subsume outside issues into its primary, pre-existing ideological cleavage (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber 2015, Marks and Wilson 2000). This is a viable strategy, but it is unlikely to account for all salience attributed to a party's secondary dimension, especially when it encompasses a wide range of socio-cultural issues.

and the United Kingdom.¹⁴ The dataset contains expert evaluations of political parties and their ideological positions on a range of issues and dimensions, including the economic left-right dimension and the cultural GAL-TAN, or Green/Alternative/Libertarian-Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist dimension (both ranging 0-10).

The validity and reliability of party position data has been debated extensively over the years. I opt to use expert data, because this data source has been rigorously tested, cross-validated, and shown to perform as well as, if not better than, other measures, such as mass survey and manifesto data (Marks et al. 2007, Steenbergen and Marks 2007). Existing survey data unfortunately do not allow me to effectively study how voters evaluate the multidimensional positions of political parties over time, but expert and voter placements of party positions have been shown to be strongly correlated (Dalton and McAllister 2015), which not only adds to the reliability of my study but also its relevance, as the positional shifts discussed here are also picked up by voters. While it has been argued that experts are more prone to detect continuity in party positions than other observers (McDonald, Mendes and Kim 2007), as they ‘merely’ update their perceptions of party reputations, using expert survey data is neither an overly optimistic nor a decisively conservative test because I am ultimately analyzing both stability and change in party positions. Finally, although the main alternative data source, manifesto data, is widely considered to be a valid and direct measure of the importance of issues for political parties, it has received criticism for conflating salience with position (Gemenis 2013; see also Mölder 2016). Consequently, I use manifesto data to measure salience (see below). Multiple robustness checks using alternative measures for the dependent and independent variables, including party positions based on manifesto data, confirm the main finding of this paper (see Appendix III-V).

Having introduced my main dataset, I will now discuss the measurement of my key variables. A complete overview of their operationalization can be found in Table 1.

¹⁴The data span five separate waves (1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014), though not all parties are consistently included across the five waves.

Table 1: Operationalization of (in)dependent variables

Dependent variables	Measure	Data source
Change Left-Right	$ Party\ position\ Left/Right_t - Party\ position\ Left/Right_{t-1} $	Own calculations; CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Change GAL-TAN	$ Party\ position\ GAL/TAN_t - Party\ position\ GAL/TAN_{t-1} $	Own calculations; CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Independent variable	Measure	Data source
Saliency	$\left(\frac{Left/Right - GAL/TAN}{Left/Right + GAL/TAN}\right) - systemic\ saliency$	Own calculations; MARPOR (Volkens et al. 2015)
Control variables	Measure	Data source
Vote share	% of vote in most recent national election	CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Government participation	1 = if in government during previous wave; 0 otherwise	CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Distance center, Left-Right	$ Party\ position\ Left/Right - 5 $	CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Distance center, GAL-TAN	$ Party\ position\ GAL/TAN - 5 $	CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Age	No. of years since party was founded	CHES (Bakker et al. 2015)
Party organization	Combination of two items*: 1. Importance of leadership in determining party policy 2. Importance of membership in determining party policy Measure: $\left(\frac{Imp.\ leadership - 1}{6}\right) - \left(\frac{Imp.\ membership - 1}{6}\right)$	(Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012) Calculation adopted from IPOD (Giger and Schumacher 2015)

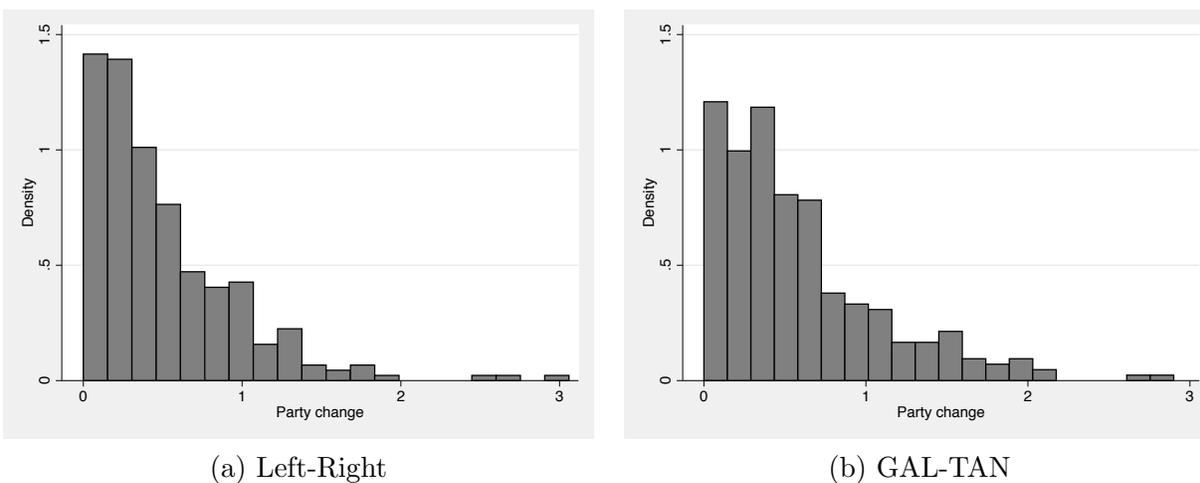
* The included items are *q23icimp* and *q23iaimp*, respectively (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). Both range from 1 (“Not at all important”) to 7 (“Very important”).

Dependent variables

In order to test my hypothesis, I need a measure of party position change so as to map ideological flexibility on different dimensions. Because I am not interested in the direction of change, I use the *absolute* difference in the average expert evaluation of a party’s position from one wave to the next—both on the economic left-right and the non-economic GAL-TAN dimension.¹⁵ In other words, the higher a party’s score on the dependent variable, the greater its positional change on this dimension as compared to the previous time point—*regardless* of the direction of change. I run separate models for each dependent variable.

The histograms for both dependent variables are presented in Figure 2. Overall, party change is more substantial on GAL-TAN than left-right, as the former’s distribution is less skewed towards zero. However, the statistics for both measures are similar despite the distinctiveness of the two dimensions, with the economic left-right dimension being ubiquitous and coherent across Europe, whereas GAL-TAN is generally considered to be more of a theoretical construct that encompasses a wide range of issues. For our purposes, however, this is a welcome finding, as it suggests that party behavior on left-right and GAL-TAN is more comparable than anticipated.

