The Behaviour of Mainstream Parties Towards Challenger Parties in Parliament – The Effect of Ideological and Institutional Factors on the Adoption of Challenger Parties’ Positions

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Introduction

“Wir werden sie jagen!” - We will hunt them. With these words commented Alexander Gauland, one of the leading figures of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), their future task in the German parliament towards the new government parties after the party had succeeded to enter the parliament in 2017. Whether this was to be understood as a promise or a threat was heavily debated in the press afterwards. Regardless of the actual intention, this sentence comes with a certain self-confidence of power to influence the behaviour of other parties. Or to frame it in the same rhetoric: the ability to hunt them to a place where they would not have gone otherwise.

The reaction of mainstream parties to challenger parties entering the electoral arena has been an often-debated topic in political science over the last decade. Starting with the seminal work of Meguid (2005; 2007) who described the reactions of mainstream parties as strategies to improve the respective electoral chances. On a theoretical level, this article seeks to combine this branch of literature with theoretic assumptions about the effects of institutional settings that form the behaviour of parties in parliament (Martin/Vanberg 2011; Helms 2008). I argue that both perspectives need to be considered to explain the position-taking of parties in parliament.

Starting from the premise that party positions and issue emphasis can change considerably between elections, I analyse under which conditions mainstream parties react to challenger parties in parliament. From a theoretical point of view there are several factors that could influence the effect of a challenger party on the positioning of mainstream parties in parliament, such as the mainstream party’s own position, public opinion and the strength of the challenger party (Adams/Somer-Topcu 2009; Williams/Spoon 2015). The focus of this work lies on the reaction of mainstream parties towards right-wing populist parties in the field of European integration and immigration. The results shed some light on possible generalizable implications while accounting for country-specific features.

To analyse the position-taking in parliament, I use a dataset that consists of all parliamentary speeches for at least 20 years in six1 European national parliaments that have witnessed the entry of prominent right-wing populist parties. By analysing speeches in parliaments and drawing from more diverse data, I can derive a valid estimation of the parties’ positions. New computer-based methods such as Wordfish and Wordshoal allow to

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1 In this paper draft four parliaments are included
obtain these positions from political texts that meet predefined criteria and provide the basis of my analysis (Slapin/Proksch 2008; Budge/Pennings 2007; Lauderdale/Herzog 2016). The results show that both ideological as well as institutional factors have an influence on the position-taking of mainstream parties in parliament: Parties that are ideologically close to right-wing populist parties on the issue of immigration seem to move away from the challenger party’s position once they have entered the parliament. This applies to both centre-right and centre-left mainstream parties. Additionally, having the same status as the challenger party regarding the government and opposition divide seems to have a strong effect on the adoption of similar positions in parliament.

In the next section, I point out why one should analyse the positioning of parties in parliament and which existing branches of the political science literature can be used and combined to develop this analysis. From this theoretical perspective I develop the hypotheses which parties react in what way and which circumstances might interact in this process. After introducing the dataset and the methodological approach I will present the results from which I draw my conclusions and point to issues and limitations that will need to be discussed in future research. The results show that assumptions from position-taking in the electoral arena can only partially be translated to the parliamentary arena and need to be analysed with different assumptions.

Theoretical Approaches to Party Positions in Parliament

Previous studies that have dealt with the influence of challenger parties on the positions of mainstream parties have looked almost exclusively at the electoral arena. Most of the time, the analysis of new challenger parties is concerned with the question of which strategies of mainstream parties as well as challenger parties resulted in electoral success, such as an increase in vote share or the entry into parliament (Spies/Franzman 2011; Van Spanje/De Graaf 2018). To a lesser extent, the success of these challengers is evaluated in terms of influence on other parties (e.g. Abou-Chadi 2014; Abou-Chadi/Krause 2018). This paper seeks to explain, in how far challenger parties exert an influence on the positions of other parties about certain topics once they enter and stay in parliaments. I will

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2 For the definition of challenger parties, I refer to Hobolt/De Vries (2012) describing them as parties that mobilize new issues (such as immigration or European integration), that see themselves as anti-establishment and are reluctant to compromise. However, I do not follow the notion that challenger parties cease to be challenger as soon as they participate in government.
look at two typical core issues of radical right-wing populist parties: immigration and European integration. Even though not all radical right-wing populist parties have a clear niche party profile, those two issues are often central parts of their profiles (Akkerman et al. 2016, Pardos-Prado et al. 2014; Mudde 2009).

Therefore, I try to identify factors that determine the position of mainstream parties on these issues and whether they adapt their positions as a result of the presence of the challenger. To analyse this effect, I draw from two branches of the literature on party behaviour that need to be combined to understand the position-taking of parties in parliament, namely the ideological party positioning during elections and institutional setting structuring the party behaviour in parliaments.

