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THESIS BOOK

Tibor Hargitai

The influence of Eurosceptic parties on the EU policies of member states

Accompanying the PhD dissertation

Supervisor: Péter Marton, Corvinus University of Budapest
Associate Professor and Deputy Head of Institute

Co-supervisor: Hans Vollaard, Utrecht University
Assistant Professor

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1. Justification of the topic

This PhD dissertation is the outcome of a long process of reflection and coming to grips with a complex topic. While a lot is by now known about what Euroscepticism can mean (for an overview, see Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2018), and how it shapes public opinion (Abbarno and Zapryanova, 2013, Fuchs et al. 2009; Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Williams and Spoon, 2015; Verney, 2015), is divided between Eastern and Western Europe (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, Pytlas, 2016), what typologies there are of party-based Euroscepticism (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Flood, 2002; Leconte, 2010; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002; Topaloff, 2012; Vollaard and Voerman, 2015 etc.) or the drivers of partisan Euroscepticism are (see for instance Leconte, 2010; Skinner, 2013; Vasilopoulou, 2011), how parties like the Danish People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party or Front National in France influence EU policies in those countries is largely unknown. The aim of this research is to better understand the influence of Eurosceptic parties on the EU policies of member states.

More specifically, it looks at how Eurosceptic parties influence government policies related to the EU¹. The research question therefore is: *What is the influence of Eurosceptic parties on the EU policies of member states?* Two case studies will be conducted to help answer this question. The three answers to that question are derived from three kinds of literature, namely the literature on the contagion effect, on coalition bargaining and lastly on parliamentary oversight. These kinds of literature deal with different elements of the question.

The contagion effect looks at the policy convergence from the niche party towards the mainstream party. Party strategic considerations for mainstream parties are the focal point here, and Meguid's 2005 Policy Salience and Ownership theory is used to do so. If parties converge their policy position towards the Eurosceptic party, then the aim is to transfer the ownership from the niche (Eurosceptic) party to the mainstream party to take away voters' incentives to vote for the niche party instead of the mainstream party.

Secondly, coalition bargaining looks at the bargaining strength of coalition parties, or in the case of minority governments also parliamentary supporters of the government, in their capacity to shape the positions that the government stands for. Bolleyer's concepts of *formation*

¹ While the focus of this research is on party politics that does not mean that political parties are considered the only Eurosceptic actors that might play a role in shaping the EU policy of member states in one form or another. Saalfeld (2000) depicted the interaction between the different actors of the parliamentary delegation process, whereby influence is exerted by voters on parties, members of parliament, the (coalition) cabinet and vice versa, and parties, members of parliament and the prime minister and cabinet also exert influence upon each other. However, he also adds the role of courts, interest groups, sub-national government, executive agencies, and international actors to the equation (2000: 355). This complex network of actors – with the addition of the media – should also be considered as the Eurosceptic actors in the political process.

weight and *coalition weight* (2007) are used to operationalise the influence parties have in the policy drafting and policy-shaping process. *Formation weight* takes place during the writing of the coalition agreement, and measures how many party-specific positions of that party end up as part of the coalition agreement. *Coalition weight* then looks at how many party-specific positions become legislation.

For the third political stream, parliamentary oversight, the agent-principal theory (Strøm, 2000; Laver and Shepsle, 1999) will be used to explain the behaviour of parliament as principal and government as an agent in the influence parliamentary parties have on the legislative process. Parties in parliament might set the political agenda during question time (Müller and Sieberer, 2014) or try to influence government policy by proposing legislation or submitting motions that would add clauses to existing legislation, which the government can choose to respond to or not. While a lot is known about the role of national parliaments in terms of parliamentary scrutiny over the EU affairs of member states, Rozenberg and Heffler highlighted (2015) that there is a gap in the literature as to whether and how parliament actually influences EU policy – a question the current research seeks to contribute in answering.

These three literature reviews lead to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis C1: Mainstream parties will use an *accommodative* party strategy in reaction to the electoral success of Eurosceptic niche parties.

