

Framing the Eurozone Crisis in National Parliaments: Is the Economic Cleavage Really Declining?

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***Abstract:** While it is undisputed that the Eurozone crisis has contributed to the politicization of European integration, the longer-term impact of this politicization on the structure of political conflict in Europe remains unclear. This article engages with research findings which argue that the crisis has contributed to a shift of political cleavages in Europe, from an economic (left vs. right) to a transnational (pro- vs. anti-EU) divide. We examine whether there is any evidence of such a shift in parliamentary debates about the crisis in four Eurozone states (Germany, Austria, Spain and Ireland) between 2009 and 2014. We use a combination of content and cluster analysis to identify the discursive frames that parliamentarians employed to make sense of the crisis, and then assess which factors affected how these frames were used. Our findings show that the economic (left-right) cleavage remained highly influential in shaping the four parliaments' crisis discourse.*

***Keywords:** Eurozone crisis; politicization; political cleavages; national parliaments; political discourse; frame analysis*

Introduction

The Eurozone financial crisis was more than just a challenge to monetary and economic policy in the European Union (EU) and its member states. It also led to an increase in EU-related public debates, and thus contributed to ongoing processes of politicization of European integration. This politicization has been studied in a variety of discursive arenas, including the media (Kriesi and Grande 2016; Leupold 2016; Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2017), social media (Michailidou 2017), and focus groups (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016). Yet it remains unclear how significant the crisis-induced debates have been in the longer term: Should they be seen as part of a fundamental transformation in the structure of political conflict in Europe, which accentuates disputes about European integration at the expense of the traditional, economically defined left-right cleavage (Hooghe and Marks 2018)? Or were they just a temporary flare-up of interest in EU affairs, with little transformative impact?

This article contributes to scholarship on the political dimension of the Eurozone crisis, especially the question of cleavage transformation, by examining the *discursive frames* that were employed in parliamentary debates about the crisis in four Western European member states of the Eurozone: Germany, Austria, Spain and Ireland. While parliamentary discourse is only one aspect of crisis-related communication, it is influential because it provides many of the assessments that shape debates in the broader public sphere. Since the parliamentary arena is structured by a country's party system, which in Western Europe tends to reflect left-right divisions, a declining importance of economic conflict in this arena would be a particularly strong indicator of cleavage transformation. Based on these considerations, our study addresses two research questions:

- First, *which frames did parliamentarians use to make sense of the crisis?* We address this question through a combination of content and cluster analysis, which

conceptualizes frames as consisting of three elements: a crisis diagnosis, a set of evaluative criteria, and a prescription (or proposed solution).

- Second, *which factors explain frame usage?* We address this question through a regression analysis, which determines to what extent framing is influenced by the economic cleavage (left versus right), the European integration cleavage (pro- versus anti-EU), or other relevant factors (such as the government-opposition dichotomy).

Our research is situated in a growing literature on the engagement of national parliaments with the Eurozone crisis. Existing studies have focused on parliamentary authorization of rescue measures (Maatsch 2016; Degner and Leuffen 2016), parliamentary oversight activities (Auel and Höing 2015; Kreiling 2018), as well as plenary debates (Putscher-Riekman and Wydra 2013; Closa and Maatsch 2014; Maatsch 2014; 2017; Wendler 2016; Wonka 2016; Kinski 2018). This study differs from previous research because of the way we define and operationalize the concept of frames: Borrowing from communication studies (Entman 1993; Matthes and Kohring 2008; Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2017), we understand frames as interpretive schemes in which diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive propositions are systematically linked. Previous research on parliamentary debates usually examines a narrower range of discursive elements – such as the evaluative standards applied – without systematically exploring how diagnosis, evaluation and prescription are connected. Our study thus provides a novel, differentiated description of how parliamentarians made sense of the Eurozone crisis. This description, in turn, generates the dependent variable that we use to test whether the economic cleavage, the European integration cleavage, or other factors shape parliamentary discourse.

This article is structured in five sections. After explaining the conceptual basis (Section I) and methodological approach (Section II) of this study, we perform a content analysis that maps the most important diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments used

in the crisis-related debates (Section III) and then combine these elements into comprehensive frames by means of a cluster analysis (Section IV). These steps address our first research question. We then turn to our second, explanatory research question and perform a regression analysis that identifies which kinds of cleavages (or other explanatory factors) influence the extent to which the identified frames are used (Section V).

Theoretical framework: The Eurozone crisis and the shift of political cleavages

Research on the structure of political conflict in Western Europe shows that economic, political and cultural globalization – of which European integration is a part – has resulted in the emergence of a new cleavage in European party systems and public spheres, which pits citizens who perceive international openness as an opportunity against those who primarily view it as a threat (Fligstein 2008; Kriesi et al. 2008; 2012; Hooghe and Marks 2018). This new cleavage has been conceptualized as being orthogonal to the left-right divide that has dominated West European politics for many decades; its growing importance challenges the preponderance of economic conflicts in structuring political debates.

The impact of the Eurozone crisis on this transformation of political cleavages is not immediately obvious. On the one hand, the distributional consequences of the crisis make it seem plausible that political actors would seek to make sense of it primarily in economic terms (Statham and Trez 2015, 299-300; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018, 1204-1205). On the other hand, the crisis also accentuated the implications of economic interconnections between EU member states and the resulting loss of national autonomy (Schön-Quinlivan 2017). In line with the latter reading, Hooghe and Marks (2018) argue that the Eurozone crisis, along with the European refugee crisis, has accelerated the shift towards a “transnational” cleavage structured around views of European integration; they cite the growing salience of Europe in

party manifestos and the emergence of new Eurosceptic parties as evidence of this development.

