A Giant Fast Asleep?
Party Incentives and Politicization of European Integration

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Forthcoming in Political Studies
Hooghe and Marks (2009) recently introduced a new research agenda for the study of European integration focusing on politicization, i.e. the inclusion of mass public attitudes into the politics of European integration. The overall aim of this paper is to respond to this new research agenda. Unlike the existing literature, which focuses on EU-sceptical extreme left og right-wing parties, the paper argues that the explanation for politicization or the lack of it should be found in the incentives the issue offers for mainstream political parties. Denmark serves as a crucial case study to show the limitations of the existing literature and the need to focus on the incentives of mainstream political parties. Empirically, the paper argues that expectations about impending politicization of European integration are misplaced. The giant is fast asleep because those who could wake it up generally have no incentive to do so and those who have an incentive cannot.
Hooghe and Marks (2009) recently introduced a new research agenda for the study of European integration focusing on politicization.¹ Moving this question to the top of the agenda of European integration research highlights the fact that our understanding of politicization remains surprisingly limited (cf. Kriesi, 2009).² Hooghe and Marks (2009) outline a theoretical framework for approaching the question of politicization, which a few other studies have approached empirically (cf. De Vries, 2007; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Kriesi, 2007).

This paper responds to the call for greater focus on politicization in European integration research. Its core theoretical argument is that the explanation for politicization or the lack of it should be found in the incentives an issue offers mainstream political parties (cf. Meguid, 2005). This is in contrast to the existing literature which has focused on EU-sceptical extreme left or right-wing parties (cf. Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Kriesi et al., 2008; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; De Vries, 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). Mainstream parties find European integration an unattractive issue for two reasons: First, party positions on the issue deviate from the left-right dimension, which is the basic structure of party competition in Europe. This makes the coalition building impact of politicization uncertain. Second, voting behaviour with regard to European integration depends crucially on how the issue is framed and this makes the electoral impact of politicization more unpredictable for mainstream parties than is the case with politicization of for example immigration.

The paper also differs from the existing literature in terms of research strategy. The typical approach to electoral politics around European integration is comparative studies (De Vries, 2007; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Kriesi, 2007). This study draws on one country,

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² EU and European integration are used synonymously throughout the paper.
Denmark, but includes the entire political agenda. The strategy has two advantages. First, Denmark can be seen as a ‘crucial case’ (Gerring, 2007) for the existing literature on politicization of European integration. The factors presented as conducive to politicization, such as EU-sceptical extreme parties and referendums, are all clearly present in the Danish case, but, as will be argued below, they do not lead to politicization of European integration. Second, the drawback of a cross-national comparative strategy is that it offers limited variation. As argued by Van der Eijk and Franklin (2007), the issue of European integration is a ‘sleeping giant’. As European integration has rarely been politicized, studying the issue cross-nationally provides limited understanding of the factors that could lead to politicization, thus making it hard to explain why it does not come about.

**Politicization and European Integration**

Hooghe and Marks (2009) put the question of politicization at the centre of their post-functionalist research programme on European integration. Politicization is understood as the inclusion of mass public attitudes into the politics of European integration. The question is how important public opinion about the European Union has become for its development (pp. 6-8). Hooghe and Marks argue that the Maastricht Accord was the starting point for a politicization of European Integration when the issue ‘entered the contentious world of party competition, elections and referendums’ (p. 7).

They further outline a theory of issue politicization pointing to different factors that are conducive to or limiting politicization (pp. 6-9, 18-21). Factors conducive to politicization are institutional factors, most importantly the constitutional opportunities of referendums, and party strategies. With regard to the latter, Hooghe and Marks point to the role of radical right or left-wing parties, the parties that have opposed European integration and thus taken advantage of the electoral incentives resulting from an EU-sceptic mass public (p. 21). At the
same time, fears of internal party disagreement and the need to appear consistent in the eyes of the mass public are factors that limit party interests in politicization (p. 19).

Politicization has made appearances in the European integration literature before (e.g. Marks and Steenbergen, 2004; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 2007; Bartolini, 2005, pp. 309-62), and the literature has focused on similar factors as Hooghe and Marks (2009): Some studies point to internal party coherence as a factor that limits party interest in politicization (Aylott, 2002; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004), and de Vries (2009) emphasizes the ‘spill over’ effect from referendums. However, the literature has paid most attention to the role of extreme left and right parties. Studies seeking to explain the salience of the issue at the electoral level thus point to the role of party polarization due to EU-sceptical extreme parties (De Vries, 2007; De Vries and Edwards, 2009). This is in line with Kriesi (2007), who draws on a more general study (Kriesi et al., 2008) that focuses on how extreme parties introduce a new globalization cleavage that includes European integration.