Hypothesis B1: With a Eurosceptic party in government, the influence of the party on policy is a product of the formation weight of the Eurosceptic party during the coalition bargaining process.

Hypothesis B2: With a Eurosceptic party in government, the influence of the party on policy is a product of the coalition weight of the Eurosceptic party during the coalition bargaining process.

Hypothesis P1: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party asks parliamentary questions as a way to modestly shape policy.

Hypothesis P2: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party takes up an alternative position as a way to moderately shape policy.

Hypothesis P3: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party provides the government party with instructions as a way to significantly shape policy.

As for the empirical part of this research, Euroscepticism in the Netherlands and Hungary is mapped. The Dutch case study will look at the Rutte I coalition government, with the hard Eurosceptic PVV as the permanent supporter in the period 2010 to 2012. The specific policy items under investigation are derived from the Roadmap that the Dutch government

drafted late 2010, which lists the six pieces of EU legislation which the Dutch government could imagine changing in the foreseeable future (Leers, 2010). Three of these items were open for negotiation in the short to medium term, namely the Dublin Regulation, and the Qualification and Family Reunification Directives.

2. Methodology

a. Case selection and logic

The Netherlands and Hungary are selected as case studies following Beach and Pedersen's logic for theory-testing process-tracing: "when there are well-developed theoretical conjectures, but we are unsure whether they have empirical support" (2013: 146). However, since both case studies also are strong candidates following George and Bennett's most-likely case study logic (2005) – in the period under consideration in both countries, there was a strong right-wing Eurosceptic presence at times when migration was a salient issue. Migration policy will serve as the EU policy area on which both case studies will focus. One of the reasons for this is that the (radical) right in Europe tends to have both an anti-immigration and anti-EU position, often combining, or reinforcing, one position with the other (Fennema, 1997; Akkerman and De Lange, 2012; De Vries, 2018). While migration policy is a domestic policy area, it has strong European dimensionality to it, which is the topic of analysis here.

Hungary and the Netherlands both had interesting episodes where the influence of Eurosceptic parties on government policy was likely. Furthermore, these two member states are different on a variety of dimensions – consensus-based government versus majoritarian government, founding member states versus joining in 2004, West Europe versus Central Europe, with widely diverging historical trajectories – which will contribute to their generalisability. The Dutch case study will look at the influence of the PVV and SGP on the government's – composed of the CDA and VVD – EU migration policy in the period when the PVV was the parliamentary supporter of the Rutte I coalition (2010-2012). For the Hungarian case study, the government's migration policy from 2015 to 2020 will be the period of analysis. During that period, the Fidesz-KDNP² government has maintained a (close to) 2/3 majority in parliament, and during the 2015 migration crisis, the Hungarian government took a Eurosceptic and nationalist turn when dealing with migration policy. In this case study, the influence of Jobbik on the government's policy will be analysed in detail.

b. Causal mechanisms

Within the qualitative research methods, process tracing is most suitable for studying causal mechanisms by linking causes to outcomes, whereby the aim is to make stronger inferences about how causes contribute to bringing about an outcome. Process tracing is a within-case