While Hooghe and Marks (2018, 127) point out that the transformation of political cleavages should not be understood as the outright disappearance of left-right divisions, which remain deeply engrained in the structure and identity of mainstream political parties, other researchers describe even more dramatic effects. In studies of parliamentary decision-making on Eurozone anti-crisis measures – including the ratification of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) – Degner and Leuffen (2016) as well as Maatsch (2016) find that the economic positions of political parties had no statistically significant effect on their voting behaviour. These studies suggest that parliamentary decision-making can be explained primarily by the government-opposition dichotomy and by parties' positions on European integration. Maatsch (2016, 648) raises the question of whether these voting patterns represent the “ultimate decline of the economic cleavage”.

Other research on parliamentary engagement with the Eurozone crisis does, however, shed some doubts on the pervasiveness of this development. Maatsch herself shows in earlier publications that positions on the left-right spectrum influenced the solutions that political parties embraced for the crisis (Closa and Maatsch 2014; Maatsch 2014). Wendler (2016, 141-191) and Wonka (2016) also point to differences in how left-wing and right-wing parliamentarians discuss the crisis. Auel and Höing (2015), in their research on a range of crisis-related parliamentary activities, argue that parliamentary behaviour reflects economic factors, particularly how severely a country was hit by the crisis; by contrast they find no effects of Eurosceptic attitudes in parliament or among the broader public. This raises the question of whether parliamentary voting patterns should be seen as an exception, reflecting the strong market pressures that parliaments faced in ratifying the EU's anti-crisis measures,

while other forms of parliamentary engagement with the Eurozone crisis are still structured by the economic cleavage.

These considerations motivate this study's focus on *parliamentary discourse*. We assume that discourse, which represents parliaments' communication function, is less affected by external pressures than ratification votes; it therefore promises a more "sincere" reflection of parliamentarians' understanding of the crisis. We operationalize parliamentary discourse through the concept of frames. Frames can be defined as discursive schemes that pattern information (Entman 1993; Chong and Druckman 2007; Entman et al. 2009); they organize experience and promote a particular understanding of a political issue by offering a diagnosis, an evaluation, and a prescription. The identification of frames in parliamentary discourse is a more complex undertaking than tallying voting results; it requires a carefully conceptualized empirical analysis, which constitutes the first (descriptive) part of the research presented in this article.

Once frames have been identified, we can in a second step proceed to explain their usage in parliamentary discourse. The question here is which factors influence a parliamentarian's decision to use a specific frame to make sense of the Eurozone crisis. This analysis allows us to test claims about the importance of political cleavages. If the economic cleavage remained dominant, we would expect frame usage to be driven, at least in part, by a parliamentarian's (or her party's) position on the left-right spectrum:

- H1: Parliamentarians from left-wing parties use different frames than parliamentarians from right-wing parties.

By contrast, if the European integration cleavage gains influence, we would expect frame usage to reflect a parliamentarian's (or her party's) position towards the EU:

- H2: Parliamentarians from pro-EU parties use different frames than parliamentarians from anti-EU parties.

As was mentioned before, existing research on parliamentary engagement with the Eurozone crisis also highlights the importance of factors that are unrelated to political cleavages or ideologies. These include most notably the government-opposition dichotomy, but also the specific ways in which different Eurozone states have been affected by the crisis. We can hence formulate two further hypotheses:

- H3: Parliamentarians from government parties use different frames than parliamentarians from opposition parties.
- H4: Parliamentarians from countries that were directly hit by a domestic banking and/or sovereign debt crisis use different frames than parliamentarians from countries that have not themselves experienced such a crisis.

These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, as frame usage can depend on a combination of factors. The clearest evidence for a decline of the economic cleavage would exist if H1 is rejected, that is, if frame usage does not differ in statistically significant ways between left-wing and right-wing parliamentarians – which would correspond to what Degner and Leuffen (2016) as well as Maatsch (2016) found for parliamentary voting behavior.

Data and methods: A frame analysis approach to the Eurozone crisis

The analysis presented in this article relies on plenary debates in the lower houses of parliament in four Eurozone member states – Germany, Austria, Spain and Ireland – between 2009 and 2014. The four countries were selected to include both “crisis states” affected by far-reaching banking and sovereign debt problems in their own domestic economy (Spain and Ireland), and others that experienced the Eurozone crisis primarily as “creditors” faced with calls to support other member states (Germany and Austria). Our sample of countries also provides variance with respect to the other independent variables highlighted in our hypotheses: All four parliaments are characterized by left-right polarization, though Ireland is

unique in that its two major parties are both on the centre-right of the political spectrum. At various points in the period under study, both right-wing and left-wing parties participated in government coalitions in all countries; all countries but Austria experienced a change of government in our time period. Eurosceptic parties are particularly strongly entrenched in the Austrian political system, but are also represented (usually in the form of smaller leftist parties) in the other three parliaments. Our countries hence allow us to test all four hypotheses.

The time period examined in this study – 2009-2014 – includes all the years in which the Eurozone crisis dominated political headlines. This time period is longer than the one usually examined in research on Eurozone-related parliamentary discourses, which has focused on parliamentary ratification procedures of the main rescue measures, especially the EFSF and the ESM. Rather than examining ratification debates, we study “ordinary” plenary debates about EU issues, which do not have the primary function of rationalizing a certain voting behaviour. Our analysis is based on debates that discussed the regular June and December meetings of the European Council. Some of these debates occurred immediately before the European Council meeting in question, others shortly afterwards. If there was no explicit debate on a specific European Council meeting, but other debates about EU economic governance occurred in the same time frame, these were also included. This selection strategy resulted in a sample of 39 debates (Online Appendix A1). All of them begin with a report by the country’s government, followed by comments and questions from parliamentarians. The units of analysis for our study are the individual speeches delivered in the context of these debates.

