

It is widely believed that voters care little about foreign policy, transforming referendums on international agreements into tests of a government's popularity. The authors analyze this notion and present two-level games characterized by asymmetric information. The article demonstrates that the linking of domestic issues to an international treaty does not convert referendums into pure plebiscites. However, the two-level decision creates a severe dilemma for the electorate. Uncertainty regarding whether the possible utility of the treaty offsets the value of domestic policies influences the decisions of voters. The median voter risks punishing a popular government or failing to express discontent with an unpopular administration. Our games explore the conditions under which competing elites try to manipulate the uncertainty of constituents about the outcome of international negotiations. Empirical illustrations are presented in the form of case studies and survey analyses of the ballots in Denmark, France, Ireland, and Switzerland.

THE PUNISHMENT TRAP Integration Referendums as Popularity Contests

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It is often argued that the linking of domestic concerns to international issues transforms referendums into tests of a government's popularity, echoing de Tocqueville's (1835/1986) concern about the negative influence of democracy on foreign policy making. We systematically analyze this notion by proposing a theoretical framework that facilitates the comparative study of international referendums. "Two-level" games (Putnam, 1988) are

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developed that enhance our knowledge about campaigns in direct democracies. Our formal models demonstrate that outcomes of referendums on international integration agreements are never mere reflections of the popularity of the supporters or opposition groups campaigning for or against the agreement.

However, domestic factors do affect the likelihood of electoral acceptance of the agreement. This creates a trade-off in the decision making of the electorate, which we call a punishment trap. Direct legislation on integration treaties is not an optimal vehicle to both evaluate a treaty's worth and simultaneously signal satisfaction with a government. Voters may have to choose between accepting an agreement on the basis of its merit and risk rewarding a government that has not successfully managed domestic politics, or rejecting the treaty, thereby punishing a popular government that negotiated and supported ratification of the agreement. This severe dilemma exists under conditions of uncertainty; we assume that constituents do not know if the integration project under consideration compensates for the government's management of the economy.

Counter to the expectations of some observers (Frey & Bohnet, 1993), competitive campaigns do not eliminate the punishment trap. As long as voters have incomplete information about the effects of the treaty, their decisions are ultimately based on trust—either believing the opposition's or the government's campaign messages. Nevertheless, the constituency is not powerless. Our limited information games show how carrots and sticks in the hands of the electorate influence elite behavior. Government and opposition groups will alter the intensity of their campaigns in response to the threat of punishment or expectation of rewards by the electorate following the referendum. However, unpopular governments cannot count on a significant popularity reward even if the constituency accepts the agreement; the image of a government that has not managed the economy well will not be enhanced in the constituency's eyes simply because of a ratification success. Consequently, under these circumstances, the opposition is more likely to successfully manipulate the uncertainty of the median voter.

By exploring the conditions of nonmajoritarian outcomes, the article sheds some light on the discussion of whether or not direct democracy is an adequate alternative to the ratification procedures of representative government. The second section offers an overview of this debate and an assessment of the most influential approaches to the study of referendums. The third section presents the limited information models from which we derive different hypotheses. We discuss the empirical significance of our deductions in the fourth section. A conclusion summarizes the article.

FOREIGN POLICY AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY

TWO COMPETING VIEWS

Direct legislation has become an increasingly important topic in international politics. This is largely a consequence of the strengthening and expanding of the European Union (Rourke, Hiskes, & Zirakzadeh, 1992). However, the normative literature disagrees on whether or not referendums are more "democratic" than other ratification procedures (Butler & Ranney, 1978, pp. 24-37; Cronin, 1989).

In this vein, some public choice theorists argue that referendum campaigns enhance the knowledge of the constituents by eliciting more information about the question under consideration (Frey & Bohnet, 1993). Political competition between proponents and antagonists of the issue under review destroys the informational asymmetries that prevail in systems of representative government. Further, referendums on international treaties constrain governments from engaging in collusive behavior with international organizations, thus hampering the expansion of bureaucracy (Vaubel, 1991).

A major argument of the opponents, by contrast, is that direct legislation about international treaties demands too much from voters. De Tocqueville (1835/1986, pp. 340-346) was one of the first theorists to claim that aristocracy is superior to democracy in the foreign policy-making domain. Further, giving power to the people in this area is perilous; as Friedrich (1968) wrote, "Mass emotionalism is the most dangerous force generated by democracy in foreign affairs" (p. 547).