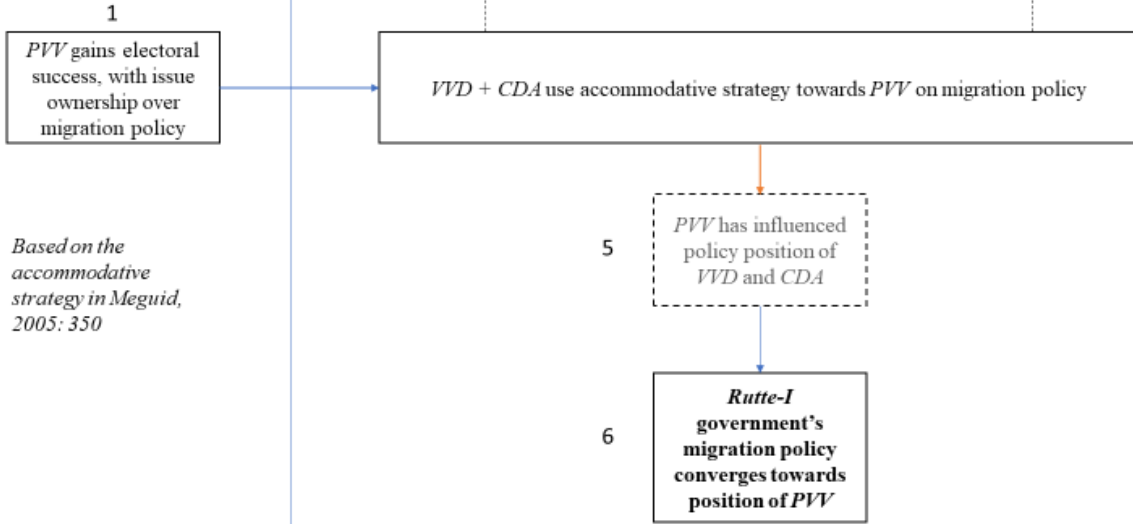
² Here considered as one party, since Fidesz and KDNP has been in a permanent coalition since 2006.

method that seeks to trace the causal process from a cause to an outcome, whereby it opens the “black box” (the causal mechanism) and not only identifies the parts of the causal process but explains their logical sequence (Beach and Pedersen, 2016: 323). Also, while the aim is to illuminate as much as possible the steps in the causal mechanism and how the parts of the causal mechanism might be sequential, it would be an overstatement to claim that full-fledged process tracing takes place. Therefore, the more modest aim here is to establish the explanatory power of the theoretical frameworks below, and thus whether the theoretical expectations match with the empirical findings in the case studies. In the empirical chapters, the goodness of fit of each causal mechanism is extensively analysed.