Figure 2: Histograms for measurement of party change
by *ideological dimension*



¹⁵A differenced dependent variable has the added advantage of taking care of potential heteroskedasticity and unit effects, as it levels variation in the intercepts.

Independent variables

So how can one best distinguish between a party's primary and secondary dimensions? For this paper, the focus is on salience, or the relative importance of a given issue or dimension to a party. The most straightforward strategy would be to rank the two dimensions by salience for each individual party. For some parties this might be a straightforward exercise, but for others parties it can be more challenging to make this assessment. For instance, GAL-TAN is certainly the primary dimension for Green and populist radical right parties, but what about for the Christian democrats? Certainly, part of their conservative image comes from their positions on social issues, but their economic profile is often clearly pronounced, as well. As a result, I propose to identify the primary and secondary dimension of a party using quantitative means. Not only is this method more transparent, but also it allows for more variation. Instead of creating a strict dichotomy between a party's primary and secondary dimension, one can measure the relative 'primariness' of each dimension and its relationship with party change.

The most commonly used measure of party-level salience comes from MARPOR, or the comparative manifesto project (Volkens et al. 2015). This data set classifies quasi-sentences of party manifestos using a coding scheme of 56 categories to gauge the relative importance of an issue area to a party (as a percentage of the entire manifesto). By aggregating (most of) these categories into clusters, the salience of entire ideological dimensions can be mapped.

The exercise of abstracting ideological dimensions from party-level data is a contentious one. Ultimately, the policy space in which parties compete is not directly observable, meaning that no 'true' map exists. Yet, following the recommendations of Benoit and Laver (2012), we can use our *a priori* assumptions to guide us in the estimation process. Thus, I abstract two dimensions from the 56 MARPOR categories. The employed categorization can be found in Appendix I, which builds on existing work (e.g. Spies and Franzmann 2011, Stoll 2010). However, because I am not limited to directional items only, my coding scheme is more inclusive, with 20 issue categories per dimension. Each category carries equal weight in my

calculations, as weighting methods are inherently focused on the party system and not the individual party (cf. Bakker and Hobolt 2013). I use the ratio between the two dimensions to gauge relative salience at the time of the most recent national election, with the variable ranging from 1 (manifesto solely about left-right) to -1 (all about GAL-TAN). For example, if Party A devotes 70% of its manifesto to left-right issues and only 30% to GAL-TAN, it would receive a score of 0.40, which, because it is positive, indicates that economic issues are relatively more salient to the party than cultural issues.¹⁶

Finally, since a party does not have full control over its own issue agenda, as other parties also shape the public debate (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010), I account for ‘systemic salience’ by subtracting the party system average from the above score, excluding the party’s own salience score.¹⁷ A positive score means that a party puts relatively more emphasis on economic issues than the other parties, while a negative score indicates that cultural issues are relatively more salient.

Control variables

I include multiple control variables in my model. I expect larger parties, measured by vote share in the last national election, to be less mobile, because significant electoral success leads to a more complex and professional organization whose ideological course is harder to change. Similarly, ‘older’ parties should have more established reputations and, thus, less flexible positions. Next, I account for participation in government. Wielding executive power binds a party by its actions in government, because voters hold them accountable. Moreover, from a Rikerian perspective, a party has less of an incentive to alter the status quo when it enjoys frequent access to government. Instead, political losers who are excluded

¹⁶ $\frac{(70 - 30)}{(70 + 30)} = 0.40$

¹⁷ While some have used similar calculations (see, for instance, Bischof 2015), others have instead opted to account for systemic salience by including a separate control variable (e.g. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010, Van Heck 2016). In those cases, however, the dependent variable was party-level salience and not positional change. Furthermore, I do not expect to explain party change using the variation in dimensional salience that is explained by systemic factors, as my focus is on a party’s own legacy and reputation.

from office do seek to promote new conflict in an attempt to turn their electoral fortunes around. Both factors should limit party change on the primary and secondary dimensions for government parties. An indicator variable records whether a party was in government during the previous wave. Because parties operating at the fringes of the political landscape have more room to maneuver, I control for the effect of ideological extremism, assessed by a party's distance from the center.¹⁸ Finally, there is an extensive literature on the relationship between party organization and positional change. That is, leadership-dominated parties are assumed to be more strategic, office-seeking, and ideologically flexible than organizations in which the balance of power is tipped in favor of policy-seeking activists (Schumacher, De Vries and Vis 2013). I include a control variable for party organization (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012), with higher scores indicating leadership dominance in setting party policy.

However, several of these control variables have the potential to moderate the effect of salience on party change, and these interaction effects need to be modeled, as well. First, larger parties are expected to have broader issue agendas (Wagner and Meyer 2014), potentially making the difference between their primary and secondary dimension smaller. Second, parties in government have no reason to upend the status quo by introducing new patterns of conflict (Van Heck 2016), nor can they avoid taking clear policy stances (Rovny 2013). Relatedly, Government participation is arguably also the most effective way for a party to establish issue ownership, including on issues outside of its core agenda, which makes its program less narrow and diminishes the difference between a party's primary and secondary dimension (Greene 2016). Finally, as extremist parties might emphasize their non-centrist positions (Wagner 2012), this could lead to more pronounced and specialized issue appeals, making them more constrained on their primary dimension yet more flexible on their secondary dimension.

Table 2 presents the summary statistics for my dependent and independent variables. As noted above, my two dependent variables produce very similar statistics. These results

¹⁸I use the absolute midpoint of the scale (here, 5 on a scale from 0-10) as the ideological center.

could be interpreted to mean that party positions are more stable on ideological dimensions compared to individual issues due to the level of aggregation. That is, party change could appear less likely when adopting a dimensional approach because of the clustering of a multitude of issues, with positional changes canceling each other out. It turns out, however, that party change across aggregated dimensions and individual issues is highly comparable.

The main independent variable, which gauges the party-level salience ratio of left-right to GAL-TAN issues, varies considerably, despite being anchored by the party system average. The highest score (1.04) belongs to *Nea Dimokratia* in 2014, as it devoted most of its manifesto to economic issues while the average across the other included Greek parties was slightly negative (-0.15). The lowest three scores, on the other hand, are all held by the *Dansk Folkeparti* (≤ -0.79), as it places great emphasis on GAL-TAN issues, especially compared to the other parties. Figure 3 shows the average salience scores by party family. As expected, radical right and green parties focus primarily on cultural issues, while the economy takes precedence for most mainstream parties as well as the radical left.