Moreover, because the electorate tends to be "rationally ignorant" (Downs, 1957) about complex issues such as abstract international agreements, voters easily fall victim to manipulation attempts by elites. Decision makers propose policies that do not necessarily coincide with the interests of the median voter (Romer & Rosenthal, 1978, 1979) or even provide distorted information to garner support (Banks, 1990). Further, there may be attempts to preserve the interests of minority views if a referendum campaign is contested. Because the government possesses "insider information" from having negotiated the treaty, and institutional advantages to exploit informational asymmetries, outcomes of referendums may not necessarily represent the interests of the majority of the participating voters.

THE FINDINGS OF THE QUANTITATIVE LITERATURE

Although this normative discussion might profit from a systematic examination of the relationship between government type and international out-

comes, most comparative studies are ad hoc (e.g., Rourke et al., 1992). With few exceptions (e.g., Pierce, Valen, & Listhaug, 1983) rigorous empirical research focuses almost exclusively on single cases.

Integration referendums are usually examined through survey analyses and macrosociological approaches. From the latter studies we have learned that conflicts between the center and periphery are important determinants of success and failure. This was the case in Norway's refusal to join the European Community (EC; Hellevik, Gleditsch, & Ringdal, 1975). Survey studies typically show that protectionist interests, low-income voters, and nationalists on the Right and the Left of the political spectrum oppose integration agreements. Party alignment seems to be a dominant factor in assessing voter preferences, but the parties in question must commit themselves strongly for or against the treaty and make their stands clear to their supporters (Gallagher, 1988; Pierce et al., 1983).

ENDOGENOUS POLICY THEORY

Because the quantitative literature is not guided by a unifying theoretical framework, there are difficulties in comparing different referendums. Endogenous policy theory offers a potential framework for analysis. Thus far in international relations this branch of formal theory has been almost exclusively employed to study protectionism. In an important contribution, Mayer (1984) explained the tariff level in a direct democracy by the resource distribution across domestic actors. The disparity between the median voter's factor endowment and the aggregate factor endowment is particularly important. Because the pivotal constituent can rarely claim factor ownership in the same proportion as the country's relative factor endowment, there is no reason to expect a free-trade outcome.

"COMMUNICATION" MODELS

Although endogenous tariff theory offers an important starting point, the consequences of referendum campaigns and other strategic manipulations preceding a vote on a treaty are not addressed. To bring these variables in, some researchers refer to "communication" models (e.g., Wessels, 1992). These approaches discuss a classic question of "which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" Does elite opinion drive mass attitudes on foreign policy or do the interests of the constituents determine government behavior? An early formalization of the first hypothesis is credited to the cybernetic approach developed by Karl Deutsch (1966, 1972). He argued that foreign policy opinion flows in cascades from the elite down to the population. This

is in contrast to Inglehart's (1970) bottom-up approach. In his view, opinions on foreign policy "bubble up" from the constituents to the elite.

This article challenges the conviction of both approaches that the formation of foreign policy opinions is a one-way street. Elites try to influence public opinion to garner support on some issues, and constituents can create incentives to force the government and its opposition to respond to majoritarian interests. Carrots and sticks in the hands of the electorate influence the elites' campaigns. Political competition in direct democracies is thus driven by both institutions and strategic interests.

AGENDA-SETTING MODELS

Our game-theoretic models incorporate the political competition driven by strategic interaction and draw on the formal literature on referendum campaigns. In particular, we build on "setter" models. These models refer to situations where one dominant actor (the "monopoly agenda setter") has an institutional advantage and is able to propose and enforce policy that may not be in the median voter's interest. These models were first delineated by Romer and Rosenthal (1978, 1979). In Romer and Rosenthal's pathbreaking contribution, voters know the location of the status quo policy, the agenda setter's preferences, and the location of the proposed alternative. Because the agenda setter can make a take-it-or-leave-it proposal, the electorate is forced to accept an outcome that may not entirely reflect its interests. Very recently, others have introduced asymmetric information to these spatial models. Banks (1990) analyzed a situation where the electorate does not know the location of the status quo or of the outcome that would become reality if the agenda setter's proposal is accepted. Such uncertainty may occur, for instance, in the event that a government tries to convince voters that membership in a security alliance should replace a policy of nonalignment. To reach its goal, the agenda setter would persuade the voters that the status quo policy of neutrality has worse effects than is actually the case. A two-sided incomplete information game developed by Banks (1993) demonstrates that uncertainty about voter preferences constrains a monopoly agenda setter. Supplementing these findings, Lupia (1992) showed that uncertainty does not necessarily lead to outcomes that do not accurately reflect the voters' interests. Constituents can employ low-cost information sources to vote as if they were completely informed.