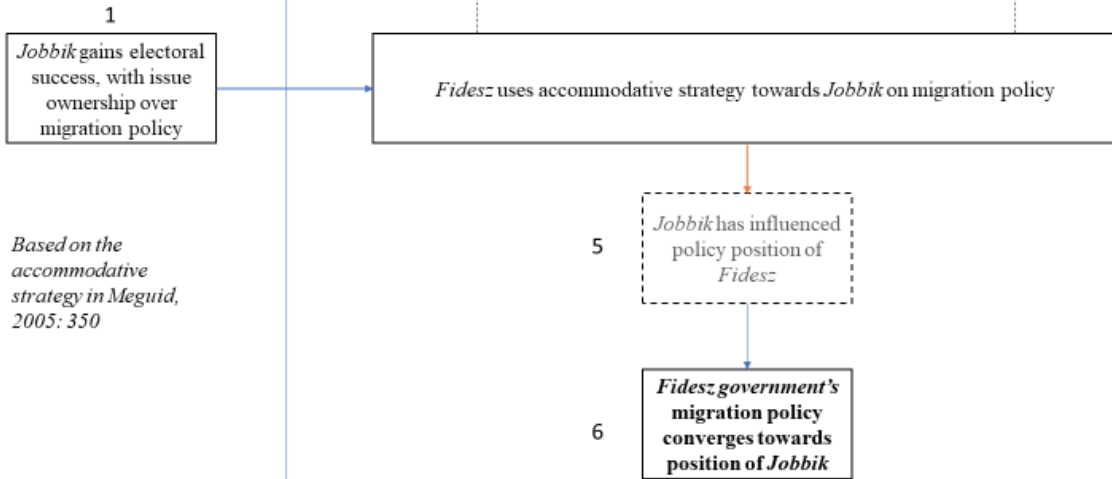
A. *Contagion effect*

For the application of the literature on the contagion effect, the theoretical framework elaborated by Bonnie Meguid (2005, 2008) will be used to test its applicability to the research question of this work. Upon considering the contagion effect, the accommodative strategy is the party strategy that mainstream parties are expected to be used in the face of a growing Eurosceptic party, since policy convergence is the phenomenon to look at when talking about the contagion effect. The figures below represent the causal mechanisms derived from Meguid’s *accommodative strategy*. In the Dutch case study, the PVV is the contagious Eurosceptic niche party that the two government parties (VVD and CDA) are changing their position on migration policy. If both parties would follow an accommodative party strategy, they would both end up with a more restrictive position on migration policy, to weaken the influence of the PVV in the political arena. Similarly, in the Hungarian case study, Jobbik is the Eurosceptic niche party which Fidesz is trying to weaken, by shifting their policy position towards that of Jobbik. Though these strategies of the government parties, the PVV and Jobbik exert influence on the EU policies of the governments, since these parties, by “carving out of a niche for themselves in the political spectrum” (Topaloff, 2012: 74), politicised previously untapped issues that appeared to be electorally advantageous (Salo and Rydgren, 2018).

Contagion effect in the Netherlands

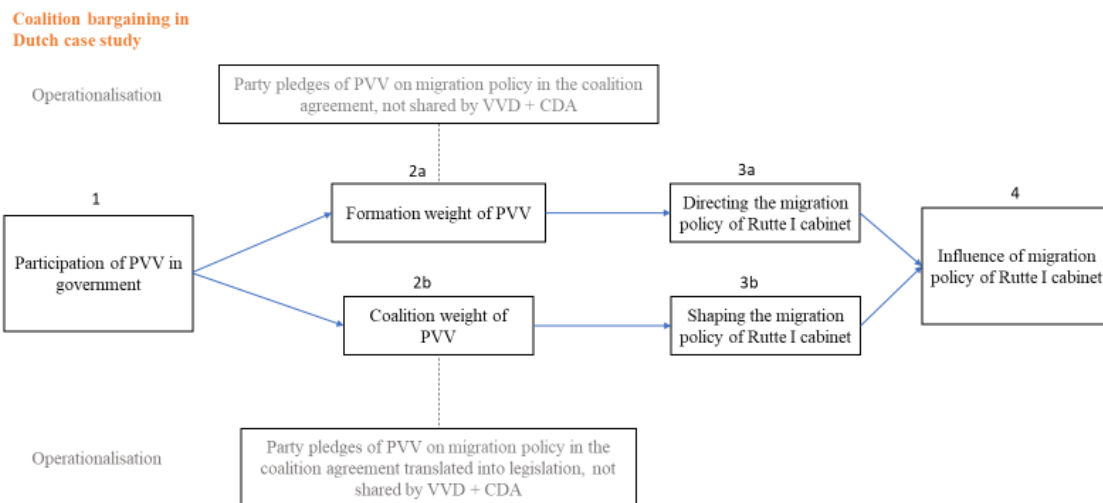


Contagion effect in Hungary



B. Coalition bargaining

In order to identify the influence of individual parties on government policy, Bolleyer's concepts of *formation weight* and *coalition weight* are guiding, for they allow for a straightforward operationalisation of how parties might influence policy. Bolleyer (2007) assessed the negotiation capacity of small parties and distinguished between two dimensions upon which negotiation capacity depends. Firstly, *formation weight* refers to the influence that a party has during the coalition formation. This factor is operationalised as the number of party pledges that make it into the coalition agreement, but which have not been supported by the other coalition parties. Secondly, *coalition weight* captures the influence of a coalition party when inter-party conflict arises during the post-formation phase, and is operationalised as the share of commitments that end up in the coalition agreement *and* which are subsequently translated into legislation, and which are not states by other coalition partners.



Based on Bolleyer, 2007.