On the one side, this draws from the background of position-taking during elections. It refers to the influential and frequently improved spatial theory (Downs 1957; Robertson 1976). Parties are seen as actors in a spatial field changing their position in order to improve their electoral success, enter offices or to implement policies (Strom 1990a; Harmel/Janda 1994). For the context of the interaction of mainstream and challenger parties the literature has been further developed in the last decade, starting with the seminal studies by Meguid (2005; 2007). The focus in her work was the question of what kind of strategies mainstream\(^3\) parties can adopt to prevent single-issue fringe parties from electoral success. In her theoretic framework, Meguid points out three possible reaction patterns of mainstream parties when confronted with a niche party actor. Two of which include alternation of the position and the third one is connected to salience. Whereas the reaction of mainstream parties through an alternation of the salience of an issue has been studied more often (Van de Wardt 2015; Rauh/De Wilde 2017), the positional change has been to a lesser degree in the focus (Abou-Chad 2014).

Even though scholars of party competition have recognized the differences between the electoral and the parliamentary arena, they only recently started to focus more on the parliamentary context “precisely because it is where all relevant parties make choices about policies” (Field/Hamann 2015). Recent studies have also shown that party systems and positions can change considerably between elections (Laver 2005; Mer- shon/Shvetsova 2008).

\(^3\) I use Meguid’s (2007: 47) framework for the classification of mainstream parties as the respective parties from the centre-right and centre left with the highest electoral average between 1970 and 2000 with the exception of the Dutch CDA which I include due to its repeated government participation.
When analysing the behaviour of parties in parliament, studies have been focusing on the institutional and institutionalized constraints and possibilities that the MPs are confronted with. This applies to the context of speeches as well as to the context of voting behaviour. First of all, this is analysed in the light of the government-opposition divide. In this literature, parties in these two groups follow different logics in their behaviour and therefore, are not necessarily differentiated by their ideology (Dahl 1966; Martin/Vanberg 2011). As one exception, Louwerse et al. (2017) take into account the ideological position of the government for explaining government-opposition voting in parliament. This leads to the different goals they want to achieve as government or opposition party. Whereas government parties, assuming they possess a majority or stable support in parliament, can propose bills that pass most of the time, opposition parties can be analysed as scrutinizer using questions and debates to attack the government and point out alternatives (Helms 2008). Nevertheless, one has to take into account that different parliamentary rules provide these groups with rights that differ considerably between countries. I argue that the position-taking of parties in parliament is important to understand the logic of party behaviour in the institutional context and has implications that go beyond this context. The following hypotheses combine these two aspects.

Following Meguid, a party can either adopt an accommodative or an adversarial strategy when changing its own position as a result of an emerging niche party. In the first occasion, the mainstream party tries to show itself as the rightful owner of the issue position proposed by the niche party. The purpose is to keep voters that are close to the own party from voting for the niche party in an upcoming election. In contrast, parties that use the adversarial strategy are not primarily concerned with their own voters turning to niche parties. Rather the new niche party is used “as a weapon against their own mainstream party opponents” (Meguid 2007: 33). By positioning itself at the opposite position of the niche party, the mainstream party adds to the salience of the conflict, hoping for voters of the mainstream opponent to turn to the niche party.

Drawing from Meguid, I assume that the ideological position of a mainstream party has an impact on its behaviour and, therefore, it does not seem to be plausible that all mainstream parties within a country react to new challenger parties in the same way. Previous empirical studies have shown that political parties are more responsive to policy shifts by other members of their ideological family (Adams/Somer-Topcu 2009). However, this has only been tested for a general left-right dimension and, additionally, not for the emergence of new actors. I assume that the responsiveness of the mainstream party depends
on the proximity to the challenger party on the discussed issue. Mainstream parties with a more similar ideological position to the challenger party are more likely to change their position after the entry of the challenger party.

In this case, mainstream parties that are closer to the position of the challenger party would shift their position towards the new position to take over potential voters from the challenger party. Taking into account the institutional context, this relationship might also be reversed: As mainstream parties in parliament are not under the same vote-seeking pressure for the whole legislative cycle as during elections, they might try to differentiate themselves from the challenger party’s position. This leads to two hypotheses that are mutually exclusive for the mainstream parties close to the challenger party’s position.

H1a: Mainstream parties with a more similar ideological position to the challenger party will take a more accommodative strategy.

H1b: Mainstream parties with a more similar ideological position to the challenger party will move away from the challenger party’s position.

These Hypotheses refer to positioning on issues that are most likely to be addressed by the respective challenger parties. However, it might be possible that the position responsiveness is also influenced by a general proximity on a left-right scale. Hence, mainstream parties that are in general closer to the new party would react more towards the new position regardless of their specific position on the challenger parties’ issue. In this case, one would expect mainstream parties from the right to feel more pressure from right-wing populist parties than mainstream parties from the left. Additionally, previous studies have shown that a general difference between left and right parties as well as between parties that are dominated by leadership or activists exists (Adams et al. 2009; Schumacher et al. 2013). They showed that left and activists-dominated parties are less responsive to changes in the public opinion. This ideological inflexibility might also be applicable to changes in the party system in parliament.