This focus on extreme parties is highly influenced by the ‘sleeping giant’ metaphor introduced by Van der Eijk and Franklin (2007) (cf. Kriesi, 2009; Börzel and Risse, 2009): The issue of integration is thus characterized by pro-EU consensus at the elite level, including most political parties that form governments, and widespread EU scepticism among the European public, which has been highly visible in recent referendums. This leads one to expect the emergence of parties that take electoral advantage of the widespread EU scepticism. However, as Kriesi (2007, p. 104) acknowledges, this line of reasoning does not explain the issue of European integration very well since politicization is less widespread than expected. This calls for an alternative.

This paper thus aims to push the research programme outlined by Hooghe and Marks (2009) further by focusing on the question of party strategies and party competition around European integration. The paper builds on a narrower definition of politicization as a matter
of saliency, i.e. that the issue is high on the agenda of political parties as well as the electorate. According to this definition, politicization is not the same as party conflict on an issue. As will be argued below, party conflict in the form of different party positions on an issue is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for politicization. Parties have different positions on many issues that do not receive much attention, i.e. become politicized.

In comparison with Hooghe & Marks (2009, p. 9), the paper focuses on the central factor of their model of issue politicization, namely political parties and their strategies. This focus allows the paper to take issue with the idea presented by Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 21) – and prominent in the literature – that EU-sceptical extreme parties can drive politicization of European integration. The aim is thus to outline an understanding of issue politicization which goes beyond arguing that the existence of electoral potential will generate politicization just because some – extreme - parties will have an incentive to politicize the issue.

**Party attention to European Integration**

To build a theoretical framework for understanding which issues political parties focus on, i.e. party issue competition, we draw on insights from agenda-setting literature (Baumgartner et al., 2006) since party issue competition can be seen as agenda-setting process:

First, an agenda is a ‘hierarchy of issues’, which implies that some are issues are more important than others, and that an agenda-setting process must be seen as a competition for attention among different issues (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, pp. 1-5). Thus, the question of politicization of European integration must be seen as relative. How is the issue ranked in the hierarchy of issues that constitutes the agenda of political parties and the electorate?

Second, agenda-setting processes are not just about attention, but also about framing. Different actors attempt to influence framing, and some are more influential than others, but like agenda-setting processes in general, no single actor can control framing of an issue,
among other things because it will be affected by real world events (cf. Baumgartner et al., 2008). As will be shown below, European integration can be framed in a number of ways that no actor controls.

Third, issue characteristics matter. Soroka (2002) has outlined an issue typology based on the flow of information on different issues and their effects on the agenda-setting process. Some issues like unemployment are prominent in the sense that the population is informed about them on a personal basis. On such issues, public attention drives the agenda-setting process. Other issues like the environment are sensational. People have limited personal information, but experience them through sensational stories in the media. On such issues, the media drives agenda-setting processes. Finally, we have government issues, for example European integration. The public has limited personal experience with these issues, which rarely produce sensational media stories. The agenda-setting process is driven by governments or other political actors, and in the case of European integration by government actions like treaty negotiations or EU summits (Boomgarden et al., 2010).

Fourth, agenda-setting processes are always triggered by specific events or what Kingdon (1995, pp. 184-90) labels ‘policy windows’. They may be unpredictable like earthquakes, or predictable like the publication of a commission report. The implication is that a theory explaining party issue competition must focus on necessary conditions, i.e. what issues parties have an incentive to focus on. Explaining why a party focuses on a particular issue at a particular time requires events that provide the content of party attention. European integration offers a continuous stream of such events, for instance the ongoing treaty and enlargement debates.

To build a theory of issue politicization at the party level, the literature on issue competition is also of obvious relevance. Budge and Farlie (1983) argue that political parties compete by attempting to draw attention to issues they find advantageous rather than by
assuming different positions on predetermined issues. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) have developed a model of party issue competition, which also draws on agenda-setting literature. At any point in time a party system agenda exists in the sense of a hierarchy of issues; the parties are forced to pay attention to it and at the same time compete about its future content. According to the issue competition perspective, the core of politicization is thus for parties to politicize advantageous issues because politicization will ‘force’ opponents to pay attention to issues they would rather avoid.