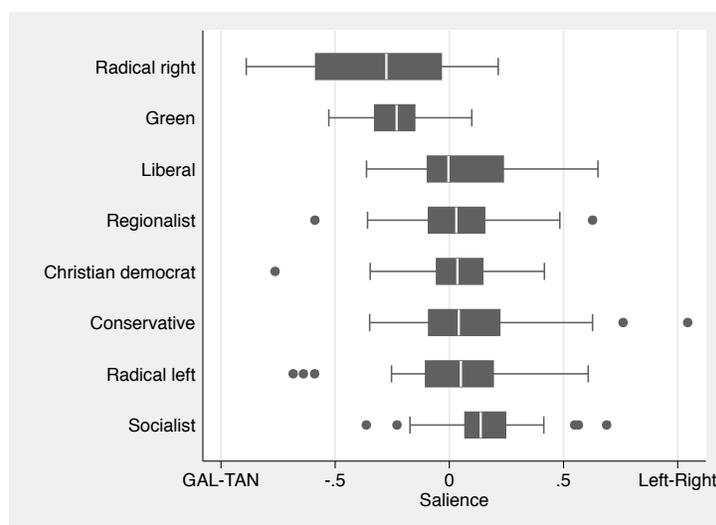
Table 2: Descriptive statistics of included variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Change Left-Right	0.50	0.46	0.00	3.06
Change GAL-TAN	0.58	0.51	0.00	2.90
Salience	0.02	0.27	-0.89	1.04
Vote share	14.46	12.16	0.15	45.40
Government participation	0.40	0.49	0.00	1.00
Distance center, Left-Right	1.94	1.15	0.00	4.91
Distance center, GAL-TAN	2.08	1.19	0.00	4.83
Age	51.22	39.68	4.00	176.00
Party organization	0.44	0.23	-0.25	1.00

Average national vote share ranges from a mere 0.15% to more than 45%, but the average across all observations is close to 14.5%. 40% of my party-year observations concerned parties in government at the time of the previous wave. Ideological extremism, measured as the distance from the ideological mid-point, encompasses almost the entire possible range (0-5),

but the average is around 2 units away from the center on both dimensions. The included parties vary substantially in age, from newly founded organizations to the British Conservative Party's 176 in 2014.¹⁹ Finally, few included parties are strongly activist-dominated, as indicated by both the mean (0.44) and the range (-0.25, 1.00). This means that, typically, the party leadership is dominant in determining the organization's course. A correlation matrix for all included variables can be found in Appendix II.

Figure 3: Saliency of Left-Right to GAL-TAN by *party family*



Model specification

I run a cross-sectional time series analysis with party-year as the unit of observation. My dependent variables are first-differenced, tracking party change on each dimension from one wave to the next. This allows me to analyze the direct effect of a dimension's saliency level on Y . The generalized model can be specified as follows:

$$|\Delta position_{i,t}| = \alpha + \beta_1 saliency_{i,t} + \beta_2 controls_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

¹⁹One might expect that party size, age, and ideological extremism are strongly correlated, but this is not the case. It is not true that, on the whole, new parties are smaller and more extremist (see Appendix II).

It is important to note that while my dependent variables are differenced, my main independent variable is not. That is, I use the *level* of a dimension's salience during the most recent national election prior to t to explain party change ($t - t_{-1}$), not the *difference* in salience between t and t_{-1} . The reason for this is that I expect a party to consistently move around more on a dimension that is less salient, even when the level of salience of that dimension does not change. Put differently, complete stability on the independent variable can lead to great fluctuations on the dependent variable, especially when there is a clear salience differential between left-right and GAL-TAN.

Tests show that the residuals at time t_{-1} are a good predictor of the residuals at t , indicating a problem with serial correlation, specifically of the panel-specific AR(1) type. Instead of using the traditional correction that leads one to include a lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side, I use the Prais-Winsten solution, as recent work has shown that the former approach can lead to bias and wash out the effect of the variables that are of theoretical interest (Plümper, Troeger and Manow 2005).²⁰ Finally, tests also indicate that my data suffer from panel-level heteroskedasticity. This is perhaps not surprising, given the multitude of parties, nested within countries, that compose my dataset. I therefore use corrected standard errors in my analysis.

Results

Table 3 presents the results of my analyses for both dependent variables. Models 1 and 3 provide a baseline for my main specifications of interest, models 2 and 4. These full models include the interaction terms with vote share, government participation, and ideological extremity to study the conditional effect of salience on party change. Starting with the

²⁰Like most research on party competition, my data set is of the $N > T$ variety, meaning that I have fewer time points than panels, which could lead to overly optimistic estimates (Hoechle 2007). For that reason, I also ran my analyses without modeling for time, both by omitting the correction for autocorrelation and by using a random effects model instead of Prais-Winsten regression. While the standard errors vary, my key coefficient estimates consistently have the same sign and are largely of a similar magnitude, thus supporting the substantive conclusions reported below.

left-right dimension, we see that as the relative *saliency* ratio of economic to cultural issues increases in comparison to the party system average, positional change decreases. The effect is reversed on the GAL-TAN dimension. That is, party change becomes less likely when a dimension's saliency increases. The coefficient estimate for saliency is consistently smaller in the baseline models, and only statistically significant for party change on the left-right dimension. This is not surprising, however, as these models do not account for the conditioning effect of the interaction terms. A party's vote share and participation in government, in particular, are expected to abate the effect of saliency on party change.