H1c: Centre-right mainstream parties will take a more accommodative strategy when a right-wing populist party enters the government than a centre-left mainstream party.
A crucial part of the dynamics in parliament is structured by the division into government and opposition. Whereas parties in government are more often in the position to pass legislation that they have proposed in their manifestos, opposition parties do more often involve in scrutinizing the government’s actions. Van der Wardt (2015) found that this is a crucial variable to predict which mainstream party will respond to niche party issues in terms of salience alternation. The strength of this division might differ between different systems as the strength of government parties in a minority government and to a lesser extent in a coalition government. Nonetheless, I assume that mainstream parties in the opposition tend to adopt challenger party positions more often as they feel the pressure to express a profile towards the potential voter that differs from the government parties. However, this effect changes when the respective challenger party is part of the government or supports the government. In this case, the mainstream party in the opposition can be expected to take a more opposing position. In how far the institutional government-opposition divide is structuring the positions in parliament in general should also depend on characteristics of the different parliaments. I assume that in systems where the influence of opposition parties is higher, for example through legislative committee systems, position-taking will be less structured by a government-opposition divide than in systems with less opposition influence. This influence is traditionally higher in the Scandinavian countries and Italy, lower in many central European countries and lowest in Great Britain (Strom 1990b; Gallagher et al. 2006). Additionally, countries that traditionally witness more often the formation of minority governments might have a smaller government-opposition divide as coalitions in parliament are changing more often and issue-specific (Strom 1990b).

H2a: Mainstream parties will only take a more accommodative strategy if they are together with the challenger party in the opposition/government.

H2b: The division between government and opposition parties is smaller in parliaments with more opposition rights and when minority governments are traditionally more frequent.

Additional to the institutional factor of the government-opposition divide, also the structure of a legislative term might influence the position of mainstream parties. Martin/Vanberg (2008) could show that the electoral cycle has an influence on the choice of topics.
that are debated in parliament: In that case coalition parties tend to debate more extensively on divisive issues as elections approach. In order to be more attractive to potential voters the probability of a reaction to other parties’ positions might be higher before an upcoming election. Further studies have shown that against the long held opinion that parties do not only compete during election but that there is positional change during the parliamentary cycle (Laver/Benoit 2003) as well as before and after elections (Schwarz et al. 2010). However, one should expect that mainstream parties should adopt a stronger vote-seeking strategy during elections. This might lead to the adoption of challenger parties’ positions during elections in order to decrease the vote share of the respective parties.

H3: The adoption of a similar position will be stronger before national elections.

Furthermore, there are more factors\textsuperscript{4} that might influence the position-taking of mainstream parties in parliament and should be included in further analyses. One of them is the public opinion towards the respective topic or policy field. It is more likely that mainstream parties will consider changing their position if the public opinion towards the topic is becoming more in favour of the niche party’s position. In this regard, political parties face a trade-off between policy- and vote-seeking (Somer-Topcu 2009). On the one hand, it seems to be attractive for parties to change their position according to changes in the public opinion in order to attract more voters. On the other hand, this might lead to proposed policy outcomes that are not anymore in line with the party’s core ideology. Loyal supporter might punish such a policy shift. There are indications for an influence of the public opinion on the party position towards European integration. So far this has only been checked for the electoral arena of European Parliament elections (Williams/Spoon 2015). The results show that parties respond in different ways as for example party size and being part of the government matter.

Another important factor might be the previous election result of a mainstream party. Somer-Topcu (2009) could show that parties tend to shift their position after elections as a result of losses. This effect decreases with time passing after the election. Also party size or party resources might also be moderating factors for the reaction of parties to other positions. As parties with fewer resources tend to focus on their own issues rather than “riding the wave” for others (Wagner/Meyer 2014). However, as the focus of this work

\textsuperscript{4} The following factors are not yet included in the analysis but will be added in future versions.
is on mainstream parties, they are most of the time the parties with the most resources in a party system.

In sum, I propose that the mainstream parties’ positions towards challenger parties’ issues as well as their reaction to the entry of a challenger party depends on the ideological position of the mainstream and challenger party as well as country-specific institutional features of the national parliaments. However, this dependence might be moderated by other factors such as the electoral cycle.

Operationalisation

To implement the theoretical framework outlined above I use full transcripts of parliamentary speeches in the countries Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Netherlands and Germany. I chose the issues of European integration and immigration to analyse the impact of challenger parties on mainstream party positions. On the one hand, new cultural issue dimensions, such as the two mentioned, show potentially a greater degree of conflict in party systems (Kriesi et al. 2012). In contrast to the standard saliency theory, Dolezal et al. (2014) could show that parties do not adopt similar positions on most of these issues. Especially issues like “Europe” or “multiculturalism” showed confrontational positions. Therefore, they have a high chance of being constantly politicised in the parliament. On the other hand, these topics are often a core subject of emerging right-wing populist parties entering the political system (Pardos-Prado et al. 2014; Mudde 2009). Consequently, these issues are most likely cases for a reaction of mainstream parties.