The next question is which factors at the party level affect this hierarchy of issues. According to Meguid (2005), mainstream political parties like Social Democrats and Conservatives, which constitute the government alternatives, are the central actors at the party level. ‘Niche parties’, e.g. Green parties, are dependent on the issue strategies of the mainstream parties for electoral success. This raises the question of which issues the mainstream parties find it advantageous to focus on.

Party systems have a structure that organizes party competition, and the left-right dimension with its origin in the economic class cleavage continues to be the dominant organizational principle (Van der Brug and van Spanje, 2009), though its ideological content has become less coherent (Mair 2008, pp. 228-30). Competition is typically organized in blocs: a bloc of government parties including at least one mainstream party faces a bloc of opposition parties, also including at least one mainstream party, which wants a government of another colour. Thus, the question of which issues mainstream parties find advantageous should be seen in light of this competitive structure (Bale, 2003). Two factors, the coalition factor and the electoral factor, determine which issues mainstream parties focus on:

The coalition factor implies that an issue needs to fit the overall left-right structure of party competition. If a party position on an issue deviates significantly from this structure the consequences of politicization in terms of competition for government power become unclear.
For parties that go after government power, it becomes difficult to decide whether attention to a specific issue is beneficial as the bloc organization is based on the left-right dimension.

European integration is a perfect example; Marks and Wilson (2000) argue that political parties across Western Europe have generally taken positions on the EU in a similar pattern, which is shaped by the two-dimensional development of the European Union; economic integration and political integration. The first dimension generated mainly left-wing opposition to European integration, most pronounced in social democratic dominated countries in Northern Europe, whereas the political integration dimension mainly has generated right-wing opposition. The interplay of the two dimensions, where the political integration dimension has become increasingly important in the 1990s, has generated a pattern of party positions with anti-EU parties at the extreme left and right, and pro-EU parties in the centre (cf. Van der Brug and van Spanje, 2009; Hooghe et al., 2002; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2007, pp. 197-203).

The result is that party positions deviate considerably from the left-right dimension. As shown by Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) it is the only major issue where party positions in Western Europe deviate significantly from the left-right dimension. Thus if for instance a Social Democratic party breaks the EU consensus by moving towards an EU-sceptical position, the coalition implications are unclear because of the ‘strange bedfellow’ problem that arises. The Social Democrats would not only join forces with the extreme left parties but also with the extreme right. The coalition implications will then depend on the extent to which politicization of European integration benefits the extreme right or the Social Democrats and the other left-wing parties.

A further consequence of European integration not fitting the left-right structure is that it is an issue where internal party disagreements are often pronounced. Political parties are organized around left-right positions. As Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 19) and others (Aylott,
have pointed out, internal party disagreement is prohibitive for politicization and makes it difficult for parties to make positional moves as these are likely to stimulate internal party conflict.

The coalition factor also implies that positional disagreement among the mainstream parties is a necessary condition for politicization, as shown in Riker’s (1996) principles of dominance and dispersion: Drawing attention to an issue where all parties agree is not attractive even though voters might find it important, and parties will move attention away from such issues (dispersion principle). For a political party, it is much more advantageous to draw attention to an issue where it has the electorate on its side and where there is a conflict with other parties (dominance principle). Thus for European integration to become politicized, one side of the competition between mainstream parties for government power needs to brake the pro-EU consensus. They need to generate the party conflict necessary for politicization. However, the fact that an issue does not fit the major conflict dimension in party systems makes positional moves by mainstream parties unattractive.

The electoral factor implies that an issue needs to be electorally advantageous for the mainstream party breaking the pro-EU consensus, or the party needs to have the electorate on its side. It is important that the electoral incentive for mainstream parties relates to the electoral majority, not just votes. For a ‘niche’ party like a Green party it is always attractive to politicize the environment because it makes it easier to capture pro-environmental voters. Whether it is an electoral majority is less important. The situation for mainstream parties is different because their wish to gain government power is premised upon swinging the median voter to their bloc. However, if a mainstream party cannot be sure to have the majority on its side on an issue it will not attempt to politicize it, but will focus on other issues where it has the electoral majority on its side. This is exactly the case with European integration.
The sleeping giant logic points to the electoral incentives in the widespread EU scepticism, which offers room for political entrepreneurs who could gain votes from it (cf. Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2009, pp. 18-21). However, the question is if the EU-sceptical position is also the majority position? The two dimensions which have shaped party position have also structured public attitudes in the sense that EU scepticism has grown as the political integration dimension became increasingly important during the 1990s. As argued by Hooghe and Marks (2009, pp. 9-14), the public increasingly sees the EU as a matter of identity and not just of economic integration. However, even if the increasing focus on identity has pushed public opinion in a more EU-sceptical direction in the 1990s (cf. Hobolt, 2009, p. 26), actual electoral behaviour based on these attitudes very much depends on the exact perspective from which voters approach the issue, i.e. framing.