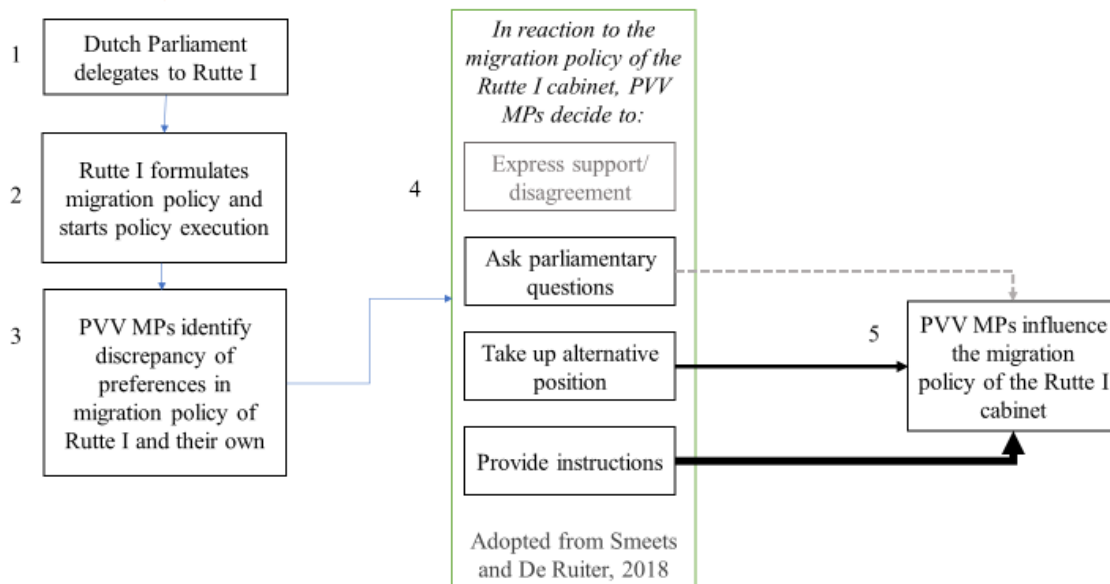
C. Parliamentary oversight

The causal mechanism that is partially derived from the literature of parliamentary oversight over EU policy is based on the principal-agent theory. In this case, the government is the agent and is bestowed the authority to represent parliament, the principal, in the European Union. That means that parliament will not have full control over the government and will lack complete information. The remainder of the causal mechanism is derived from Smeets and De Ruiter (2018), who identified four steps on a so-called “scrutiny ladder”, which shows how different types of scrutiny correspond with levels of scrutiny.

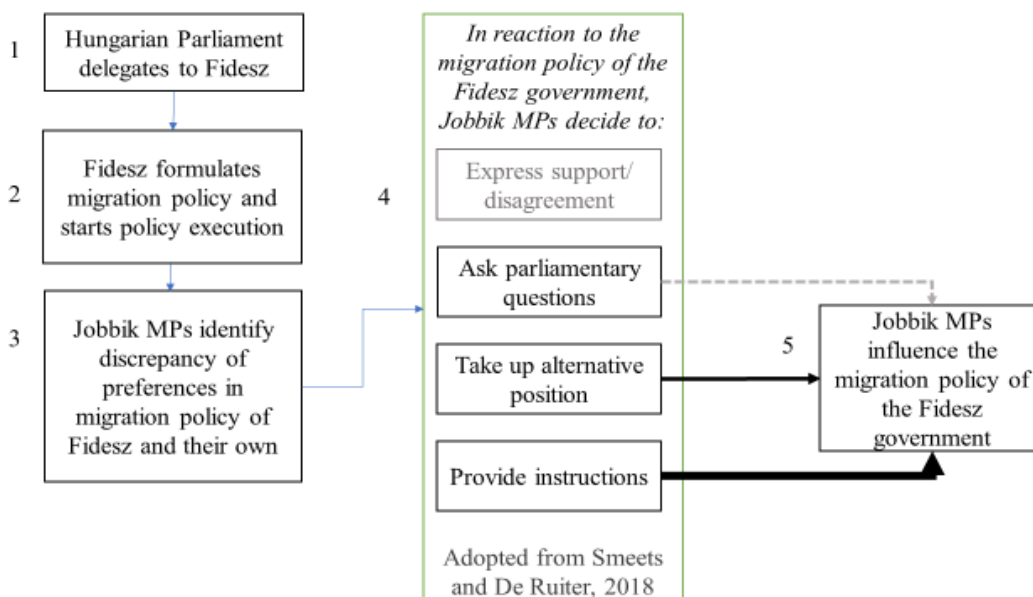
Steps 1 through 3 in both cases are part of the principal-agent model, where the respectively Rutte I cabinet and the Fidesz government are mandated by parliament to govern