Table 3: Regression analysis of absolute party changes, 1999-2014

	Left-Right		GAL-TAN	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Saliency	-.061*	-.221*	.015	.186*
	(.020)	(.056)	(.015)	(.049)
Vote share	.004*	.002*	-.002*	-.002*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.000)	(.001)
Government participation	-.107*	-.077*	-.026*	-.029
	(.020)	(.019)	(.012)	(.015)
Distance center	-.063*	-.067*	.064*	.066*
	(.006)	(.008)	(.006)	(.005)
Age	-.002*	-.002*	.001*	.001*
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Party organization	.298*	.368*	.423*	.420*
	(.028)	(.034)	(.014)	(.015)
Saliency × vote share		.008*		-.004
		(.003)		(.003)
Saliency × govt. participation		.041		-.067
		(.048)		(.048)
Saliency × distance center		.019		-.037*
		(.024)		(.014)
Constant	.569*	.554*	.232	.228*
	(.020)	(.025)	(.017)	(.015)
<i>N</i>	282	282	282	282
Wald	2236.24	2101.12	2098.37	137669.23

Table entries are Prais-Winsten regression coefficients corrected for panel-level heteroskedasticity and standard errors (in parentheses).

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

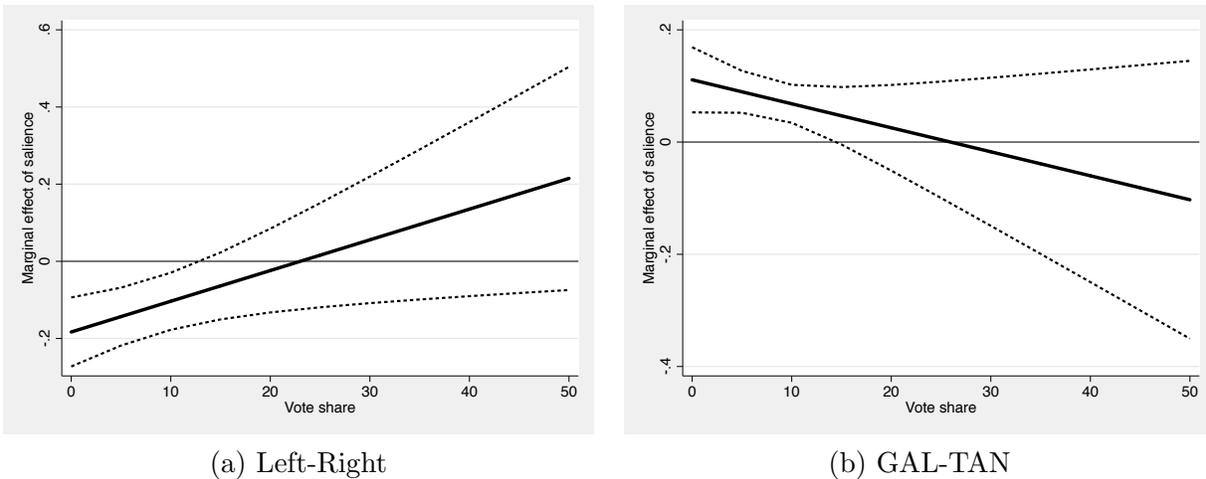
Moving on to models 2 and 4, both coefficient estimates on *salience* are statistically significant and in line with my hypothesis. The coefficient on the left-right dimension is substantively larger. This makes sense, given that the GAL-TAN dimension is less coherent. Ideological change on the left-right dimension should always concern a party's position on matters of redistribution and government intervention in the economy, whereas GAL-TAN encompasses diverse cultural issues, such as law and order, immigration, and environmental protection. That being said, coefficient estimates of around 0.20 are substantial, as the average positional change of a party is around 0.50 on each dimension (see Table 2).

Of the included control variables, *vote share* and *age* have statistically significant coefficients, but with effect sizes that are marginal and not of substantive interest. Interestingly, while ideologically extremist parties are more likely to change position on GAL-TAN, they are actually less likely to do so on the left-right dimension. This is an intriguing finding that warrants further exploration. Finally, the effect of party organization on positional change is very convincing, with leadership-dominated parties being far more likely to alter their ideological positions than their more activist counterparts. This is true on both dimensions and corroborates the findings of recent studies (e.g. Schumacher, De Vries and Vis 2013).

However, while the signs and statistical significance of the reported findings are immediately interpretable, the best way to study their effects is by means of marginal effects plots. Figure 4 shows that the marginal effect of *salience* on left-right party change decreases as a party's vote share increases, before becoming statistically indistinguishable from zero when the 95% confidence intervals include the null. The other interacting variables, government participation and distance from center, are set at 0 (i.e. not in government) and 2 (the median value), respectively. This is in line with my expectation, because larger parties have broader issue agendas that will diminish the salience differential between their primary and secondary dimension. The reverse is true for the marginal effect of *salience* on the GAL-TAN dimension; the coefficient estimate is positive at first, before becoming statistically indistinguishable from zero. On both dimensions the cut-off lies between a national vote share of

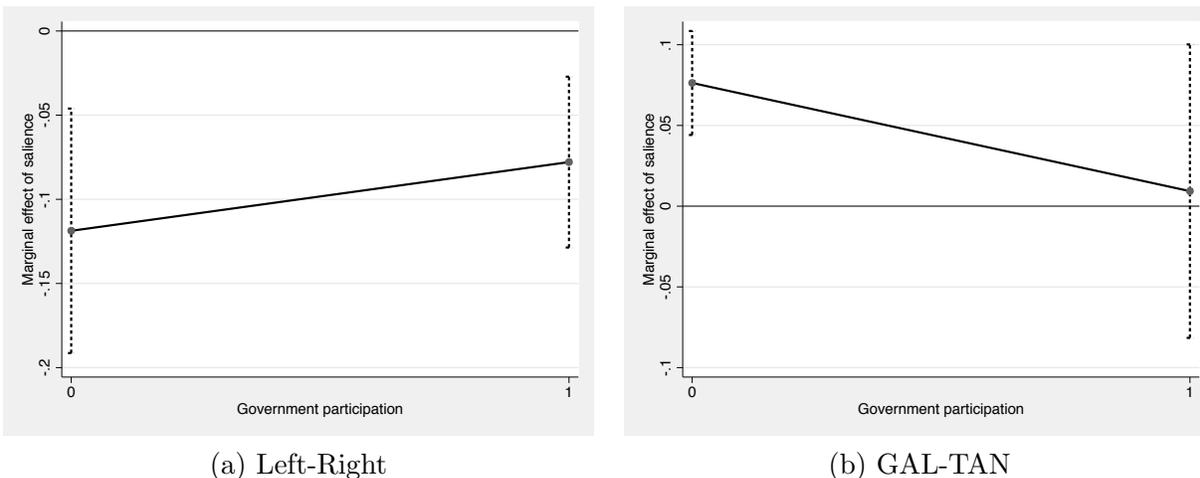
10-15%. Although this may seem low, well over half of my party-year observations fall below this threshold, meaning that the marginal effect of salience is not statistically significant for relatively large parties.