Any issue can of course be framed in different ways, but the nature of the European integration issue makes framing particularly relevant and thus the electoral incentives for mainstream parties more uncertain than for other issues. Should the EU be framed in terms of EU’s role in limiting climate change?; Turkish entrance into the EU?; or the ‘democratic deficit’ and the structure of European institutions? As Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 13) put it: ‘Hence, public opinion on Europe is particularly susceptible to construction: i.e. priming (making a consideration salient), framing (connecting a particular consideration to a political object) and cueing (installing a bias)’. This view is further supported by a comprehensive study of referendums on European integration: The outcome very much depends on the way the issue is framed in the public debate, including how the electorate perceives the consequences of a No (Hobolt, 2009).

This does not imply that public opinion on the EU is superficial, rather the opposite; the complex way in which the EU has developed in terms of both economic and political integration is reproduced in public opinion. Though framing is relevant to any issue, the
multidimensional nature of European Integration makes the question particularly relevant for this issue and thus creates uncertainty about the electoral implication of politicization. As the agenda-setting perspective has shown, this is something parties can influence but not control, especially when the issue is subject to electoral contestation among mainstream parties.

Summing up, party issue competition is a struggle about placing issues on the party system agenda, implying that also parties which would rather see an issue disappear are forced to pay attention to it. The central question is whether it is attractive for mainstream parties to focus on an issue. This depends on the coalition criteria: does the issue fit the left-right line of conflict, and the electoral criteria: does a mainstream party have the electoral majority on its side? If these conditions are fulfilled, the parties will try to use events like EU treaty negotiations to politicize the issue. If the conditions are not fulfilled, the issue will be ignored and will not become politicized.

This theoretical framework leads to a general prediction that European integration will not be politicized as the mainstream parties lack both coalition and electoral incentives. The prediction from the literature discussed above is quite different, namely that political entrepreneurs like radical right wing parties should be able to politicize it based on its electoral potential for such parties. ‘Spill-over’ from referendums (De Vries, 2009) would be an additional mechanism for politicization.

**Politicization of European Integration in Denmark**

In the following, electoral politics on European integration in Denmark will be analysed according to Gerring’s (2007) ‘crucial case study’ logic. The Danish case can be considered

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3 The following is an example of a ‘dis-confirmative’ crucial case study that aims to falsify a given theory (cf. Gerring’s (2007) discussion of ‘crucial case studies’). The literature on politicization of European integration, including Hooghe and Marks’ theory (2009), probably does not fully meet Gerring’s criteria (2007) for such a
‘crucial’ for the literature because it has all the factors conducive to politicization: Denmark has had six referendums on European integration, five during the past 25 years; Denmark has very successful extreme parties, which should be able to act as entrepreneurs on issue of European Integration. Especially, the EU-sceptical Danish Peoples Party has over the last decade become a central actor in the Danish party system with around 13 per cent of the vote; the Danes are among the more EU-sceptical populations (Hobolt, 2009, p.28). Should politicization happen anywhere, it should be here. Denmark has also over the past 25 years witnessed a proliferation of the party political agenda involving politicization of issues like the environment and immigration (Green-Pedersen, 2006). The development of party attention to European integration can thus be compared with issues that have become politicized.

As the first step it is obvious to focus on the dependent variable, politicization of European integration. As argued above, the concept refers to saliency, i.e. how important is the issue on the party system agenda and the voters’ agenda. Politicization thus refers to an issue with a prominent position on both agendas. This immediately raises a half empty/half full discussion about how to define prominent. As outlined above, agenda-setting literature approaches the question by comparing across issues (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, pp. 1-5).