Using parliamentary debates to extract ideological party positions is a far less often used tool in political science compared to manifestos, expert surveys or roll-calls. Nevertheless, except for roll-calls, it is the only meaningful data that allows to directly infer the position of a party in a parliament. Furthermore, the methodological approach of inferring positions from texts such as speeches has gained increasingly more attention, especially due to improved data availability.

Speeches in parliament do not only signal parties’ preferences on certain policies, but also parties’ preferences on the use of legislative time (Pedrazzani 2017). Whereas government parties try to enact the proposed legislation quickly, opposition parties have an interest in delaying government-sponsored proposals. However, the number of opposition

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5 Finland and Germany are not yet included.
speeches also depends on the salience of the legislation to the respective party and its ideological heterogeneity. This is in line with the finding that opposition also ask more questions on topics that salient to them (Otjes/Louverse 2017). One could argue that every positioning of parties (whether in manifestos or debates) should be considered as cheap talk as long as they do not manifest in actual legislative action. However, parliamentary debates usually take place during the time of related legislation or if the topic is part of a general debate. Therefore, the speeches should capture the party positions detailed without losing the connection to voting behaviour of MPs. Furthermore, tactical voting might lead to the instance of opposition parties voting against government party proposals, although they would generally agree on the issue as they are often subject to a high degree of partisan influence (Alemán et al. 2017). Additionally, parties consider parliamentary debates as an important stage as speaking time is highly in demand (Proksch/Slapin 2015: 85). Hence, I assume that parliamentary debates reveal more about what is considered by Benoit/Laver (2006: 15) as the “sincere” position of parties rather than their “strategic” position. In this regard no differences could be observed when only considering voting behaviour. For this reason, the analysis of speeches does not only reveal a better distinction between government and opposition parties than counting roll-calls. It also offers the possibility to distinguish between different opposition positions even if parties vote jointly against the government. Therefore, one virtue lies in the fact that political debates in parliaments reflect conflicts over policy content that is relevant at the discussed time and often connected to legislation. Contrary to this, it has been argued that it is difficult to deduce a party’s position only from its emphasis of an issue in a manifesto and therefore to distinguish between position and salience (Klemmensen et al. 2007: 748). With the measurement of salience, it is connected to the basic assumptions of the analysis of manifestos, such as in the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2016), which reflect “saliency theory” as how parties express their policy preferences (Lowe et al. 2011: 127). However, by analysing debates instead of manifestos it does not rely as much on the strategic behaviour of parties as the CMP. Whereas it is possible to imagine that parties do not mention entire issues in manifestos for strategic reasons (even though they might have a strong position) it is far more likely that those issues will be debated during a legislative period. This applies to a lesser extent to the well elaborated and often discussed RILE scale, which combines many different aspects to one issue. However, this changes with respect to more specific issues. Consider for example the case of the Social Democrats in Denmark. They score a 0 on
the pro-anti EU scale in the last three coded elections of the CMP (Volkens et al. 2016). Does this reflect the position it is going to take towards such issues in parliament? Probably not! It is rather a reflection of (deliberately) low issue salience and might be interpreted in the light of issue ownership. Still, when confronted with EU issues in parliament, and therefore in the daily political business, the respective party will be forced (at least to some extent) to take a position on debates and proposed bills. Therefore, parliamentary debates provide a much more balanced source.

Compared to expert survey data the measurement approach might also solve the problem of overestimation of extreme party position. There seems to be some evidence that experts tend to judge parties on the end of measurement scales more radical than they are (Curini 2010). This might as well happen with manifesto data due to the limited topic selection in manifestos. Also, the measurement is easily replicable. Additionally, a main issue with text-based measures of policy quantities is that they “should come with associated estimates of uncertainty” (Lowe et al. 2011: 134), which is not the case with manual coded data. This problem has been in the middle of the discussion of the treating text as data movement. Computerised coding promises the “ability to process large amounts of text quickly and, hopefully, accurately” (Budge/Pennings 2007:123).

The basis of the actual implementation is provided by the ParlSpeech data set, which contains annotated full-text vectors of 3.9 million plenary speeches in the legislative chambers of key European states (Rauh et al. 2017). The data set currently covers roughly the period between 1990 and 2015 in seven EU member states. I will use the data for the Netherlands and Sweden and I have enlarged my sample with the cases of Denmark and Austria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country (years covered)</th>
<th>Mainstream Left</th>
<th>Mainstream Right</th>
<th>Right-wing Populist Challenger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria (1996-2017)</td>
<td>SPÖ</td>
<td>ÖVP</td>
<td>FPÖ (BZÖ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark (1997-2017)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>DF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1990-2016)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a first step, the salience measurement approach by Rauh (2015) will be applied for the identification of debates with the topics EU integration and immigration. By using a dictionary-based approach he analysed how often EU key words are used in parliamentary debate. The same dictionary is used to identify speeches about European Integration. For the topic of immigration, a search string by Boomgaarden/Vliegenthart (2009) provides
the basis and has been translated and adjusted for this paper. These debates will then form the basis for the position measurement. Similar to the manifesto approach, all speeches, which contain statements about European integration and immigration held by members of a political party in a certain time span, will serve as data for the measurement of the party position.