The models introduced here refer to this previous work by constructing asymmetric information games of competitive referendums about integration treaties. In accordance with the most recent contributions (e.g., Gerber, 1993), we perceive such campaigns as three-actor games. The first step in such a

contention is taken by a government that has to defend an international agreement once the interstate negotiations are concluded. A competing elite must then decide if it will challenge the government's claim that the treaty is beneficial for a majority of the voters. The pivotal player is the median voter who makes the final decision about acceptance or rejection of the treaty.

Our approach differs from previous setter models in three respects. First, the "agenda" is exogenously given. Although governments have some influence on the outcome of international negotiations, they are far from having monopoly power. Second, voters do not care only about the issue at stake. They link the referendum to domestic considerations and have some incentives to punish unsuccessful governments. This behavior is similar to the assumptions underlying a two-level negotiation game developed by Morrow (1991). In his model, the electorate considers not only the outcome of arms control talks but also the state of the domestic economy. The third new element of our approach is that the electorate uses carrot-and-stick measures to punish or reward governments and the opposition for their domestic policies.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

We will develop two models to study the dynamics of direct legislation on foreign policy issues. We illustrate our deductions by examining five referendums on integration issues. These cases include the Danish referendums on the Maastricht treaty, the Irish ballot on the same agreement, the French vote on this issue, and the Swiss decision concerning the European Economic Area¹. We analyze the referendum campaigns with respect to hypotheses derived from our game-theoretic models.

Although our analysis explores instances of both ratification success and failure, there are a number of other limitations that should be mentioned. First, there are still too few comparable cases and too many variables to test our deductions rigorously. To mitigate this difficulty we supplement our findings with survey results whenever appropriate. Second, a number of the variables are exceedingly difficult to quantify. We try to overcome this drawback by

1. Since the writing of this piece, there have been four additional referendums on adhesion to the European Union. Austria, Finland, Norway, and Sweden voted in the summer and fall of 1994 whether or not to become member states. All of those referendums except Norway's were successful. While the results of those votes are beyond the scope of this study, it would appear that Sweden's vote followed a similar pattern as the French case, with a narrowing of public opinion as the Finnish campaign was akin to the Irish vote with a large majority (57% yes, 43% no) voting in favor. Norway rejected EU membership by about the same margin (47.8% yes, 52.2% no). Austria, which voted overwhelmingly in favor of EU membership, experienced an anti-integrationist backlash one year later when some parts of the electorate did not see the government promises immediately fulfilled.