In identifying frames used in these speeches (that is, in responding to our first research question), we build on an approach developed in communication studies by Matthes and Kohring (2008). They conceptualize frames as being constituted by the combination of

distinct *frame elements*, namely the diagnosis of a problem, the interpretation of its causes, a normative evaluation, and a prescription or treatment. We adopted this understanding; however like other researchers (Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2017, 803), we merged the categories of diagnostic and causal frame elements, which often overlap. As an empirical research strategy, Matthes and Kohring suggest that frames should be analyzed by first conducting a content analysis on each individual frame element, and then establishing linkages between frame elements by means of a cluster analysis. We followed this approach. Compared to research that proceeds deductively to examine theoretically pre-determined frames, it allows researchers to work more closely with the textual material and ensures that they keep an open mind on non-expected combinations between frame elements, thus minimizing the risk that coding is reflective of the coder rather than the text (David et al. 2011).

This study hence analyzes frames as “packages” of three frame elements: diagnosis, evaluation, and prescription. While not each invocation of a frame needs to contain an explicit reference to all three elements, our ambition is to examine frames as comprehensive schemes that address all three dimensions.¹ As suggested by Matthes and Kohring (2008), we operationalized this understanding in a two-step process: First, we conducted a content analysis to identify the diagnostic, evaluative, and prescriptive arguments that the speeches in our sample presented about the Eurozone crisis.² Second, we ran a cluster analysis to determine how diagnosis, evaluation and prescription connected in comprehensive frames. Our coding categories (discussed in the following section) were derived inductively from a close reading of the selected debates and then applied systematically to all 479 individual speeches. Given the complexity of many speeches, we assigned up to two codes for each frame element (diagnosis, evaluation, prescription). However, not all frame elements were necessarily addressed in all contributions. Since our conception of frames emphasizes the

combination of diagnosis, evaluation and prescription, the frame analysis presented below is based only on those 367 speeches in which at least two of the three frame elements were addressed.

After frames had been identified through content and cluster analysis, we turned to our second research question, which concerns the factors that influence frame usage. For this purpose, we conducted a multinomial logistic regression analysis that allows us to estimate the impact of the (potential) explanatory factors highlighted in our four hypotheses. Party positions on the left-right scale and towards European integration were operationalized using data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015; Polk et al. 2017). The difference between government and opposition speakers was coded based on the parties formally included in government coalitions. As measures for the differentiated experience of the crisis, we distinguished between parliamentarians from “crisis states” (Spain and Ireland) and “non-crisis states” (Germany and Austria). Parliamentarians’ gender, age, as well as the year of the speech were included as control variables. A total of 17 speeches by independent parliamentarians or members of parties not ranked in the Chapel Hill Survey were omitted from the regression analysis (N=350).

Diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments

The coding scheme that we developed for the content analysis of frame elements distinguishes a total of thirteen coding categories (Table 1). These refer to distinct argumentative or interpretive propositions whose character differs between frame elements: Diagnostic propositions make causal claims about the origins of the crisis. Evaluative propositions present benchmarks by which the crisis (and the crisis response) should be assessed. Prescriptive propositions present or reject crisis solutions; for this frame element, we coded both positive and negative references, since much of the discourse focused on the

rejection of other speakers’ proposals. For the sake of terminological simplicity, we will refer to all of these different kinds of propositions as “arguments” in the remainder of this article.

Table 1: Coding categories for diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive frame elements

Diagnosis: What caused the crisis?	Evaluation: How should the crisis be assessed?	Prescription: How can the crisis be solved?
<p>Excessive debt: The crisis is caused by governments and/or citizens in the crisis states behaving irresponsibly – they over-borrowed instead of staying within their means.</p> <p>Unregulated neoliberalism: The crisis is caused by deregulation and unconstrained markets and banking sectors.</p> <p>Institutional deficits: The crisis is caused by deficiencies in the institutional architecture of Economic and Monetary Union.</p>	<p>Economic effects: The crisis response is viewed in terms of its effects on macro-economic indicators – including GDP growth, government deficit, unemployment, labour costs, etc.</p> <p>Social costs: The crisis response is viewed in terms of its effects on citizens – this includes references to suffering because of job losses, reduced social benefits, undermined personal dignity, etc.</p> <p>Political values: The crisis response is viewed in terms of its effects on normative principles such as democracy, constitutionalism, solidarity, European spirit, national identity, etc.</p> <p>Politics: The crisis response is viewed in partisan terms, as evidence of the success or failure of the national government and/or the EU to produce desirable political outcomes.</p>	<p>Austerity and structural reform: Crisis states should focus on becoming more competitive, reduce deficit/debt (austerity), engage in structural reform, <i>not</i> engage in economic stimulus measures.</p> <p>Solidarity for solidity: Financial support should be provided to crisis states, but only on the condition that they show prudent financial management and willingness to reform.</p> <p>Financial transfers: More redistribution between member states, common European solutions (e.g., Eurobonds, bank resolution funds), more investment and financial support, debt relief.</p> <p>Deeper economic integration: Create stronger EU-level institutions for economic supervision (including banking supervision) and cooperation.</p> <p>Accountability of markets: Private investors should be made to pay for the economic problems that they have caused.</p> <p>Breakup of Eurozone: The Euro should be abandoned (return to national currencies), the Eurozone should be split up, or some state(s) should leave or be expelled.</p>

The coding of diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments can provide the basis for quantitative analysis. Table 2 presents a count of how frequently they are used in each country; it provides first insights into the national differences in the discussion of the crisis. With respect to *diagnostic arguments*, we see clear differences between our two groups of states; references to excessive debt are the most popular explanation of the crisis in Germany and Austria, while unregulated neoliberalism is blamed most frequently Spain and Ireland. For *evaluative arguments*, we find that the social costs and political values are much more

extensively used as a benchmark for assessment in Spain and in Ireland than in Germany, with Austria in an intermediary position.