(step 1), and then develop and implement their respective (migration) policies (step 2). In step 3, we focus on the Eurosceptic niche parties and their attitude towards the migration policies of their governments. Within the parliamentary setting, the members of parliament (MPs) of these parties are expected to exercise their right to scrutinise the government’s migration policy. According to Smeets and De Ruiter’s (2018) scrutiny ladder, the impact of their scrutiny is contingent on the effort they put into it, i.e. the more energy they put into an issue – their expertise and (inside) knowledge – the more these Eurosceptic MPs will be able to influence the migration policies of their governments. The figures below are the representations of the causal mechanism of parliamentary oversight for the Dutch and Hungarian case studies.

Parliamentary oversight in Dutch case study



Parliamentary oversight in Hungarian case study



D. Operationalising policy change

When tracing the developments of these policy issues, did the level of the instruments, the instruments themselves and/or the hierarchy of goals change? If yes, how? These two questions will be asked for all policy items, to establish whether first, second or third-order change occurred. That will then represent the gravity of the policy change, whereby first-order change is part of the ‘normal’ decision-making process, and second-order change is already influenced by ideological considerations of the political actors (Greener, 2001). Third-order change falls under what Peter Hall calls *paradigm shifts*. In the face of significant policy failure, political actors might refer to such paradigm shifts, and policy learning would occur (Peter, 1993).

Table 1 summarises the dimensions of change for each order of change. If only the level of the instruments of the policy issues of migration policy (Qualification Directive, Family Reunification Directive, etc.) was altered, for instance through a change in the age requirement for immigrants seeking family reunification in the Netherlands, then a first-order change occurred, since the instruments and goals of the policy issue remain the same. When the policy instruments are subject to change as well, but the goals of the policy are unaltered, Hall’s speaks of second-order change.

An example would be altering the requirements for family reunification. In third-order change, the goals of the policy themselves are altered. Sticking with family reunification, an example of third-order change could be the complete abandonment of the possibility for family reunification, whereby the very goal of allowing family the reunify is off the table.

Table 1: Operationalising migration policy change		
Policy change	Dimension of change	Examples
First-order change	Goals and instruments remain the same, but the <i>level of the instruments</i> change (policy adjustments)	Age requirement for family reunification is altered.
Second-order change	Goals remain the same, but <i>the instruments</i> and <i>the level of the instruments</i> change	Next to an age requirement, an income requirement and minimum age also become criteria for family reunification.
Third-order change	<i>The hierarchy of goals, the instruments themselves</i> and <i>the level of the instruments</i> all change	Banning family reunification

3. Main findings

What is the influence of Eurosceptic parties on the EU policies of member states? That is the question this dissertation started with, and it will end with an answer to this question. For the purpose, three policy items were analysed and discussed in the case of the Netherlands – the Dublin Agreement, and the Qualification and Family Reunification Directives – and two in the case of Hungary – the rejection of the migration quota system and the Stop Soros legislative bills. Table 2 summarises the support of the hypotheses for the Dutch and Hungarian case studies, as a measurement of how well the three theoretical frameworks explain the influence

	Case studies	Netherlands	Hungary
Contagion effect	Hypothesis C1: Mainstream parties will use an accommodative party strategy in reaction to the electoral success of Eurosceptic niche parties.	Partial support	Supported, with marginal effects
Coalition bargaining	Hypothesis B1: With a Eurosceptic party in government, the influence of the party on policy is a product of the formation weight of the Eurosceptic party during the coalition bargaining process.	Partial support, but indirect influence also very significant	-
	Hypothesis B2: With a Eurosceptic party in government, the influence of the party on policy is a product of the coalition weight of the Eurosceptic party during the coalition bargaining process.	Partial support, but indirect influence also very significant	-
Parliamentary scrutiny	Hypothesis P1: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party asks parliamentary questions as a way to modestly shape policy.	Supported	Not supported
	Hypothesis P2: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party takes up an alternative position as a way to moderately shape policy.	Supported	Not supported
	Hypothesis P3: To influence policy, the Eurosceptic party provides the government party with instructions as a way to significantly shape policy.	Supported	Not supported