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study in terms of a formal structure of the theory leading to a series of precise predictions. However, the literature does point to a number of easily identifiable factors which should lead to politicization. This makes it possible to use the Danish case for the purpose of what Gerring (2007) labels a ‘path-way analysis’ focusing on understanding causal mechanisms, in this case related to party competition around European integration.

4 Regarding transfer of sovereignty, the Danish constitution requires a referendum if the transfer is not supported by a 5 out of 6 majority in parliament (the referendums in 1972, 1992, 1998 and 2000). The constitution further allows the government to call an ‘advisory’ referendum which parties will normally consider binding (the referendums in 1986 and 1993) (Svensson, 2003, pp. 79-105).
Politization may thus refer to the top three issues on both the party system agenda and the voters’ agenda.

Figure 1 shows the development of five central issues on the party political agenda in Denmark measured via the length of parliamentary debates. Compared to the other issues, the EU has remained a minor issue receiving less than 5 per cent of the party attention. The peak years in party attention to the EU in the Danish parliament are 1985, 1991, 1996 which all reflect party attention in parliament in connection with the European integration treaties. Except in connection with treaty negotiations, party attention in parliament is much more limited than attention to the economy, which has had a high position on the party political agenda throughout the period, but also to issues like immigration, the environment and health, which have seen a politicization in the period (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Wolfe, 2009).

The same picture emerges at the level of the electorate. Figure 2 thus shows the development of different issues on the voters’ agenda at national elections since the 1981 election. At the

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5 Debates in the Danish parliament can relate to bills, interpellations, resolutions and governmental policy accounts. The length of debates has been recorded by counting columns in the records of the Danish parliament (Green-Pedersen, 2005). The advantage of this measure of the party political agenda is that long debates cannot be generated by individual parties or members, but require a cross-party view of the issue as important. The issue content of the debates was coded using a modified version of the policy agenda coding scheme originally developed by Baumgartner and Jones in a US context (Green-Pedersen, 2005).

6 Voters were asked an open MIP question. After answering, respondents were probed: ‘Can you mention more important problems?’ Up to three additional problems were recorded. Voters’ agenda was calculated by taking
beginning of the period, the electorate’s agenda was dominated by the economy, which has lost salience and left room for other issues like immigration, the environment, and health. The EU has remained a marginal issue on the electorate’s agenda. It received the highest attention in 1998 with 3.9 per cent of the agenda, but otherwise takes up less than 2 per cent of the electorate’s agenda alongside issues like defence, business or transportation, which normally play very minor role in Danish elections.

There are, of course, other definitions of politicization. De Vries (2007, p. 374) talks about politicization of European integration in Denmark at the level of the electorate based on the increases in the 1990s shown in Figure 2, but without cross-issue comparisons. This is one reason for that conclusion; another is a different threshold for declaring an issue politicized. With a low threshold, European integration can be considered politicized in Denmark. However, this implies that many issues are politicized and the question of politicization becomes increasingly uninteresting since issues that are not politicized become rare.

European Integration and Party Competition in Denmark

The theoretical framework presented above would argue that this lack of politicization is due to a lack of coalition and electoral incentives for mainstream parties. Whether this is in fact true for Denmark requires a detailed analysis of Danish party politics and public attitudes toward European integration.

the total number of answers mentioning a particular issue as a percentage of total number of answers. Data for the Danish national election surveys is from the Danish data archive, www.dda.dk.
Danish party politics has generally been dominated by the left-right dimension whether seen from the perspective of voting behaviour in parliament (Hansen, 2008) or government formation (Skjæveland, 2003). Similar to the general European pattern, the major mainstream parties, which have also by and large been the parties in governments, the Social Democrats, the Conservatives, and the Liberals (Venstre) have been pro-European integration. During the 1970s and 1980s, opposition to European integration came from the parties to the left of the Social Democrats reaching into the party itself. In the 1990s, left-wing opposition was very clear from the extreme left Red-Green Alliance, whereas the Socialist People’s Party is an example of ‘soft EU scepticism’ (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008) and more varied opposition (Pedersen, 1996). From the early 1990s EU opposition also developed within extreme right-wing parties starting with the Progress Party and much more pronounced in the Danish People’s Party established in 1995 (cf. Buch and Hansen, 2002). Thus party positions have the same structure generally found in Europe with EU opposition at the extremes of the political spectrum. As a consequence, a mainstream party breaking the pro-EU consensus will face a ‘strange bedfellow’ in the form of an extreme party from the other side of the political spectrum. A mainstream party would therefore find it difficult to judge the coalition implications with regard to bloc competition for government power which is exactly based on the left-right dimension.