Table 2: Diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments

Frame element	Arguments	Germany	Austria	Spain	Ireland
Diagnosis	Excessive debt	14 (10%)	27 (12%)	14 (7%)	3 (2%)
	Unregulated neoliberalism	9 (6%)	24 (10%)	24 (12%)	17 (11%)
	Institutional deficits	7 (5%)	21 (9%)	10 (5%)	9 (6%)
	No diagnosis provided	116 (80%)	162 (69%)	148 (76%)	129 (82%)
Evaluation	Economic effects	43 (30%)	66 (28%)	48 (25%)	56 (35%)
	Social costs	9 (6%)	47 (20%)	55 (28%)	40 (25%)
	Political values	16 (11%)	33 (14%)	42 (21%)	28 (18%)
	Politics	39 (27%)	28 (12%)	26 (13%)	20 (13%)
	No evaluation provided	39 (27%)	60 (26%)	25 (13%)	14 (9%)
Prescription	Austerity and structural reform	30 (21%)	32 (14%)	21 (11%)	10 (6%)
	Reject austerity and structural reform	19 (13%)	19 (8%)	43 (22%)	40 (25%)
	Solidarity for solidity	13 (9%)	8 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
	Reject solidarity for solidity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)
	Financial transfers	12 (8%)	20 (9%)	15 (8%)	29 (18%)
	Reject financial transfers	19 (13%)	34 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Deeper economic integration	21 (14%)	22 (9%)	59 (30%)	30 (19%)
	Reject deeper economic integration	2 (1%)	6 (3%)	1 (1%)	10 (6%)
	Accountability of markets	13 (9%)	23 (10%)	8 (4%)	9 (6%)
	Reject accountability of markets	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
	Breakup of Eurozone	0 (0%)	7 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Reject breakup of Eurozone	2 (1%)	9 (4%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
	No prescription provided	15 (10%)	53 (23%)	45 (23%)	27 (17%)
Number of speeches included in the analysis		73	117	98	79

Note: Two arguments were coded for each speech. Percentages are based on the number of codings. They are calculated for each country (column percentages) and express the share of each argument within the frame element in question. Percentages might not sum up to 100% due to rounding error.

Our analysis of *prescriptive arguments*, for which both support and rejection of a certain solution were coded, gives a good insight into the focal points of crisis-related political contestation in each state. Only some proposals generated explicit conflict – that is, a relevant proportion of both positive and negative references – while others remained largely uncontested. These patterns reflect the fault lines of crisis-related political debates in each state:

- In the German *Bundestag*, controversies focused on austerity and financial transfers. Chancellor Angela Merkel's centre-right Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) as well as the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) advocated for austerity and rejected financial transfers (especially so-called "Eurobonds"). CDU/CSU speakers often added a justification of the emergency loans to the crisis states based on the "solidarity for solidity" argument; they also demanded deeper economic integration – but without financial transfers – to prevent the re-occurrence of crises. The clearest contrast to this position could be found in the discourse of the Green Party and the Left Party, which rejected austerity and often supported financial transfers; in the case of the Left Party this was combined with appeals for greater accountability of market actors. The position of the Social Democrats (SPD) was the most inconsistent; in the early years of the crisis its speakers often presented a "soft" version of the centre-right's framing, but over time – even after it had re-joined the government in 2013 – the party shifted towards a more explicit rejection of austerity and (conditional) support for financial transfers.
- Debates in the Austrian *Nationalrat* had a similar focus. The issue of austerity divided the grand coalition that governed Austria in our time period, with the Social Democrats (SPÖ) often skeptical and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) firmly in support. Limited financial transfers were supported by both government parties as well as the Greens, while opposition was strong among the parties of the far right – Freedom Party (FPÖ), Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) and Team Stronach. Like in Germany, there was less controversy about deeper economic integration (rejected only by the far right) and increased accountability of markets (supported across the political spectrum). Beyond this, the presence of the far right makes Austria stand out in that it is the only country in our sample where a potential breakup of the Eurozone was occasionally discussed.

- The responses in the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados* highlighted EU-based solutions to the crisis, while austerity was more contentious. The dominant party of the centre-right, the Popular Party (PP), endorsed austerity in government and opposition, though this position was frequently rejected by centre-right peripheral nationalist parties. Support for deeper economic integration was largely uncontested on the centre-right, and the most often proposed solution. On the left side of the political spectrum, the positions taken by Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) differed from those of more radical leftist parties such as the United Left (IU) and regional leftist parties. While all leftist parties prioritized European solutions to the crisis, particularly deeper economic integration, PSOE only turned against austerity once it was no longer in government, while the far-left was uncompromising in its rejection for the entire time period.
- Austerity and deeper economic integration dominated controversies in the Irish *Dáil Éireann* as the centre-right Fianna Fáil government, led by Brian Cowan, defended its austerity budget. Under Cowan, Fianna Fáil consistently advocated for austerity and pushed for deeper economic integration. Fine Gael under Enda Kenny, though also usually classified as a centre-right party, were openly critical of Fianna Fáil's austerity policies and advocated for increased infrastructure funding as a means of job creation. The loudest voices against austerity came from the left, namely from Labour and Sinn Féin, who often embraced the "accountability of markets" argument. All parties with the exception of Sinn Féin advocated for deeper economic integration, particularly the European Commission's proposal for a European System of Financial Supervision. Following the 2011 election which brought a defeat of the Fianna Fáil government, Fine Gael formed a coalition with the Labour Party. Now in the opposition, Fianna Fáil emerged critical of austerity policies, while Fine Gael became its strongest advocate. However, the bulk of its contributions centred on arguing for deeper economic integration

and financial transfers for Ireland but also others, particularly Greece. The 2011 election also saw the election of the Eurosceptic People Before Profit Alliance whose members, along with some independents, represent the bulk of the calls to reject both austerity and deeper economic integration.

Identifying Eurozone-related frames

While our analysis so far has examined the frequency of various diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments in parliamentary speeches, our second analytical step – the identification of comprehensive frames – requires a closer look at the combination between arguments, both within each frame element, and between different frame elements.