of the Eurosceptic parties on EU policies of Hungary and the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, the government parties VVD and CDA used accommodative party strategies to counter the influence of the PVV, meaning these party converged their migration policies towards that of the more restrictive PVV. As for the success of the accommodative strategy, that success is more modest. Concretely, while the policy convergence took place, the VVD and CDA were not able to increase the issue salience of migration and did not transfer issue ownership over migration away from the PVV. The latter maintained the overwhelming ownership over migration policy. While the PVV did experience a decrease in electoral

support, this is more likely to have been a consequence of the fact that most parliamentary parties boycotted the PVV during the 2012 elections over the fall of the Rutte I cabinet.

As for Hungary, the Fidesz government similarly used an accommodative strategy, thereby taking over some of Jobbik's policy proposals and increase the salience of immigration. At the same time, Fidesz was able to take ownership of the referendum on the migrant quota system and the criminalisation of supporting asylum seekers (the Stop Soros legislative bills). One of the reasons why Fidesz could claim ownership over these issues is the pro-government domination of the media landscape (Bátorfy and Urbán, 2020). However, in terms of the electoral losses expected for Jobbik, these did not materialise. It is likely that much of Jobbik's constituency supports Jobbik and not Fidesz, because these voters consider Fidesz corrupt (Szabo, 2015).

Regarding the support for the formation and coalition weight in coalition bargaining, the Dutch case study offered mostly indirect evidence of the PVV shaping the coalition agreement of the Rutte I government. Regarding the formation phase, the proposals in the coalition agreement that focused on halting or strongly curbing the inflow of migrants and asylum seekers was much encouraged by the PVV. Also, the indirect influence of the PVV on the coalition agreement is the fact that 16% of the coalition agreement discusses migration policy, that is even 43% for the support agreement. As for the coalition phase, evidence was found for the influence of the SGP on the government's policies, specifically regarding conditioning family reunification on being married or having a registered partnership. That ended up as a negotiated policy item, though it was not part of the programmes of either VVD, CDA or PVV, but only of the SGP. The SGP became the government's silent supporter, after the government lost its majority in the Eerste Kamer (Senate) in March 2011.

As mentioned earlier, the Fidesz-KDNP is considered to be a single party and therefore not a coalition.

Lastly, the support of the hypotheses of parliamentary oversight is conditional in the case of the Netherlands and virtually absent in the case of Hungary. The PVV was in a unique arrangement as parliamentary supporter, which allowed it to take part in the weekly ministerial meetings with the prime minister without having ministerial responsibilities. This way, the PVV had disproportionately more information than the other parliamentary parties, allowing it to instruct the government on a course of action, in line with the agreements between the itself and the government. On the other hand, in Hungary the opposition's parliamentary oversight tools have been marginalised, and the overwhelming (super)majority of Fidesz in parliament incapacitates the opposition in parliament.

In terms of the causal mechanisms, these should be considered as complementary to one another, helping to explain the ways in which Eurosceptic parties can shape the EU policies of member states.

Table 3 summarises the main results of the empirical case studies, in terms of the policy changes that occurred and the strength and conditions of the value of the theories used. In several cases, there are conditions to the success policy influence of the Eurosceptic party on the EU policies in the Netherlands and Hungary. The main points are reproduced here.