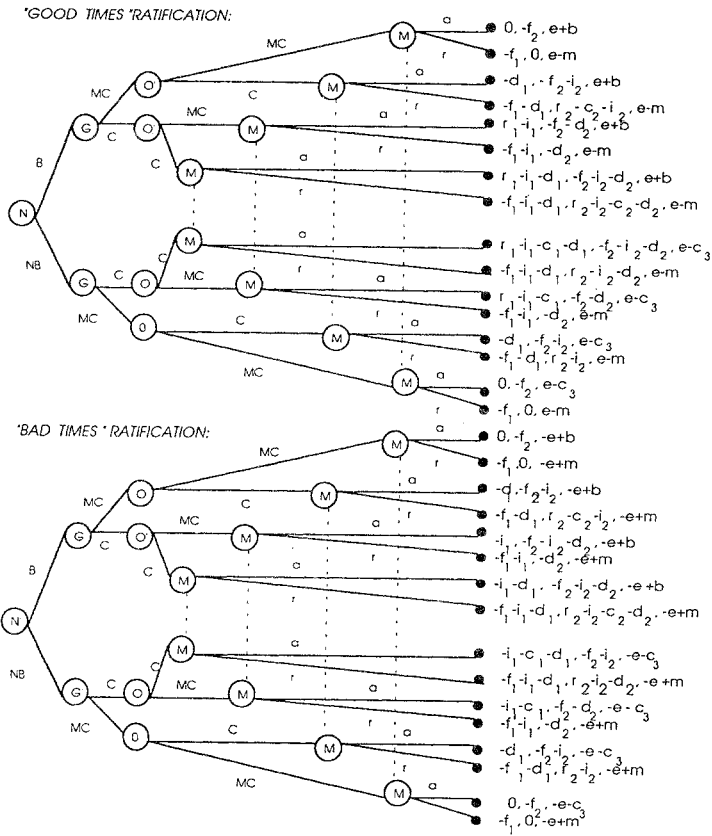


Figure 1. The “good times” and the “bad times” ratification games.

stressing one of the advantages of formal theory, counterfactual reasoning. Third, the cases we are examining are not wholly independent. Danish rejection of the Maastricht treaty, for instance, affected subsequent ballots. In our view, this temporal dependence does not bear as much importance as the other limitations. Although events in one state influence the constituents in another state, the veil of uncertainty is not lifted completely. A more serious limitation of the work arises because of differences in the level of voter turnout. However, the pivotal constituent examined in this article does not know if abstaining is harmful to her interests. Not surprisingly, referendums on integration treaties generally lead to high levels of voter participation.

BALANCING DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two ratification games analyze the crucial interactions of a referendum ballot. Our formal argument draws on recent innovations in information economics; in particular, we use “signaling” games. Such models study the impact of information advantages (“private information”) on the interactions among different actors. In the context of our games, the government and the opposition know more about the international agreement up for ratification than do the voters. Only the elites are really able to assess whether the treaty is beneficial or nonbeneficial to the median voter. The decision makers may try to compensate for the fact that a nonoptimal treaty resulted from negotiations at the international level by lying about the real effects of the treaty to the domestic population. According to the terminology of signaling games, elites in this situation are “weak” actors who are “mimicking” the behavior of their “strong” counterparts. In the models we develop, a government is weak (strong) when it presents a nonfavorable (favorable) treaty to the electorate. Governments can be forced to accept such suboptimal outcomes at the international level if they do not have sufficient clout with the other states to make their consent indispensable, if they are overly optimistic about the preferences of their constituency, or if they can hope to face a naive electorate. The opposition is weak (strong), by contrast, when it knows the integration agreement is beneficial (nonbeneficial) to the pivotal constituent.

THE PLAYERS

Figure 1 presents the “good times” and the “bad times” ratification games in extensive form. The strong government is denoted as player G; its weak counterpart as player G'. The strong (weak) opposition is player O (player O'). We denote the pivotal constituent as player M.

SEQUENCE OF MOVES

The two games commence with a move by nature (player N) that chooses the level of the treaty. Subsequently, the government has to choose whether or not it wants to convince the pivotal constituent in an intense campaign that the treaty is beneficial (C). The alternative is to only engage in a minimal campaign (MC). The opposition observes the movements of the government. Regardless of the decision by the opponent, the domestic challenger can choose to attempt to persuade the electorate that the treaty is not beneficial

(C). The alternative is to engage in a minimal campaign (MC). After observing the moves by the competing elite, the pivotal voter will decide either to accept or to reject the treaty.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLES

Factors Affecting Government and Opposition Preferences

Audience costs. To engage in an information campaign invokes audience costs i_1 and i_2 for the government and opposition.² The audience costs refer to the intensity of a campaign in favor of or against a referendum. The intensity of a campaign addresses the extent to which the government claims the treaty is beneficial and the extent to which the opposition forcefully and publicly claims the treaty is not beneficial. High audience costs are linked, for instance, to the statement that nonratification endangers a country's reputation and consequently jeopardizes the benefits being reaped from current policy. The intensity can be assessed by looking at the amount of money spent in the campaign by each side, the number of public appearances members of the different camps make concerning the referendum issue, the amount of air time campaigners purchase or use to advocate a vote in their side's favor, and the extent to which the camp's members are mobilized in canvassing support for their cause.