It makes sense to begin this analysis by focusing on *combinations within each frame element* (diagnosis, evaluation and prescription). As was previously mentioned, we coded up to two arguments per frame element for each speech. This allows for a fine-grained analysis but results in a large number of combinations. It is advisable to reduce this complexity before performing a cluster analysis, to prevent the formation of either large uninterpretable clusters or small clusters consisting only of rarely mentioned arguments. We therefore examined all combinations between arguments that relate to the same frame element; for evaluation and prescription (where the number of coding categories was particularly high) we then formed aggregate categories that group thematically similar combinations (Table 3).³ Our aggregation strategy for evaluation focused on the distinction between economic arguments and those rooted in social or political values; we privileged these over arguments referring to “politics” because the latter primarily reflect the rituals of government-opposition conflict and do not carry much substantive content. Our aggregation strategy for prescription focused on the distinction between austerity-related and Europe-related arguments since controversies

about these two issues – as described above – were the most salient dimensions of Eurozone-related parliamentary debates in each of our four states.

Table 3: Diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive arguments: Aggregated categories

Frame element	Aggregated categories	Original categories	Germany	Austria	Spain	Ireland
Diagnosis	Excessive debt	Excessive debt	10 (14%)	9 (8%)	9 (9%)	2 (3%)
	Unregulated neoliberalism	Unregulated neoliberalism	5 (7%)	16 (14%)	19 (19%)	13 (17%)
	Institutional deficits	Institutional deficits	3 (4%)	9 (8%)	6 (6%)	6 (8%)
	Excessive debt & neoliberalism	Excessive debt combined with neoliberalism	2 (3%)	7 (6%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
	Excessive debt & institutional deficits	Excessive debt combined with institutional deficits	2 (3%)	11 (9%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
	Neoliberalism & institutional deficits	Neoliberalism combined with institutional deficits	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (4%)
	No diagnosis provided	No diagnosis provided	49 (67%)	64 (54%)	57 (58%)	54 (68%)
Evaluation	Economics	Economic effects, potentially combined with politics	35 (48%)	36 (31%)	20 (20%)	18 (23%)
	Social/political values	Social costs and/or political values, potentially combined with politics	14 (19%)	38 (33%)	43 (44%)	19 (24%)
	Economics & social/political values	Economic effects, combined with social costs or political values	8 (11%)	30 (26%)	28 (29%)	38 (48%)
	Purely partisan	Politics, not combined with any substantive evaluative argument	14 (19%)	6 (5%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)
	No evaluation provided	No evaluation provided	2 (3%)	7 (6%)	2 (2%)	3 (4%)
Prescription	Austerity	Austerity and structural reform and/or rejection of financial transfers	18 (25%)	47 (40%)	4 (4%)	0 (0%)
	Europe	Financial transfers, deeper economic integration, and/or rejection of Eurozone breakup	19 (26%)	26 (22%)	51 (52%)	40 (51%)
	Austerity and Europe	Solidarity for solidity, or combination of arguments from previous two categories	22 (30%)	22 (19%)	17 (17%)	11 (14%)
	Neither austerity nor Europe	All other prescriptive arguments	14 (19%)	17 (15%)	24 (25%)	28 (35%)
	No prescription provided	No prescription provided	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
Number of speeches included in the analysis			73	117	98	79

Note: Percentages are calculated for each country (column percentages); they express the share of each argument within the frame element in question. Percentages might not sum up to 100% due to rounding error.

The aggregated categories allow us to characterize each speech by exactly three variables: one for diagnosis, one for evaluation, one for prescription. The link between them – and hence the *combination between frame elements* – is what constitutes Eurozone-related frames in our conceptualization. We conducted a two-step cluster analysis to identify the most important patterns of combination. This method was selected over other clustering procedures because it can handle large datasets, is applicable to categorical variables, and automatically determines a recommended number of clusters based on the Bayesian information criterion (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011, 237-284). We opted for the creation of an outlier cluster with 15% noise handling to produce “clean”, easily interpretable clusters, and also to have a reference category for further analysis.⁴ It should be noted that, since cluster analysis is an exploratory procedure, there is not one single correct clustering of the data. The clustering reported below was compared to other cluster solutions produced with a different configuration of variables, different outlier treatment, and/or a manually determined number of clusters; most of these proved similar in the basic structure of the identified clusters. As suggested in the literature (Donk et al. 2012; Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2017), we verified the automatically selected cluster solution using a discriminant analysis, which resulted in an acceptable value (93.7% of grouped cases correctly classified).

Table 4: Cluster analysis of frame elements

Frame element	Arguments (aggregated categories)	Cluster 1: Economic responsibility	Cluster 2: Citizens, not markets	Cluster 3: Build a better Europe	Outlier cluster
Diagnosis	Excessive debt	20 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (12%)
	Unregulated neoliberalism	0 (0%)	24 (32%)	20 (18%)	9 (11%)
	Institutional deficits	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (12%)	10 (12%)
	Excessive debt & neoliberalism	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (16%)
	Excessive debt & institutional deficits	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (18%)
	Neoliberalism & institutional deficits	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (10%)
	No diagnosis	75 (79%)	52 (68%)	80 (70%)	17 (21%)
Evaluation	Economics	53 (56%)	13 (17%)	26 (23%)	19 (23%)
	Social/political values	17 (18%)	36 (47%)	40 (35%)	16 (20%)
	Economics & social/political values	25 (26%)	27 (36%)	38 (33%)	18 (22%)
	Purely partisan	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (9%)	17 (21%)
	No evaluation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (12%)

Prescription	Austerity	43 (45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (32%)
	Europe	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	114 (100%)	22 (27%)
	Austerity and Europe	52 (55%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (24%)
	Neither austerity nor Europe	0 (0%)	76 (100%)	0 (0%)	7 (9%)
	No prescription	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (9%)
Total		95 (100%)	76 (100%)	114 (100%)	82 (100%)

Note: Percentages are calculated for each cluster (column percentages); they express the share of each argument within the frame element in question. Percentages might not sum up to 100% due to rounding error.