The described set of speeches is then used to estimate Wordshoal scores for the two (or three) main centre-left and centre-right mainstream parties (following the classification of Meguid 2007: 47) as well as the respective right-wing populist party for every quarter or of a year or half-year with available data. This aggregation level has turned out to be the most appropriate one as it is the division with a sufficient amount of data. The Wordshoal estimator relies on the Wordfish scores but takes into account the debate structure of the parliamentary debate (Lauderdale/Herzog 2016). Therefore, scores can be estimated at debate level to account for the uniqueness of the debated topic and then be aggregated at the preferred time level. The underlying Wordfish algorithm scales political texts without requiring the use of reference texts. Instead it “assumes an underlying statistical distribution of word counts, and, lastly, the ability to use all words in every document and to estimate the importance of each of these words” (Slapin/Proksch 2008: 708). The algorithm uses the relative frequencies of the words from a text as data to locate them (the parties) on a scale. Therefore, it relies heavily on the selection of these texts (or subsets of texts like in manifestos) as well as on the interpretation of the produced scales by the researcher (Proksch/Slapin 2009; Lauderdale/Clark 2014). Once the texts are chosen, however, the approach provides some possibilities to process the data with the goal to concentrate on the influence of words that have a meaning with regard to policy position. These include stemming words as well as excluding stop words, very rare words or words that are only used during a certain period of time (Proksch/Slapin 2009: 334). The resulting scores are then used as dependent variables in two ways.

The nested structure of the presented speech data (different speakers of parties in different debates at a certain time point) creates problems with the consistency of the analysis from

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6 The German version is included in the Appendix for both topics.

7 Speeches are only considered if they include at least three keywords or if the debate topic and the speech contain at least one keyword. This reduces the speech number to 3000-15000 speeches per issue and country.

8 Using the R packages quanteda (Benoit 2018) and wordshoal (Lauderdale/Herzog 2016)

9 The debate structure is not yet included for the Dutch dataset. However, I use the date of the debate as an identifier for the debate. This should be a good approximation as it is rather unlikely that two or more debates about the mentioned issues will occur on one day that are not highly related.
two angels. First of all, as the data is a time series one would have to implement a dynamic model for the text analysis which allows the parameters to vary over time in order to estimate positions consistently in one model for the same party (Lauderdale/Herzog 2016; Martin/Quinn 2002). However, such a model is not yet included in the packages used for this analysis and would require a Bayesian factor analysis.

Figure 1: Data Structure of the Speech Data

Secondly, it needs to be considered that MPs are not (completely) free to speak in parliament: On the one hand, the parliamentary agenda is setting the topic for a debate. Its creation differs between countries but the influence of the government on it should be taken into account (Rasch 2014). On the other hand, as parties are not unitary actors the positions of their MPs cannot be expected to be consistent. Parties and their leadership differ in their dealing with backbenchers and the electoral system of a country has a considerable influence on these decisions (Proksch/Slapin 2015). However, as I’m more interested in party position shifts than party division, I will leave this issue for further research. Both factors do not invalid the results of this paper but should be considered in further research.

In a first step, I will analyse the positions for the two issues in the different parliaments descriptively to get a first impression of the data and the dynamics over time. In a second step, I will conduct an interrupted time series analysis to estimate the effect for entry of the challenger party into parliament. Unfortunately, due to data availability, this is only possible for the cases of Sweden and the Netherlands. The analysis allows to estimate the
direct effect on the mainstream parties and parliament as well as effects on a change in the trends of the position-taking (McDowall et al. 1980).

In the last step, I only look at the time points where the challenger parties have already entered the parliament and measure the distance between the mainstream parties and the respective challenger party. I use a standard OLS regression with country fixed effects to measure the influence of institutional, ideological and electoral factors on the distance between mainstream and challenger parties.

**Descriptive Analysis**

In order to get an impression of the position measures of the party and first insights of the changes over time, I have plotted the party positions for each parliament and issue. The first plot (Figure 2) displays the estimated positions for the social democratic (S) and the conservative (M) mainstream parties as well as the right-wing populist party (SD) in Sweden. We can see that the average position of the social democrats is closer to the right-wing populists at the time of the entry.

![Figure 2: Party Positions in the Swedish Parliament](image)

However, in contrary to the conservative party, we can see a stronger trend away from the populist’s position. This trend also seems to be increased after the change of government in 2014 from the conservative to a social democratic-green government. This could serve as first indication for the hypothesis that the entry of a challenger party into the
parliament has an effect on the positions of mainstream parties and that this effect depends on the ideological position of the mainstream party. The issue of European integration, on the other hand, does not fit the expected outcome as the challenger party does not take a more extreme position but rather to jump in between the mainstream parties’ positions.