Public attitudes in Denmark towards European integration are torn between the two dimensions of economic integration and political integration discussed above (cf. Siune et al., 1994, pp. 124-36; Hobolt, 2009: 165-66). This has been highly visible in the six Danish referendums: one before Denmark entered the European Union (the European Community) in 1972, the Single European Act in 1986, the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, a follow-up referendum on the Danish Edinburgh agreement in 1993, the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998, and
the Euro in 2000. The latter and the Maastricht Treaty referendum resulted in No majorities; the other four in Yes majorities.

The explanation for the different outcomes should be found in the two-dimensionality of public attitudes towards European integration and is thus a matter of framing (Svensson, 2002; Hobolt, 2009). Referendums dominated by the economic integration aspect, which implies a focus on economic gains from membership, resulted in a Yes, especially in the 1972 and 1986 referendums. In referendums with focus on the political integration aspects, the outcome was a No, i.e. in 1992 and 2000 (Svensson, 2002).

The 2000 Euro referendum is particularly instructive. Its economic integration aspect did not prevent the national debate from revolving around national identity issues as well. Although most of the political elite including the mainstream parties focused on the economic gains from joining the Euro, the No side was successful in turning the debate into a broader question about political integration and this swung the majority towards No (De Vreese and Semetko, 2004). In sum, the shifts between Yes and No majorities depend on whether the issue is framed as securing the gains of economic integration or as loss of national identity and self-determination. Further, as the Euro example shows, political parties, even when the mainstream parties are united, do not control the framing of the issue.

In sum, the issue of European integration fulfils neither the coalition criteria nor the electoral criteria, and should not expect the issue to have played a significant role on the party system agenda. The extreme parties in the current Danish party system, the Red-Green Alliance and the Danish People’s Party, have an electoral interest in the issue, and can be expected to focus on it. Table 1 shows the share of party attention to European integration in the mainstream parties’ election programmes as well as the EU-sceptical extreme left-wing
and right-wing parties. The latter parties focus constantly on the issue, while it is more or less ignored by the pro-EU mainstream parties during election campaigns, except in the 1990 election. The limited focus from mainstream parties is thus in line with the finding of non-politicization at the party level based on parliamentary data presented above.

Table 1 around here

The analysis of the Danish case so far is counterfactual. It is premised upon the assumption that if the coalition and electoral criteria were fulfilled, the mainstream parties would use events like EU treaties to achieve politicization. This assumption can be supported empirically. First it is worth looking at the only break with the EU-positive consensus of the mainstream parties, namely the Social Democratic No position on the Single European Act in 1986. This No resulted in a parliamentary majority against the Act, and the Conservative Prime Minister reacted by putting the issue to a referendum (Worre, 1988). The context of the Social Democratic No was a parliamentary situation where the right-wing minority government relied on parliamentary support from a small centre party, the Social Liberals, on economic matters. However, on non-economic issues like foreign policy and the environment, the government did not have its support, and an ‘alternative majority’ of the left-wing bloc and the Social Liberals ruled on these issues (Damgaard and Svensson, 1989).

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7 The election programmes are identical to those collected under the party manifesto project, but have been re-coded using the coding scheme for parliamentary debates, see note 4. Sentences have also been used as coding unit instead of quasi-sentences as in the original party manifesto coding (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2009).

8 The strong focus on the EU in the Liberals’ 1990 programme does not correspond well with other descriptions of this election (cf. Bille et al., 1992) and is probably an effect of the particular document selected as party manifesto.
Since EU scepticism on the extreme right did not exist at that time, the Social Democrats could use the Single European Act as an agenda-setting event to activate the alternative majority and push the issue into the left-right conflict in Danish party competition. It was the left-wing alternative majority including the Social Liberals against the other bourgeois parties. Further, a considerable part of the Social Democratic party had been against joining the Common Market in 1972, so the move towards a more EU-sceptic position was not such a major move for the Social Democrats. Actually, it made the party more united than it had been in 1972 (cf. Haahr, 1993, pp. 199-215).