As Table 4 shows, our cluster analysis suggests that the parliamentary debates reviewed for this study are structured by three comprehensive frames:

- The first can be labelled “economic responsibility”. When it provides a crisis diagnosis, it focuses on excessive debt. Evaluative standards in this frame are overwhelmingly economic, though in some instances value-oriented considerations provide an additional reference point. As prescription, this frame endorses austerity, either coupled with European solutions or not.
- The second frame can be called “citizens, not markets”. When it provides a diagnosis of the reasons for the crisis, it blames unregulated neoliberalism. The crisis is assessed primarily in terms of social and political values, sometimes combined with economics. The proposed solution to the crisis consists of neither austerity nor an expansion of the EU’s role.
- The third frame can be labelled “build a better Europe”. Its crisis diagnosis, where made explicit, refers to unregulated neoliberalism or institutional deficits. This frame uses a mixture of evaluative criteria, but a clear majority of the included speeches refers to social or political values. The preferred solutions focus on the EU-level but do not encompass austerity.

The popularity of the three frames differs between the states included in this study, and also over time. As Figure 1 shows, the “economic responsibility” frame dominates in the non-crisis states (Germany and Austria), while “build a better Europe” is the most frequently used

frame in the crisis states (Spain and Ireland).⁵ Figure 2 demonstrates a consolidation of frame usage over the course of the crisis (for a similar finding, see Puntsher-Riemann and Wydra 2013, p. 579): While a large number of idiosyncratic arguments is used in the earlier years of the crisis, as evidenced by the high share of outliers, parliamentary discourse becomes increasingly dominated by our three frames after 2011.

Figure 1: Frequency of frames per country

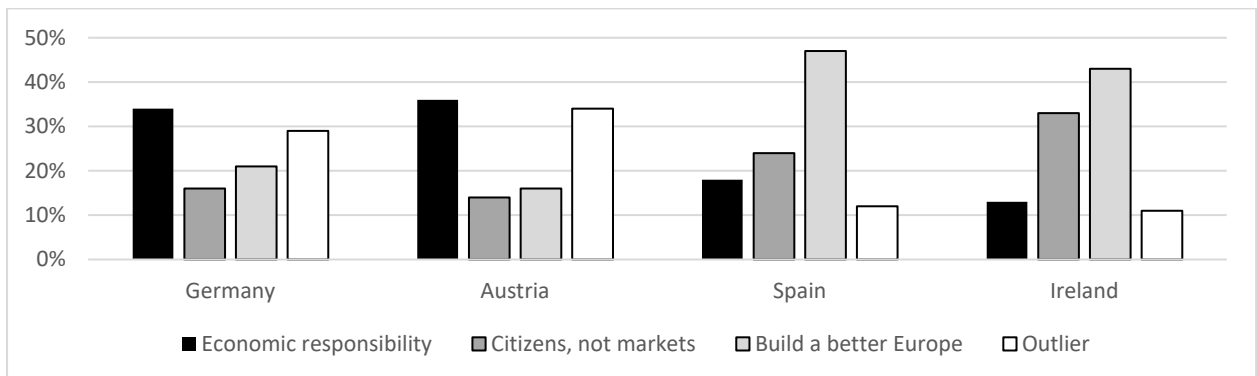
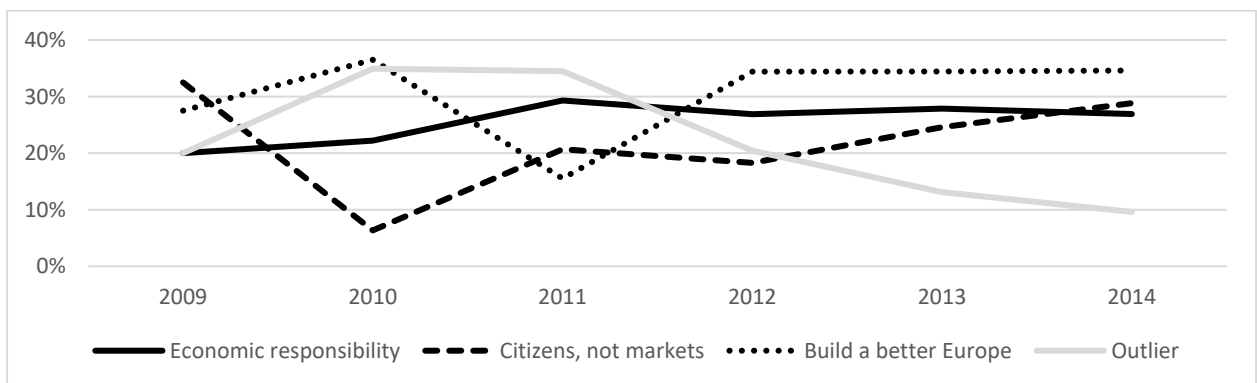


Figure 2: Frequency of frames over time



Explaining the prevalence of discursive frames

The identification of the three frames allows us to proceed to our second research question, which concerns the factors that explain frame usage. The hypotheses developed in the theoretical section of this article highlight four potential *independent variables*: (1) the position of a speaker's party on the left-right scale, which we can treat as indicator for the

economic cleavage; (2) the position of a speaker’s party towards the EU, which we can treat as indicator for the European integration cleavage; (3) a speaker’s role as a member of a government or opposition party; and (4) a speaker’s origin from a crisis state or non-crisis state. We conduct a multinomial logistic regression analysis to examine their influence. Age and gender of the speaker, as well as year, were examined as control variables (for a model that uses similar independent and control variables in a binary logistic regression, see Kinski 2018). The frames identified through the cluster analysis make up our *dependent variable*. The regression allows us to calculate how the odds of a speech making use of a specific frame, compared to falling into the outlier cluster, change in correlation with our independent and control variables.⁶ If this so-called “odds ratio” is higher than one, this indicates that as the independent variable changes, the odds increase. Conversely, odds ratios lower than one point to decreasing odds that the outcome will occur.