Deterrence costs. Because the campaigns are interrelated, elites must also take the informational activity of the other side into account. Deterrence costs are represented by d_1 and d_2 . In cases where a substantial majority of the government is advocating ratification, the cost to the opposition to enter the campaign is high. The government will often have easier access to the media and will be able to rely on an existing infrastructure to campaign for the referendum. However, the deterrence costs to the government and opposition are not zero-sum. Opposition leaders may be public and popular figures and able to rely on an existing infrastructure to campaign. If the opposition includes a major political force, deterrence costs are low.

Carrots and sticks. This set of predictor variables is composed of rewards, penalties, and punishment costs.

2. Fearon (1990) presented a pioneering analysis of audience costs in crisis bargaining.

1. *Reward for successful campaign:* Only a popular government is rewarded by the electorate for a successful campaign. If the treaty passes, a good manager of domestic politics obtains a popularity bonus r_1 . A successful ratification without special efforts, on the other hand, does not have any effect on the public acceptance of the administration. Such success is equal to a payoff of zero. If the treaty is rejected, the opposition can count on a bonus r_2 in both good and bad times domestically.
2. *Penalties for unsuccessful campaign:* If the government or opposition loses the referendum, it might be penalized by the electorate; the losing side will experience diminished popularity. In the case of ratification failure, governments are punished with a penalty f_1 . The opposition receives an equivalent penalty f_2 if the treaty is accepted.
3. *Punishment costs:* The constituency can force political elites to behave according to the majority interests. The punishment costs c_1 and c_2 incorporate the withdrawal of public support to elites who lied during the referendum campaign.

Factors Affecting Electorate's Preferences

The constituent's utility function consists of a domestic and an international component:

Costs or benefits of accepting a treaty. To mistakenly approve a nonbeneficial treaty imposes a cost c_3 on the constituent. When accepting a beneficial treaty, the constituent can count on the benefit b .

Utility from management of economy. Popular governments create favorable economic conditions, yielding a payoff e to the constituent, whereas a bad economic situation produces a disutility $-e$. Governments perceive rejection of a treaty as a signal to change their domestic policy. An unpopular government will induce measures m that are profitable to the median voter, whereas a popular government does an unfavorable step $-m$. The rejection of the treaty thus leads to payoffs $-e + m$ and $e - m$, respectively.

PREFERENCE ORDERS

Our two games model nontrivial situations that pose strategic problems to the pivotal constituent. Under other assumptions, this player would have accepted or rejected as dominating strategies. If the state of the economy is bad, the voter never ratifies the treaty under the condition $m > b$. In other words, the crucial constituent rejects any treaty if the utility stemming from a change in the domestic policy exceeds the possible benefits of the treaty. This is the pure popularity contest where the international dimension does

not matter.³ In economically favorable circumstances, the pivotal constituent does not care about the agreement and always approves of it if $m > c_3$. This too is a pure popularity contest because the electorate again does not care about the substance of the agreement under review. This situation arises when the disutility of a change of policy is larger than the costs of accepting a nonbeneficial treaty. We do not assume, however, that the desire to punish an unpopular government (or rewarding a popular one) is the only factor influencing voters' choices. Voters face a dilemma under the conditions $b > m$ and $c_3 > m$, respectively.

If constituents are not satisfied with the government's management of domestic politics, there are not enough incentives for the government to campaign. This makes it easier for the opposition to claim that the agreement is detrimental to voter interests. In the event of favorable domestic conditions, voters might induce a change for the worse in the government's economic policy by rejecting the agreement. In short, contested referendums on international treaties pose a punishment trap.

In sum, we assume the following payoff orders:

$$A1 = -f_1 - i_1 - d_1 < -f_1 - i_1 < -f_1 - d_1 < -f_1 < -d_1 < 0 < r_1 - c_1 - i_1 - d_1 < r_1 - c_1 - i_1 < r_1 - c_1 - d_1 < r_1 - i_1 - d_1 < r_1 - i_1$$

$$A2 = -f_2 - i_2 - d_2 < -f_2 - i_2 < -f_2 - d_2 < -f_2 < -d_2 < 0 < r_2 - c_2 - i_2 - d_2 < r_2 - c_2 - i_2 < r_2 - c_2 - d_2 < r_2 - i_2 - d_2 < r_2 - i_2$$

$$A3 = -e + b > -e + m > -e - c_3 \text{ (unpopular government)} \\ = e + b > e - m > e - c_3 \text{ (popular government)}$$

The inequalities $0 < r_1 - c_1 - i_1 - d_1$ and $0 < r_2 - c_2 - i_2 - d_2$ denote that the weak types have an incentive to imitate their stronger counterparts. However, these actors only try to bluff under conditions of uncertainty.