In a second plot (Figure 3) I show the change of party positions of the two Austrian mainstream parties SPÖ and ÖVP as well as the right-wing populist party FPÖ. The illustration also includes the BZÖ which was founded as a moderate splinter party of the FPÖ in 2005, but did not achieve to re-enter parliament after the national elections in 2013. From the first view we can see that there is hardly any variation of the position of the SPÖ over time, being relatively steady at the opposite side of the scale to the FPÖ. In contrast, we can see quite some movement of the position of the ÖVP. This corresponds with the change of government coalition parties of the ÖVP. With the formation of a right-wing government in 1999 together with the FPÖ, the ÖVP changed its position considerably towards the FPÖ position. After the breakup of the coalition (as well as the succeeding coalition of the ÖVP and BZÖ between 2005 and 2006). The ÖVP changed its position again towards the position of the SPÖ, when they formed a grand coalition government after the 2006 elections. This seems to point to the assumption that the government-opposition status had an effect on the Austrian mainstream parties.

Figure 3: Party Positions in the Austrian Parliament
However, as before there are differences between the two issues. Whereas the EU issue merges completely into the government-opposition dynamic, the position of the FPÖ towards immigration is separated from the two mainstream parties throughout the whole time of analysis.

Figure 4 shows the party positions of the Danish parties. In this case we have indicators that we can assume both effects described from the cases before. After the entry of the right-wing populist Danish Peoples Party (DF) in 1998, the Social Democrats (S) changed its position strongly away from the challenger party. However, during the time of the centre-right government under the leadership of the conservative party Venstre (V) from 2001 to 2011, the social democrats positioned themselves much closer to right-wing populist. This changed again (stronger for the immigration issue) with the start of centre-left government in 2011 when the social democrats took a position further away from the right-wing populists. In the case of Denmark, the position-taking towards the two issues is much more similar with the right-wing populist party taking a position further away from both mainstream parties.

Figure 4: Party Positions in the Danish Parliament

![Diagram](image)

The position-taking in the Netherlands (figure 5) shows in some parts similar characteristics as in Sweden. Whereas the right-populist PVV enters the parliament with immigration position as the edge of the position spectrum, its positions towards European integration are located more in the middle. The liberal-conservative VVD that is initially the closest to the PVV’s immigration position changes its position, especially with the entry
into government together with the CDA in 2010 (although it was supported by the PVV until 2012). The social democratic PvdA does not change its position considerably over time. The Christian democratic CDA, on the other hand, does position itself in terms of immigration closer to the PVV after the end of its government coalition with the VVD.

Figure 5: Party Positions in the Dutch Parliament

In summary, the graphs provide a first hint that ideological as well as institutional factors have an influence on the position-taking of mainstream parties when confronted with challenger parties. The differences between the plots of Sweden and the Netherlands on the one side and Denmark and Austria on the other side, might also lead to the possible assumption that core issues of the challenger parties only become important for the government-opposition divide of the mainstream parties after the challenger party has been established for some time in the parliament. However, not both issues have proven to be equally well suited to analyse the position taking in parliament. When re-evaluation the dictionary approach for the selection of the speeches, this seems to be plausible and provide an argument to qualitatively select from the quantitatively pre-selected speeches: Whereas the immigration dictionary is more likely to only detect speeches with an underlying pro-anti-immigration discourse, this might not be the case for the EU dictionary. In this case, speeches and debates might have an EU connection through the initiation of legislation from the European level. The actual topical content, however, might be located in different policy areas.
The Entry Effect of the Challenger Party

As mentioned above, I conducted an interrupted time-series analysis to analyse what immediate effect the entry of a populist right-wing party had on the party position of the spatially closest mainstream party. From the descriptive results it becomes apparent that the issue of immigration seems to be the more suitable case for the analysis. In concrete terms, this means the influence of the entry of the PVV on the VVD in the Dutch parliament and the influence of the entry of the SD on the Social Democrats in the Swedish parliament.

Figure 6: Interrupted Time-Series Plots

The analyses show very similar results for the two parties. Both parties show only a small immediate jump in the data which is away from the position of the challenger party but in both cases not significant. However, this changes once we look at the change in the slope after the entry of the challenger party. Whereas both parties’ position was quite constant over time before the challenger party’s entry both of them move their position away from the challenger party quite constantly. This change in the slope is very significant\(^\text{10}\) for both parties. In comparison, there is no such effect for all other parties in the

\(^{10}\) 0.0000 for the Social Democrats and 0.003 for the VVD
two countries. This can be seen as an indicator, that the initial positional proximity has an influence of the reaction of mainstream parties in parliament.

The Effect of Challenger Parties within Government

In order to analyse the effect on the mainstream parties’ positions once the challenger party has entered the parliament, I ran an OLS regression with country fixed effects\(^\text{11}\). I use the difference between the position of the mainstream and the challenger party as my dependent variable.