In terms of electoral incentives, the break seemed attractive as opinion polls in the period had shown a majority against Danish EC membership (Worre, 1988, p. 363). However, the Single European Act campaign became framed around the economic gains and losses and not around self-determination and identity as the Social Democrats would have wished. This resulted in a relatively clear Yes with 56.2 per cent, and the Social Democrats ended up on the wrong side of the electoral majority. The example shows how the issue could be integrated into the left-right dimension and fulfilled the coalition criteria, but turned out not to fulfil the electoral criteria as the Social Democrats did not have the electorate on its side. This combined with the end of the Cold War caused the Social Democrats to return to the pro EU consensus (Haahr, 1993, pp. 235-58).

It is also worth comparing the development of the European integration issue directly with an issue that has become politicized in Denmark, namely immigration. The politicization of immigration in Denmark is explained in detail by Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008). What is important for comparison with European integration is to explain how it differs on the two key variables argued to drive politicization, namely electoral incentives and coalition incentives. Unlike European integration, immigration has been characterized by a strong and constant issue-ownership by right-wing parties (Goul Andersen, 2008). The relative
immigration sceptic position of the right has been in line with similar scepticism in the Danish population. Thus, it has been clear that politicization would benefit the right-wing parties. Party positions on immigration follow the left-right structure almost perfectly. The only difference is that the Social Liberals have been to the left of the Social Democrats on the issue, whereas they are generally to the right of the Social Democrats (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). However, after the Social Liberals joined the Social Democrats in government in 1993, the coalition implications of politicizing immigration were clear. It would not generate any coalition problems if the right-wing parties tried to turn their issue-ownership into votes, which was exactly what happened during the 1990s.9 Politicization of the issue was a major reason for the electoral victory of the right-wing bloc in 2001 (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). The immigration issue thus shows how new issues can become politicized, if mainstream parties find it attractive to do so.

As argued above, the Danish case was selected because it could be seen as a ‘crucial case’ for the existing literature (cf. Gerring, 2007) in the sense that one should expect European integration to be politicized in Denmark if the existence of EU-sceptical extreme parties and referendums leads to politicization. These two factors therefore deserve further discussion. Table 1 shows that extreme parties have taken up the issue of European integration, in recent years especially the Danish People’s Party, which has otherwise had great political success as noted above. They have just not been able to politicize European integration, which would have forced the mainstream parties to address the issue. At the 1998 election a new EU-sceptical party, Democratic Renewal, ran, but only received 0.3 per cent of the vote.

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9 The difference in position between the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats actually caused internal disagreements in the government when the Social Democrats wanted to move to the right on the issue to avoid politicization, which by itself generated additional attention to the issue.
Remarkably, referendums have had a high average turnout of 83.2 per cent, which
approaches the turnout at national elections. The highest turnouts were 90 per cent in 1972
and 88 per cent in 2000 (cf. Hobolt, 2009, p. 9). The lowest turnout was 75 per cent in the
1986 referendum. The average for the nine national elections during the last 25 years is 85.8
per cent. These very high turnout rates support focusing on the party level when analysing
politicization and seeing the issue as a ‘government’ issue from an agenda-setting perspective.
A competing explanation of the focus on party competition would be that the issue is not
politicized because the electorate is not interested. The issue is simply too distant and
complex for politicization at the level of the electorate, even if it were politicized at the party
level. However, the referendums show that once political elites including political parties
focus on the issue, public attention in the form of referendum participation follows. This view
is further supported by Togeby’s study (2004) of voters’ agenda, which is based on surveys
with four month intervals in the period 1999-2002. The study shows that the EU plays a
marginal role in between elections on the voters’ agenda with one exception: In the month
leading up to the Euro referendum, the issue received similar levels of attention from the
electorate as health and immigration (Togeby, 2004, pp. 40-49). In other words, European
integration can attract the attention of the electorate, but it requires the same political party
attention as during referendum campaigns.

Conclusion
Hooghe and Marks (2009) have pushed the question of politicization to the forefront of
European integration research. The theoretical argument of this paper is that to understand
issue politicization with regard to European integration, we need to focus on the incentives for
issue politicization facing mainstream parties, and not focus on EU-sceptical extreme parties

10 Data on turnout at national elections is taken from the homepage of the Danish parliament www.ft.dk.
as the literature has typically done. The latter parties have a strong electoral incentive to politicize European integration, but they cannot do so if the mainstream parties ignore the issue. Further, the paper argues that such incentives for politicization will depend on two factors, namely the extent to which the issue offers a clear electorally winning position and the extent to which the issue can be integrated into the left-right structure of party competition.