Table 3: Policy change and explanatory power of theories in the case studies		
	Netherlands	Hungary
<i>Policy change</i>	<u>Second-order change</u> : For all three policy items, the instruments change, while the goals remained the same.	<u>Third-order policy</u> : since the goals and instruments changed. A paradigm shift from a common European approach to a national one.
<i>POS theory (contagion effect)</i>	<u>Partial</u> : Theoretical expectations of accommodative strategy do not explain actual developments. - Issue salience ↓ instead of ↑ - No effect on issue ownership - But electoral outcome correct, ↓	<u>Strong</u> : Mainstream party used accommodative strategy to transfer issue ownership from niche party and marginal niche party electorally.
<i>Formation and coalition weight (coalition bargaining)</i>	<u>Strong, but indirect</u> : Many immigration items of parliamentary supporters ended up as policy output. PVV held a very strong bargaining position towards Rutte I, SGP after March 2011 also had influence.	<u>None</u> : One government party, no coalition.
<i>Principal-agent theory (parliamentary oversight)</i>	<u>Strong, but conditional</u> : For the parliamentary supporters, as principals, the delegation was successful and provided instructions to the agent. The disproportionate influence of the PVV as principal was conditioned on the limited information asymmetry, since it took part in weekly cabinet meetings.	<u>Hardly</u> : Two-third majority government, power in parliament practically unchallenged. Only in the case of widespread demonstrations was the principal able to put significant pressure on the agent.

In the case of the Netherlands, the coalition structure of the Rutte I government was particularly favourable for the Eurosceptic party influence on EU policies, for the following reasons:

1. The hard Eurosceptic PVV became a parliamentary supporter of the government, *with* a prominent political position and in close contact with the government parties – participating in the weekly meeting of the ministers and prime ministers – but *without* ministerial responsibilities and accountability.
2. Under Rutte I, and due to the role of the hard Eurosceptic PVV, one of the most salient policy issues for the PVV – immigration policy – was also relatively salient for the public. Therefore, immigration policy became a policy area to invest in. For the PVV

immigration policy is often seen directly linked to the negative aspects of the EU, as it is an omnibus issue for the European far-right, and it often coupled with European integration (see Akkerman and De Lange, 2012; Fennema, 1997).

3. The CDA and the VVD had been moving towards a more restrictive immigration policy during the early 2000s as well (Akkerman, 2018). Therefore, these mainstream parties were susceptible to the more restrictive immigration policy proposals of the PVV as well.
4. Earlier research found that immigration flows are positively correlated with the electoral support of the PVV (Dennison et al., 2017). Therefore, the PVV's participation in the Rutte I cabinet also allowed parties like the VVD and CDA to experiment with stricter immigration policies, that would have been considered controversial otherwise.

These conditions and consequences created a more favourable climate for the hard Eurosceptic PVV to influence or shape the EU policies of the Netherlands regarding immigration. It is less likely that other salient EU policy dimensions, like the environmental policy of the EU, the PVV would become a major influence. The PVV lacks the issue ownership in that case. On the other hand, on based this research, it is likely that a Eurosceptic left-wing party like the SP, might be able to shape government policy on financial matters, conditioned it is somehow embedded into government. The PVV's one foot in and one foot out of the government appeared to be a defining factor in its propensity to shape the government's EU-related migration policy.

In the case of Hungary, important conditions and consequences for the success policy influence of Eurosceptic Jobbik on the Fidesz government were the following:

1. With a supermajority (most of the time) in parliament since 2010, Fidesz was weakly constrained by domestic party competition, conditioned that policies were not too controversial for too much of the Hungarian public. In the case of the migrant quota system, the Hungarian government remained undeterred by the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union that Hungary violated EU law by not participating in the migrant quota system (Kormany.hu, 2020).
2. The Fidesz-KDNP government had an anti-immigration agenda, therefore making it susceptible to the even more restrictive immigration policy of the far-right niche party. This offered Jobbik the opportunity to shape government policy, as Jobbik's proposals could be seen as a kind of testing ground (Enyedi and Róna, 2018).

3. Similar to the Dutch case study, immigration policy was a very salient for the Eurosceptic parties but also among the public. However, contrary to the Dutch case, Fidesz increased the salience of immigration (Bíró-Nagy, 2018).

Jobbik may be considered the only political competitor for voters on the right side of the political spectrum in Hungary under the period of investigation (Várnagy and Ilonszki, 2018). This potential competitor might have encouraged the Fidesz government to adopt an accommodative strategy to Jobbik's immigration proposals, in to mitigate the risk of Jobbik's electoral growth.

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