Figure 4: Marginal effects of salience on party change
by *vote share*



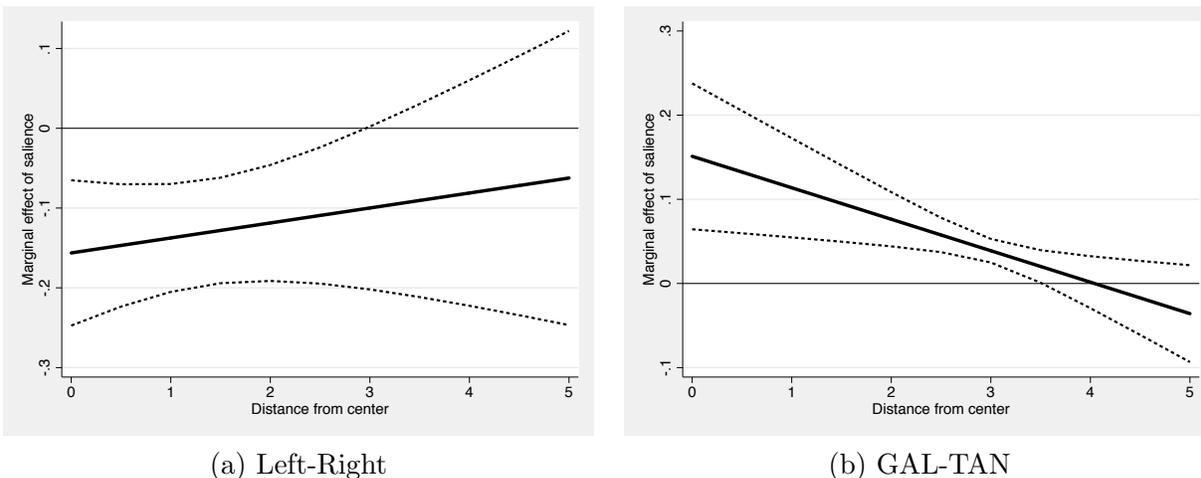
Next, Figure 5 graphs the marginal effect of *salience* on party change by government participation for each dimension. As before, the other interacting variables, vote and distance from center, are set at their respective median values, 8.1 and 2. Once a party enters government, it inevitably needs to expand, and concede partial control over, its own issue agenda. This reduces the salience differential between a party's primary and secondary dimension and decreases its marginal effect on party change—or, in the case of the GAL-TAN dimension, makes it statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Figure 5: Marginal effects of salience on party change
by *government participation*



Finally, Figure 6 plots the marginal effect of *salience* on party change by degree of ideological extremism. The other interacting variables, vote and government participation, are set at 8.1 (the median value) and 0 (i.e. not in government), respectively. The expectation was that more extremist parties would have more pronounced and narrow programs, thereby increasing the effect of salience. Yet, on both dimensions, the marginal effect approaches zero as a party becomes more extremist, indicating no meaningful difference between its primary and secondary dimension. Although this could be due in part to the limited number of observations at the edges of the political spectrum, more theoretical explanations can be formulated. It is possible that extremist parties truly talk about only a single dimension, thus reducing the effect of a dimensional salience differential. Alternatively, perhaps there is a ‘ceiling effect’ that prevents extremist parties from moving further away from the center (Sommer-Topcu 2015), which would also lead to a decrease in the marginal effect of salience on party change. Nevertheless, this is an interesting and unexpected finding that requires further investigation.

Figure 6: Marginal effects of salience on party change
by *distance from center*



Taken together, my empirical analyses consistently confirm the overarching hypothesis of this paper. I also ran multiple robustness checks to alleviate potential concerns about the validity of this finding (see Appendix III-V). The conclusion that a party’s position is less flexible when a dimension’s relative salience is high holds when (1) using alternative operationalizations of key variables, including those which rely on manifesto data to gauge party change or employ an expert-level measure of salience; (2) looking at long-term party change across more than one wave—that is, t compared to t_{-2} as the dependent variable—to rule out the alternative explanation that my findings are solely driven by short-term zigzagging or expert uncertainty; (3) analyzing positional shifts across different levels of aggregation, from the two ideological dimensions analyzed here to specific issues related to left-right, GAL-TAN, and European integration; (4) directly comparing party change on the two dimensions by using a single ratio as the dependent variable, similar to my salience measure; and (5) including country and/or year fixed effects. Finally, a possible concern could be that expert evaluations are ‘noisier’ on a party’s less salient dimension due to a lack of information, which might, in turn, explain my findings. The correlation between party change and the standard deviation in expert evaluations is weak, however.²¹ Together, these robustness

²¹The correlations for left-right and GAL-TAN are 0.29 and -0.02, respectively.

checks increase my confidence in the main finding reported in this study.

Discussion

The study of party competition is crucial for our understanding of representative democracy. While much of the party competition literature has focused on the causes and magnitude of party change, voter and expert placements of parties have drawn attention to the perceived stability in parties' ideological positions. Building on insights from cleavage theory, this paper has attempted to provide a reasonable solution to reconcile these opposing perspectives. By accounting for the multidimensionality of the policy space in Western Europe and the pivotal role of historical party legacies, we can distinguish between a party's *primary* and *secondary* dimension, and we can start to assess their importance for the study of party change. Parties cannot always reposition themselves without effort, cost, or punishment, as formal theorists typically assume (Adams et al. 2006). Rather, they are expected to be rooted on their primary dimension, as their reputation and relatively strong party-voter linkages put considerable limitations on ideological flexibility, whereas fewer constraints exist on their secondary dimension, allowing for more strategic, vote-maximizing behavior. Certainly, parties can and do change positions on their core dimension (Adams et al. 2006, Ezrow et al. 2011), but I have argued that such (potentially high profile) policy shifts are relatively less common and auspicious.

