Taking Europe to Its Extremes? Extremist Parties and Public Euroskepticism

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Conflict over European Integration

1. Idea of Europe
2. Public Support for European Integration: Sceptical or Fickle?
4. Gloomy Prospects for Further Integration?
The Idea of Europe

“Building Union among people not cooperation between states.”

“There is no real peace in Europe, if the states are reconstituted on a basis of national sovereignty. (...) They must have larger markets. Their prosperity is impossible, unless the States of Europe form themselves in a European Federation.”

Jean Monnet
Much Has Changed in Europe…

Front National  Sinn Fein  Socialist Party
Public Support or Opposition?

Percentage of respondents answering "good thing" in response to the following question: "Generally speaking, do you think that [your country’s] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?" (Source: Eurobarometer)
Question: Qa7. Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is/would be...?

Answers: A good thing
Question: QA13. In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

Answers: Positive
Image of EU?

Source: EB (2012)
Explaining EU Support

- **Utilitarian expectations**
  - People who benefit from trade liberalization are more supportive of the EU

- **National identity**
  - People with stronger, and more exclusive, attachment to their nation are less supportive of the EU

- **Cue-taking**
  - People use national proxies, such as party cues
Inverted U Curve

Source: De Vries & Edwards, 2009
Rightwing extremist parties mobilize feelings of national identity against European integration
Leftwing extremist parties mobilize feelings of economic anxiety against European integration
Evidence?

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Evidence?

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Gloomy Future?

- **Europhoria** is increasingly under fire from the right and the left. Many have dismissed party-based Euroskepticism since it is largely on the extremes.

- *This was unwise!* Eurosceptic parties are a decisive force in swaying popular opinion against Europe. Basis for growing uncertainty about the future of European integration amongst the mass public.

- *Recent Dutch elections show move back to the middle…but what about Cameron’s plans*
Thank You!

[Image of a cartoon]