Figure 7: Regression model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: distance_MS_CHAL</th>
<th>gov_opp_dif</th>
<th>0.790*** (0.095)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>0.223** (0.090)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election</td>
<td>-0.486*** (0.152)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theta_t_1</td>
<td>0.109* (0.062)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factor(country)DK</td>
<td>0.732*** (0.135)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factor(country)NL</td>
<td>0.159 (0.122)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factor(country)SW</td>
<td>0.695*** (0.197)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.604*** (0.137)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 330
R2 0.298
Adjusted R2 0.283
Residual Std. Error 0.791 (df = 322)
F Statistic 19.558*** (df = 7; 322)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

\(^{11}\) I also ran a model with party fixed effects but the results stay by and large the same.
As the plots have already suggested, being in a different government or opposition status as the challenger changes the mainstream party position significantly further away from the challenger party’s position. The effect is by far the strongest with an effect size of nearly 0.8 on a scale from -2 to 2 and also highly significant. Comparing centre-left and centre-right mainstream parties, centre-left parties generally position themselves further from right-wing populist parties in parliament. However, this effect is smaller and less significant. Furthermore, in times elections mainstream parties generally take a position closer to the challenger. This effect is also surprisingly strong and significant. This shows that overall, mainstream tend to position themselves closer to the position of challenger parties in the quarter of year before an election. All of these results support the previous findings: There is no moncausal explanation to the reaction of mainstream parties to challenger parties in parliament. In fact, different ideological and institutional factors influence the position-taking of these parties.

Conclusion

The influence of new parties in the party system on established mainstream party positions has been a much debated topic over the last decade (Meguid 2007; Abou-Chadi 2014). However, as well as the general discussion on party positions, this debate has been very much connected to the electoral arena. This paper has argued that while these analyses have produced valuable information on the party behaviour during elections, they are not easily transferable to the institutional arena of parliaments. The institutionalized context should broaden our understanding of party positions and add to the studies mentioned above. With new improving quantitative text analysis methods being able to process large amounts of newly available data, I analysed speech data from parliaments in order to detect the influence of right-wing populist challenger parties on mainstream parties when entering and staying in parliaments. There is evidence that the logics of the institutional setting as well as the electoral and ideological constraints both have an influence on the positioning of parties in parliament. However, the issues immigration and European integration do not seem to be as comparable in terms of position-taking in parliament as in the electoral arena. This makes sense as the detection of EU debates with the dictionary might lead to a much broader set of
debates. In further studies one should qualitatively pre-analyse those debates and distinguish between debate that are more probable to have an underlining pro-anti EU structure and those that are rather discussing other issues in a European context. I could confirm my first general hypothesis that the entry of a new challenger party into parliament has a stronger positional effect on ideologically closer parties. However, regardless of being a centre-right or centre-left party, the entry seems to lead to a positional differentiation of the mainstream party.

Additionally, also the second set of hypotheses can largely be confirmed: The respective government-opposition status of the challenger and the mainstream party determines their positional distance on immigration. This division is particular strong in Austria where opposition influence is smaller and minority governments very rare. There is also an election effect on the mainstream party positions as their difference to the respective challenger party is smaller during elections. This might point to what Meguid (2007) calls an accommodative strategy.

This study has taken some first steps to analyse the position-taking of parties in parliament. Therefore, it comes with certain limitations that will hopefully be tackled in future research. First of all, these limitations are connected to the problems of the Wordshoal algorithm with time-series data which have already been described. Furthermore, this study treats parties as unitary actors and does not allow for variance in the position of single MPs. An analysis on the MP-level could not only improve the methodological implementation but also provide valuable information on the dynamics within parties. Previous studies as well as this study have very often focused on the mainstream parties and its reaction patterns. However, it might be interesting to explain the position-taking of new challenger parties inside and outside parliament.

This study provides valuable insights from a quantitative perspective on how party positions change in parliaments depending on the party system. However, further studies would very much profit from a connection to a more qualitative analysis of the position-taking in speeches. These might also include quantitative methods such as topic modelling to attach more meaning to the abstract spatial party positions.
References