The results of my analyses are robust across a variety of alternative operationalizations and confirm the hypothesis that party change becomes less likely as the party-level salience of an ideological dimension increases. Indeed, on the left-right dimension for instance, the three largest positional shifts in my data set were all made by populist radical right parties (party change > 2), namely the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, the French *Front National*, and the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*—parties for whom the GAL-TAN dimension was considerably more salient than left-right compared to the rest of the party system. On the

other hand, the three smallest positional changes between waves on the economic dimension (change < 0.02) all concerned mainstream parties: The Spanish *Partido Popular*, the Swedish *Socialdemokraterna*, and the Dutch *Partij van de Arbeid*.

Theoretically, this paper follows a line of recent research that has started to test and expand on some of the most fundamental assumptions on which our models of party competition rest (Hobolt and De Vries 2015, Rovny 2013, Schumacher, De Vries and Vis 2013). Although these assumptions have served us well, this paper moves the literature in a new direction. It is by no means the first attempt to join spatial and salience theory (e.g. Meguid 2005), but its focus on multidimensionality and the subsequent salience differential provides a unique lens for studying party strategy across ideological dimensions that have varying levels of importance. This paper has made a methodological contribution to the field by utilizing the strengths of two widely used measures of party behavior, namely expert survey and manifesto data. MARPOR data (Volkens et al. 2015) provided a valid measure of dimensional salience and its importance for explaining the positional shifts of parties, tracked using CHES data (Bakker et al. 2015, Polk et al. 2017).

The empirical finding that salience predicts both stability and change in party positions has important implications for the study of democratic representation and party strategy. Far from being mutually exclusive, a party can opt to employ different strategies on different ideological dimension. This article supports the idea that a party will favor stability over change on its core dimension in order to prevent alienating its most loyal supporters, while on secondary issues it will be more likely to branch out and frequently alter its program in order to reach out to new voter groups and attempt to maximize its electoral support. The strong conditioning effect of government participation on this relationship between salience and party change suggests that holding executive power is truly a transformative experience for parties, which corroborates research that distinguishes between mainstream and challenger parties based on government experience (Hobolt and De Vries 2015).

While this paper sheds new light on party change, further research is needed. What

about the direction of change? Does public opinion matter for the salience of ideological dimensions? And do voters pick up on parties' positional shifts, whether large or small? We do not have all the answers yet—and better data on, for instance, multidimensional voter placements of parties could contribute to that effort—but this article lays the framework for future research to investigate these questions more fully.

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Appendices

I. Categorization of MARPOR issue areas

#	Issue category	Dimension
401	Free market economy	Left-Right
402	Incentives	Left-Right
403	Market regulation	Left-Right
404	Economic planning	Left-Right
405	Corporatism/mixed economy	Left-Right
406	Protectionism (positive)	Left-Right
407	Protectionism (negative)	Left-Right
408	Economic goals	Left-Right
409	Keynesian demand management	Left-Right
410	Economic growth (positive)	Left-Right
411	Technology and infrastructure	Left-Right
412	Controlled economy	Left-Right
413	Nationalization	Left-Right
414	Economic orthodoxy	Left-Right
415	Marxist analysis (positive)	Left-Right
504	Welfare state expansion	Left-Right
505	Welfare state limitation	Left-Right
506	Education expansion	Left-Right
507	Education limitation	Left-Right
701	Labor groups (positive)	Left-Right
702	Labor groups (negative)	Left-Right
104	Military (positive)	GAL-TAN
105	Military (negative)	GAL-TAN
106	Peace	GAL-TAN
107	Internationalism (positive)	GAL-TAN
108	European community (positive)	GAL-TAN
109	Internationalism (negative)	GAL-TAN
110	European community (negative)	GAL-TAN
201	Freedom and human rights	GAL-TAN
202	Democracy	GAL-TAN
305	Political authority	GAL-TAN
416	Anti-growth economy (positive)	GAL-TAN
501	Environmental protection (positive)	GAL-TAN
601	National way of life (positive)	GAL-TAN
602	National way of life (negative)	GAL-TAN
603	Traditional morality (positive)	GAL-TAN
604	Traditional morality (negative)	GAL-TAN
605	Law and order	GAL-TAN
606	Civic mindedness	GAL-TAN
607	Multiculturalism (positive)	GAL-TAN
608	Multiculturalism (negative)	GAL-TAN
705	Underprivileged minority groups	GAL-TAN

II. Correlation matrix for all included variables

Table 4: Correlation matrix

	Change L-R	Change G-T	Sal.	Vote share	Govt. part.	Dist. L-R	Dist. G-T	Age	Party. org.
Change L-R	1.00								
Change G-T	0.19	1.00							
Saliency	-0.04	-0.03	1.00						
Vote share	0.09	-0.01	0.27	1.00					
Govt. part.	-0.04	-0.00	0.22	0.23	1.00				
Dist. L-R	-0.14	0.08	0.05	-0.16	-0.13	1.00			
Dist. G-T	0.18	0.08	-0.34	-0.25	-0.14	-0.00	1.00		
Age	-0.14	-0.03	0.14	0.36	0.10	-0.05	-0.41	1.00	
Party org.	0.18	0.17	0.07	0.32	0.04	-0.06	-0.11	-0.09	1.00

III. Alternative operationalizations

One way to check the robustness of my findings is by using a series of alternative operationalizations of the main variables of interest. First, the dependent variable can be operationalized differently. I use MARPOR's own left-right and GAL-TAN coding of manifesto issue categories to map parties' positions on the two ideological dimensions.²² As before, a party's score on the dependent variable is the absolute change in its position between time points. Table 5 presents the output of this analysis.

For the sake of comparison, I employ the same measure of saliency as in my main analysis. The results confirm that a negative relationship exists between saliency and party change. That is, as the relative importance of the economic dimension increases, party change on left-right decreases while on GAL-TAN it increases. It should be noted that only the coefficient estimate for *saliency* on the left-right dimension is statistically significant, but this relationship needs to be explored in more detail given the included interaction terms.

²² *Left-right* = (per401+per402+per407+per414+per505) - (per403+per404+per405+per406+per409+per412+per413+per415+per416+per504);
GAL-TAN = (per104+per109+per601+per603+per605+per608) - (per105+per106+per107+per501+per503+per602+per604+per607+per705).