Table 5: Multinomial logistic regression results

Independent and control variables		Odds ratios [Exp(B)]		
		Economic responsibility	Citizens, not markets	Build a better Europe
Party’s right-wing economic stance		1.493***	0.625***	0.726**
Party’s pro-European integration stance		0.777	0.918	1.566**
Speaker from government party		2.509*	0.484	0.377**
Speaker from crisis state		1.213	2.882*	5.215***
Age of speaker		1.016	1.017	1.017
Female speaker		1.669	1.311	0.581
Year (reference category: 2009)	2010	0.595	0.103*	1.150
	2011	1.047	0.169*	0.578
	2012	1.156	0.461	1.707
	2013	1.668	0.780	2.119
	2014	2.724	1.220	1.959

Reference category: Outlier cluster.

Pseudo R²: Cox & Snell 0.495; Nagelkerke 0.529; McFadden 0.249.

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Table 5 displays the odds ratios calculated in our best regression model.⁷ It allows for the following conclusions on our four independent variables:

- *Party positions on the left-right scale* (H1) have a strong, and statistically significant, effect on the odds of a speech making use of all three frames. We calculated these effects

based on the indicator “left-right economic” in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, which ranges from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). If all other variables are held constant, every one-point step towards the right in this indicator increases the odds of a speech using the “economic responsibility” frame, rather than falling into the outlier cluster, by 49%. By contrast, the odds of a speech using the “citizens, not markets” and “build a better Europe” frames decrease by 37% and 27%, respectively. In short, “economic responsibility” is typically a frame of the political right, while the other two frames are more common in speeches by left-wing politicians.

- *Party positions towards European integration* (H2) prove relevant only for the “build a better Europe” frame. Using the indicator for a party’s general stance on integration in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, which ranges from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favour), we find that every one-point increase in the indicator, if all other variables are held constant, increases the odds of a speech using the “build a better Europe” frame, rather than falling in the outlier cluster, by 57%. This indicates that, unsurprisingly, this frame is more popular among pro-European politicians. By contrast, party attitudes on European integration did not have a significant effect on the use of the “economic responsibility” and “citizens, not markets” frames.⁸
- The *government-opposition dichotomy* (H3) has a statistically significant effect on the “economic responsibility” and “build a better Europe” frames. If a speech is made by a member of a government party (and all other variables are held constant), the odds of the “economic responsibility” frame being used, as opposed to the speech falling into the outlier cluster, increase by 150%, while the odds of the “build a better Europe” frame being used decrease by 62%. In other words, “economic responsibility” is typically a government frame, and “build a better Europe” an opposition frame. The government-

opposition dichotomy does not have a statistically significant effect on the odds of a speech using the “citizens, not markets” frame.

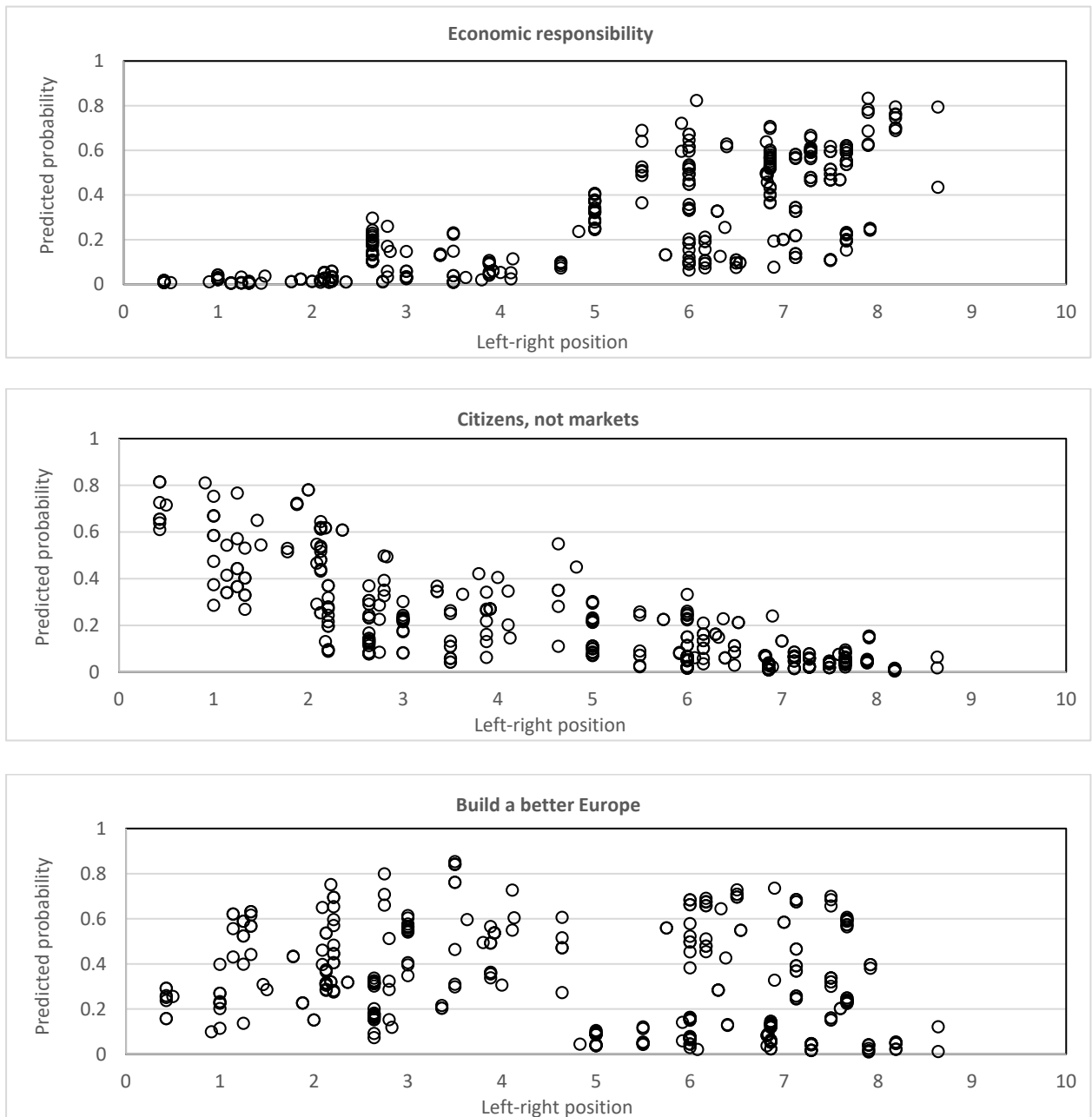
- A speaker’s country – specifically the *difference between crisis and non-crisis states* (H4) –has a statistically significant effect on the odds of a speech using the “citizens, not markets” and “build a better Europe” frames. The calculated odds ratios indicate that, if all other variables are held constant, a speaker’s origin from a crisis state increases the odds of a speech using the “citizens, not markets” frame, rather than falling in the outlier cluster, by a factor of 2.88. Under the same conditions, the odds of a speech using the “build a better Europe” frame increase even more dramatically, by a factor of 5.22. In other words, both frames are much more likely to be used in speeches by parliamentarians from the states that were hit hard by the crisis. By contrast, we did not find a statistically significant effect of a speaker’s origin on the odds of a speech using the “economic responsibility” frame.