Appendix

EU Dictionary

europäische(n|r){0,1} union
europäische(n|r){0,1} (atom|wirtschafts){0,1} gemeinschaft(en){0,1}
eu
eg
ew
euratom
(eu|eg)-vertrag(ages|läge){1}
vertrag(s|es){0,1} von (maastricht|amsterdam|nizza|lissabon)
(maastricht|amsterdam|nizza|lissabon)-vertrag(s|es){0,1}
(lissabon|amsterdam) vertrag(es|s){0,1}
einheitliche(n|r){0,1} europäische(n|r){0,1} akte
römische(n) verträge
aeu-Vertrag(es|s){0,1}
(eu|eg)-verfassung|vertrages{0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} verfassung|vertrag|vertrages{0,1}
(eu|eg)-erweiterung(en){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} währungsunion
europa der [1-9] [1,2]
(eu|eg)-[1-9][1,2]
europäische(n){0,1} projekt(es|s){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} einigung
europäische(n|r){0,1} integration(sprozeß|sproze|sprozes|ssβ|essβ|ssβes){0,1}
(eu|eg)-institution(en){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} institution(en){0,1}
wirtschafts- und währungsunion
ew
www
egww
(eu|eg)-kommission
europäische(n|r){0,1} kommission
(eu|eg)-kommissar(e){0,1}
(eu|eg)-kommissarin(nen){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} Kommissare(n){0,1}
(eu|eg)-beamte(n|r){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} beamte(n|r){0,1}
europäische(n){0,1} exekutive
europäische(n)s{0,1} parlament(es|s){0,1}
europaparlament(es|s){0,1}
(eu|eg)-parlament(es|s){0,1}
ep
europawahl(en){0,1}
europaabgeordnete(n|r){0,1}
(eueg)-abgeordnete(n)r{0,1}
(eug)-ministerrat(s(es){0,1}
(eueg)-[a-öö]*minister
ratspräsidentschaft
(eueg)-ratspräsidentschaft
europäische(r)n{0,1} [a-öö]*rat(s(es){0,1}
(eueg)-gipfel(n){0,1}
europagipfel(n){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} gipfel(n){0,1}
(eueg)-mitgliedstaat(en){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} mitgliedstaat(en){0,1}
(eueg)-mitgliedsl(ändler){1}
europäische(n)r|s{0,1} mitgliedsl(ändler)
(eueg)-staat(en){0,1}
(eueg)-l(ändler)
europäische(r)n{0,1} gerichtshof(s(es){0,1}
eugh
(eueg)-gerichtshof(es)s{0,1}
(eueg)-gericht(s(e){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} zentralbank
ezb
ezb-direktorium
ezb-rat
hohe(r)n{0,1} vertreter(in)s{0,1} für außen- und sicherheitspolitik
europapolitik
europäische(r)n{0,1} ebene
(eueg)-ebene
europäische(n)r{0,1} verfahren
europabühne
(eueg)-kompetenz(en){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} kompetenz(en){0,1}
(eueg)-[a-öö]*politik(en){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} [a-öö]*politik(en){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} [a-öö]*union
europäische(n)r{0,1} mandat(es)s{0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} binnenmarkt(s(es){0,1}
einheitliche(n)r{1} binnenmarkt(s(es){0,1}
europäische(n)r{0,1} [a-öö]*integration
gemeinsame(n)r{0,1} außen- und sicherheitspolitik
europäische(n)r{0,1} außen- und sicherheitspolitik
polizeiliche(n)r{0,1} und justizielle(n)r{0,1} zusammenarbeit
europäische(n)r{0,1} [a-öö]*m(a)arkt(es)s{0,1}
(eueg)-[a-öö]*agenda
(eueg)-[a-öö]*haushalt(s(es){0,1}
(eueg)-[a-öö]*programm(s(es)e}{0,1}
(eueg)-[a-öö]*regulierung(en){0,1}
europäische(r|n){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*regulierung(en){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*vorschrift(en){0,1}
europäische(r|n){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*vorschrift(en){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*vorgabe(n){0,1}
europäische(r|n){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*vorgabe(n){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*ziel(e){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} ziel(e){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*maßnahmen
europäische(r|n){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*maßnahmen
(eu|leg)-instrumente(n){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} instrumente(n){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*standard(s){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} standard(s){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*norm(en){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*norm(en){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*zusammenarbeit
europäische(r|n){0,1} zusammenarbeit
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*gesetzgebung
europäische(r|n){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*gesetzgebung
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*gesetz(e){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*gesetz(e){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*recht(es|s){0,1}
europarecht(es|s){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*rechtsetzung
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*richtlinie(n){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*richtlinie(n){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*verordnung(en){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*verordnung(en){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*entscheidung(en){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*entscheidung(en){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*leitlinie(n){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*leitlinie(n){0,1}
(eu|leg)-[a-zäöüß]*strategie(n){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*strategie(n){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitik
esvp
europäische(n|r){0,1} sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitik
esvu
gemeinsame(n|r){0,1} sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitik
europäische(n|r){0,1} recht(sprechung|sordnung|setzung){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*recht(es|s){0,1}
vertragsverletzungsverfahren
vorabentscheidungsverfahren
aeuv
europäische(n|r){0,1} währung(en){0,1}
(eu|eg)-währung(en){0,1}
gemeinschaftswährung
eurozone
euro-zone
euromaun(s){0,1}
euro-ram(s){0,1}
europäische(n|r){0,1} [a-zäöüß]*fonds
(eu|eg)-[a-zäöüß]*fonds
stabilitäts- und wachstumspakt(s|es){0,1}
stabilitäts- und wachstumspakt(s|es){0,1}

Immigration dictionary

einbürger[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
sprachkur[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
sprachunter[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
familienzusammenführung
scheinehe
zwangsheirat
zwangsverlobung
scheinverlobung
immigr[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
zuwanderu[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
einwand[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
multikult[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
muslim[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
islam[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
asyll[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
aufenthaltsgenehm[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
staatsbürgerschaft
flüchtling[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
ehrenmord
hasspred[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
haßpred[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
menschenhandel
familiennachzug
burka
integrationsdebatte
kopftuch
migrant[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
migration[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
parallelgesellschaft[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
fluchtursache[a-zöäåàçéêíôöûü]*
integrationsbeauftrag*  
integrationsdefizit*  
aufenthaltserlaubnis  
ausländer*