Table 5: Regression analysis of absolute party changes (MARPOR), 1999-2014

	Left-Right	GAL-TAN
Salience	-.773*	2.100
	(.284)	(1.843)
Vote share	-.032*	-.061*
	(.007)	(.009)
Government participation	-1.248*	.980*
	(.100)	(.190)
Distance center	.441*	.931*
	(.043)	(.045)
Age	.020*	.021*
	(.003)	(.003)
Party organization	1.370*	2.087*
	(.206)	(.755)
Salience \times vote share	.342*	-.028
	(.021)	(.058)
Salience \times govt. participation	-6.865*	2.704*
	(.374)	(1.162)
Salience \times distance center	1.508*	-1.131*
	(.158)	(.526)
Constant	5.169*	3.438*
	(.118)	(.428)
<i>N</i>	278	278
Wald	5917.43	8383.72

Table entries are Prais-Winsten regression coefficients corrected for panel-level heteroskedasticity and standard errors (in parentheses).

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Second, I introduce another measure of the *independent* variable. As an alternative to manifesto data, I employ party-level salience items included in CHES to measure the importance of each ideological dimension.²³ Table 6 shows the results of an analysis that uses this alternative operationalization of the independent variable; the other components of the model are identical to the one in the main paper. The relevant salience items were only included in the 2014 CHES wave, so the number of observations is lower than before and there is no time series dimension to the data. Nevertheless, the coefficient estimates for each model, again, have the appropriate signs. Briefly put, as a dimension's salience increases, party change decreases. This time, however, the coefficient estimate for *salience* is only statistically sig-

²³The included items are *lrecon_salience* and *galtan_salience*.

nificant on the GAL-TAN dimension.

Table 6: Regression analysis of absolute party changes, 1999-2014

	Left-Right	GAL-TAN
Saliency (CHES)	-.678 (.623)	2.538* (1.215)
Vote share	.004 (.005)	-.003 (.006)
Government participation	-.046 (.106)	.101 (.122)
Distance center	-.049 (.047)	.087 (.063)
Age	-.002 (.002)	-.003 (.002)
Party organization	.129 (.231)	.365 (.250)
Saliency \times vote share	.002 (.036)	-.017 (.045)
Saliency \times govt. participation	.242 (.637)	-1.342 (.794)
Saliency \times distance center	.149 (.220)	-.455 (.301)
Constant	.564* (.203)	.437 (.224)
<i>N</i>	90	90
Wald	12.90	14.17

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

IV. Party change on dimensions vs. issues

Table 7 compares party change on the left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions, presented earlier, to three specific items included in CHES related to European integration. The three items measure change in the party leadership's support (1) for European integration in general, (2) for the powers of the European Parliament, and (3) for the EU's foreign and security policy. Crucially, the mean and standard deviation are very similar across all items, despite the fact that the EU-specific questions are measured on an alternative 7-point scale that

ranges from “Strongly opposed” to “Strongly in favor”. This is reassuring, because these findings suggest that the relative stability in party positions observed and explained in this paper is unlikely to be the product of the adopted dimensional approach.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics (in)dependent variables

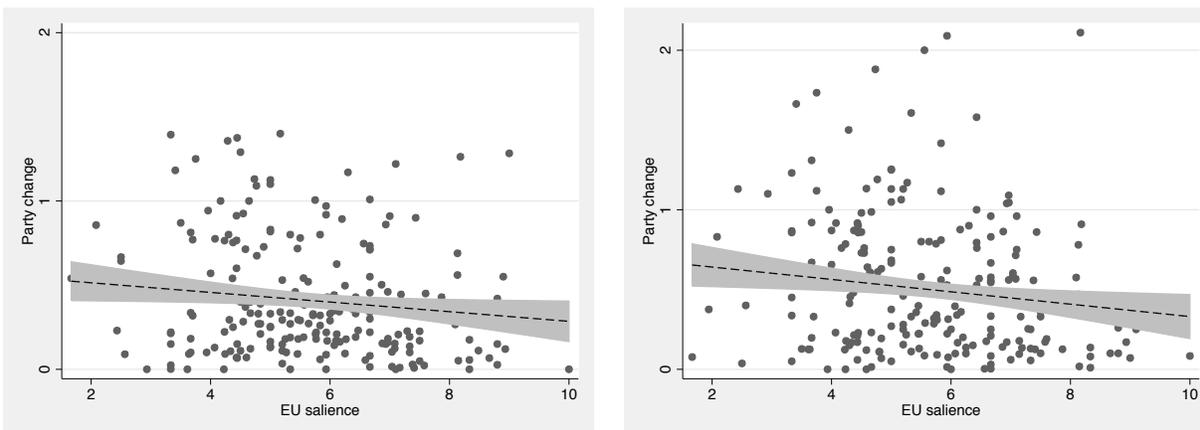
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Change Left-Right	0.502	0.461	0.000	3.059
Change GAL-TAN	0.595	0.508	0.000	2.900
Change European Union	0.406	0.388	0.000	2.900
Change European Parliament	0.503	0.453	0.000	2.790
Change Foreign policy	0.496	0.446	0.000	2.550

Finally, an additional way to check the robustness of this paper’s findings is by analyzing the actual relationship between party change and salience for these specific items. This is possible because CHES includes a question on the relative salience of European integration for a party’s public stance, measured on an 11-point scale from 0 (“not important”) to 10 (“most important”). As before, the expectation is that positional change on these EU-specific issues is less likely as European integration becomes more salient to a party. Figure 7 graphs party change on the European Union and its foreign policy by the salience of European integration for non-governmental parties.²⁴

Even when not accounting for party size or ideological extremism, we nevertheless observe a negative relationship between the party-level salience of European integration and positional change, both with regard to support for the EU in general and its foreign and security policy. In other words, the party leadership’s position on these specific issues is less likely to change over time as the overall salience of European integration increases. This is in line with my expectation and further lends credence to the findings of this paper.

²⁴The two only clear outliers, the Liberal Alliance in Denmark (2014) and Syriza in Greece (2006) with scores of 2.3 and 2.9, respectively, are not shown in graph (a).