In the Danish and most other cases these factors block politicization because they offer mainstream parties no incentive to break their pro-EU consensus. However, the factors are variables, so cross-national variation in politicization of European integration can be expected. The degree of public scepticism towards European integration obviously varies (cf. Hobolt, 2009, p. 28), and the more sceptical the population is, the more likely politicization is. It will make it more certain for the mainstream parties that they will have the electorate on its side if they break the pro-EU consensus.

Coalition factors also vary. In a two-party system like the traditional UK party system, they are absent, which implies that the strategies of the mainstream parties will be based on the electoral factor only. The same is more or less the case for Switzerland where government formation is based on the ‘magical formula’, and where coalition formation therefore has a different character. According to the framework applied here, Switzerland and the UK could thus be considered most likely cases of politicization of European integration. Interestingly they are also the two examples of politicization of European integration presented by Kriesi (2007). In the Swiss case politicization has been driven by the Swiss People’s Party (Kriesi, 2007). In the British case, the Conservatives politicized the issue in the 1997 and 2001 British elections, but only with positive electoral outcome in 2001 (Evans, 1998; 2002).

Two additional questions also need further discussion: the willingness of political parties to change positions and the possible sui-generis of the issue of European integration:
First, as European integration has developed, right-wing opposition to European integration has become increasingly important, implying that a move towards an EU-sceptical position is most likely from right-wing mainstream parties. However, these parties, as in Denmark, have traditionally been most pro-European integration, and moving towards an EU-sceptical position could easily result in internal party conflicts and an unclear party position. This was exactly what happened to the British Conservatives in 1997 and the reason the issue was not electorally rewarding for the party (Evans, 1998).

A further issue in this regard is the extent to which parties are in fact willing to make positional moves for strategic reasons, i.e. to gain votes. The reason why for instance mainstream right-wing parties do not move to a more EU-sceptical position may simply be that they are unwilling, for ideological reasons, to make such a move, even if politicization was electorally attractive. This remains to be seen as mainstream parties have generally not faced such incentives. More generally, the idea that parties are willing to change policy position for electoral purposes is, however, supported by considerable evidence from studies in the spatial party tradition (e.g. Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Ezrow, 2005).

Second, one may of course argue that the EU is a sui-generis issue, where the party competition dynamics are unique and cannot be understood by general arguments about the nature of party competition as presented here. However, as Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 7) argue, the development of the European Union over the past decades implies that the issue has developed from being a sui-generis issue towards being one issue among others that may become part of party competition. Still, this does not imply that the nature of European integration is not important for understanding politicization dynamics. The substantial development of the EU matters for the way political conflicts have been structured. Thus the existence of EU scepticism on both the extreme left and right is a function of the substantial development of the issue starting with market integration generating opposition on the left.
and then political integration generating opposition on the right. Further, European integration being a ‘government issue’ may also limit politicization. As argued by Sitter (2001) there is an opposition element in EU scepticism in the sense that once in government and involved in treaty negotiation, it may be hard to sustain an EU-sceptical position. As most mainstream parties have a realistic expectation of gaining government power within a reasonable future, this may also limit their interest in politicization. However, the example of the British Conservatives shows that mainstream parties can nevertheless become EU-sceptic.

The final question, which lies behind Hooghe and Marks’ (2009) broader focus on politicization, is the implications for public influence on European integration. One of the striking elements in the Danish case is the extent to which referendums and national elections are kept separate. Referendums become the main mechanism through which public attitudes towards European integration will affect the development of the European Union. The Danish case shows that this mechanism is not ineffective, the Danish op-outs on especially the Euro being the clearest example. However, referendums are also very much controlled by the pro-European elites, which thus have considerable control over when and how public attitudes are allowed to matter for European integration. The understanding of politicization as party salience provided by this paper is thus crucial for understanding the broader question about politicization raised by Hooghe and Marks (2009).
References


Figure 1:
The development of selected issue on the party political agenda in Denmark 1981-2006
Figure 2: The development of selected issues on voter’s agenda at Danish national elections 1981-2005
Table 1
Percentage of total sentences in election manifestos about the EU of the three major mainstream parties and the extreme parties in Denmark, 1981-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Social Democrats</th>
<th>Conservatives</th>
<th>Liberals</th>
<th>Red-Green Alliance</th>
<th>Danish People’s Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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