On balance, our regression results show that the positions communicated in parliamentary speeches on the Eurozone crisis are influenced by a diversity of factors. While all four hypotheses find some support in our analysis, it is particularly noteworthy that economic cleavages strongly influence how the Eurozone crisis is framed in the debates examined here. The left-right dimension is in fact the only factor that has a statistically significant influence on the odds of all three frames. As Figure 3 shows, the predicted probabilities calculated as part of our regression model, which assess the chance of a speech making use of a specific frame, strongly correlate with the left-right position of the speaker’s party affiliation, particularly for the “economic responsibility” and “citizens, not markets” frames (Figure 3).⁹

These results stand in contrast to the findings reported by Degner and Leuffen (2016) as well as Maatsch (2016) in their analysis of parliamentary voting on the ratification of Eurozone rescue measures. In other words, even if the pressure imposed on national

parliaments to ratify anti-crisis measures had the effect of (temporarily) overriding economic cleavages in parliamentary decision-making, these cleavages most certainly did not disappear from parliamentary debates.

Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of the three frames



Conclusion

While it is widely accepted that the Eurozone crisis has given a boost to the politicization of European integration, research into the longer-term implications of this politicization for the structure of political conflict in Europe has only recently begun to be published. This study has proposed an innovative conceptual and methodological approach for assessing cleavage transformation based on a frame analysis of parliamentary discourse. Our research shows that, in contrast to parliamentary voting patterns on some of the crisis response measures, these debates do not indicate a decline of the economic cleavage. Our results might not seem particularly surprising – after all, the Eurozone crisis did concern issues of economic regulation and redistribution, and European parliaments are the very birthplace of left-right politics. However, in the light of claims in the literature about shifting cleavages in European politics, our study serves as a reminder that economic concerns remain an important factor in shaping political discourse. When viewed together with research that finds evidence for a declining importance of left-right politics in parliamentary voting patterns, our results suggest some degree of disconnect between parliamentary talk and parliamentary action which deserves to be further explored, not least because it may have the effect of undermining the credibility of the affected political parties and parliamentarians in the eyes of the public. At a more general level, we can conclude that the Eurozone crisis raised complex and multifaceted issues, but certainly did not make economic conflicts and left-right political debates obsolete.

Notes

¹ Our approach differs from other recent studies of Eurozone-related debates in national parliaments, which focus on only one of the three frame elements. For instance, Wendler (2016, 115-129) and Wonka (2016) analyze evaluative standards used in parliamentary discourse, distinguishing various

resource/output-oriented and normative arguments, while Maatsch (2014) concentrates on neoliberal and Keynesian solutions proposed for the crisis. Closa and Maatsch (2014) link the pragmatic, ethical and normative justifications used by parliamentary parties to their support (or lack thereof) for Eurozone rescue measures. Kinski (2018) examines the definition of the constituency – national or European – in whose name parliamentarians claim to speak.

² The material was coded by the four authors of this article. An intercoder reliability test was conducted using a random selection of twenty contributions; it resulted in acceptable levels of reliability (Krippendorff's alpha of 0.711 for diagnosis, 0.734 for evaluation, and 0.713 for prescription).

³ More detailed information on the aggregation process, including a list of all individual combinations of arguments within each frame element, is presented in Online Appendix A2.

⁴ Auto-clustering statistics are available in Online Appendix A3.

⁵ It is noteworthy that the number of outliers is higher in Germany and Austria than in Spain and Ireland. This finding proves consistent across the various cluster solutions we calculated, including ones with a higher number of clusters. We hence interpret it as evidence of more idiosyncratic discourse patterns in these countries, rather than as an indication of an undefined cluster that we have failed to identify.

⁶ The outlier cluster is an appropriate reference category for this analysis since it constitutes a “neutral” category of all those speeches which cannot be allocated to any of the three frames.

⁷ We use a generalized estimating equation (GEE) approach – calculated through the complex samples module in SPSS – to address the fact that some parliamentarians are represented more than once in the sample. A diagnostic examination indicates an acceptable model. Both the model as a whole and each of our four independent variables are statistically significant at least at the 0.01 level. Collinearity diagnostics were satisfactory. The full list of parameter estimates, as well as information on sample design, variables and model effects, is available in Online Appendix A4.

⁸ As an alternative indicator for non-economic political cleavages, we also tested the GAL-TAN variable in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey; however, its effects on frame usage were not statistically significant.

⁹ For “build a better Europe”, the predicted probabilities correlate more strongly with positions on European integration. A graph that displays this correlation is available in Online Appendix A5.

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