Figure 7: Party change by salience of European integration



(a) European Union

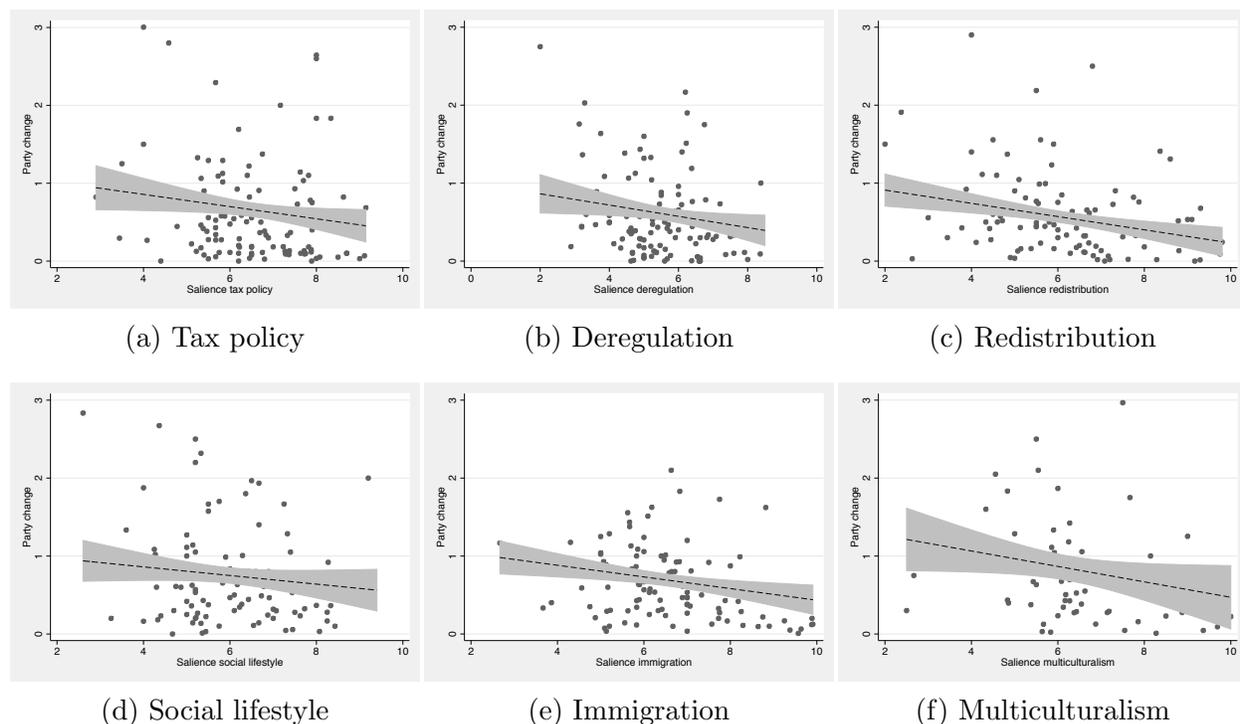
(b) EU foreign policy

Similarly, Figure 8 depicts the relationship between party change and salience for six individual policy areas that are encompassed by the aggregate ideological dimensions used in my primary analysis, left-right and GAL-TAN. The specific issues are (1) tax policy, (2) deregulation, (3) redistribution, (4) social lifestyle, (5) immigration, and (6) multiculturalism.²⁵ Government parties are once again excluded here.²⁶ In line with both my main findings and the above Figure 7 on parties' EU-related stances, positional change is less likely when an issue's salience is high. This relationship holds true for all policy areas, despite not controlling for the size and ideological extremism of a party. The results of this robustness check confirm the findings of this paper and suggest that the hypothesized relationship between party change and salience applies to both ideological dimensions and individual policy issues.

²⁵The CHES items survey a party's position and salience on "improving public services vs. reducing taxes", "deregulation of markets", "redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor", "social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality)", "immigration policy", and "integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism vs. assimilation)", respectively.

²⁶A common y-axis is used across all graphs to allow for direct comparison. As a result, the following observations are not shown here: LAOS in Greece (2010, graph (a) tax policy), PVV in the Netherlands (2010, graph (b) deregulation), and SVP in Italy (2014, graph (f) multiculturalism).

Figure 8: Party change by salience on individual issues



V. Party change as a ratio

The main analysis of this paper studies the relationship between party change and salience separately for each ideological dimension. An alternative approach would be to directly compare party change on left-right and GAL-TAN by using a ratio between the two as the dependent variable in my model, similar to my main independent variable measuring salience. This specification is not ideal, because it assumes that party behavior is uniform across the two dimensions, which we know not to be true—party change is slightly more frequent and substantial on the less coherent cultural dimension. However, a ratio of change does account for the possible correlation between party positions across the two dimensions, and allows me to further test the validity of my findings.

In the same way as my independent variable, I calculate the ratio of change using the following formula:

$$ratio = \frac{|\Delta Left/Right| - |\Delta GAL/TAN|}{|\Delta Left/Right| + |\Delta GAL/TAN|} \quad (2)$$

where a positive score indicates that a party moved more on left-right than on GAL-TAN from t_{-1} to t , and vice versa. Given the same independent variable as before (*salience*), we would expect a clear negative relationship between x and y . That is, as the relative saliency of left-right to GAL-TAN issues increases, the ratio of party change should decrease, which means more movement on GAL-TAN than left-right. Conversely, a decline in *saliency* should produce an increase in the ratio of party change.

Table 8: Regression analysis of absolute party changes, 1999-2014

	Ratio of change
Saliency	-.168* (.029)
Vote share	.004* (.001)
Government participation	-.040* (.009)
Age	-.001* (.000)
Party organization	.015 (.042)
Saliency \times vote share	.013* (.002)
Saliency \times govt. participation	.022 (.034)
Constant	-.057* (.022)
N	282
Wald	144.62

Table entries are Prais-Winsten regression coefficients corrected for panel-level heteroskedasticity and standard errors (in parentheses).

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 8 presents the results of this analysis. Because a party's distance from the ideological center varies for each dimension, this control variable and its interaction term are omitted here. The sign and statistical significance of the coefficient on *salience* once again confirm my findings. As the relative 'primariness' of a dimension increases, party change becomes less likely.²⁷ Furthermore, the marginal effect of *salience* is not statistically significant for government parties (not shown here), confirming that participation in government greatly conditions party behavior.

²⁷Another way to account for the possible dependence between party change on left-right and GAL-TAN would be to use "seemingly unrelated regression". This method is ill-suited to handle the temporal dimension of the data, however, leading to distorted standard errors. Nevertheless, this method also produces similar signs for the coefficient estimates of interest.