RESULTS

Under complete information, there is no inefficiency in either the "good times" or the "bad times" ratification games because the pivotal constituent

3. There is anecdotal evidence in support of our assumption that voters link domestic to international considerations. For example, during the course of the French campaign, pressure for Mitterrand to resign increased. Alain Minc, a leading left-wing liberal, argued in *Le Monde* that Mitterrand should announce that he would resign after the ratification of the treaty in order to detach the issue of his popularity from the substance of the treaty. A poll done for the newspaper *Libération* indicated that 42% of the voters viewed the referendum as an opportunity to vote against the government.

receives its most preferred outcome. Further, because political elites can anticipate the winners and losers of the ballot, there are no competitive campaigns.⁴

This highly unlikely event reveals that the assumption of complete information is unrealistic for the referendums under examination. However, these results explain why there is often hardly any political competition about issues on which public opinion has already reached a basic consensus. It is costly to conduct a campaign that will not succeed anyway. Strategic manipulation and contested campaigns become possible if voters are uncertain about the level of the treaty.

Empirical tests support the assumption that some rational ignorance on behalf of the electorate influences the outcome of the referendums. In Denmark, prior to the first referendum, 45% of the voters judged their knowledge about Maastricht to be poor and incomplete (Siune, Svensson, & Tonsgaard, 1992). A secondary analysis of Swiss polling data additionally illustrates that strategic manipulation is indeed a major factor influencing the attitude of individual respondents on integration agreements after controlling for traditional explanatory variables.⁵

The first proposition summarizes how uncertainty affects the behavior of the electorate and the competing elites in “good times.” The behavior of elites and the median voter change when trust in the government’s campaign exceeds a certain threshold value. Below this turning point, the constituent believes the message of the opposition; above this point, the median voter finds the government’s campaign more convincing. The median voter’s beliefs prior to the campaign are influenced by socioeconomic factors and situational variables, such as government performance. The electorate may alter its beliefs on the basis of the campaign messages.

Proposition 1

Under incomplete information, the “good times” ratification game has two major outcomes:

4. The results can be obtained by backward induction, a reasoning process where players work backward from the right to the left of a game tree and anticipate each other’s rational choices.

5. We constructed multivariate logit models to examine the impact of asymmetric information; of the education level; of linguistic, left-right, and urban-rural cleavages. These are some of the variables that have shown a strong influence on the voters’ decisions in bivariate tests (Kriesi, Longchamp, Passy, & Sciarini, 1993). The inclusion of an indicator measuring how much a respondent trusts the government increases the percentage of correct predictions by 8%.

6. A proof of this proposition and the one following can be obtained from the authors on request.

Equilibrium 1: Below the threshold belief $p_0 = (c_3 - m)/(b + c_3)$, the constituency probabilistically decides to accept the treaty. The opposition campaigns forcefully against the treaty, whereas only the strong government always engages in a campaign. The weak government mixes its strategy.

Equilibrium 2: Above the threshold belief $p_0 = (c_3 - m)/(b + c_3)$, the constituent mixes her strategy between accepting and rejecting. The government and the strong opposition always engage in a forceful campaign, whereas the weak opposition employs a mixed strategy.

A central implication of the ratification game in “good times” is that the constituency can never completely escape the punishment trap. Outcomes depend for the most part on whether the constituent believes she is facing strong or weak types; propaganda from two sides never completely solves the constituent’s dilemma. This result challenges the assertion (Frey & Bohnet, 1993) that political competition destroys informational asymmetries. We are also able to clarify how the mixture of domestic and international considerations affects the outcome. The more unfavorable a policy change by a popular government could be after the rejection of the treaty, the more likely it is that an agreement will be ratified.

The two equilibriums are symmetric. In the first equilibrium, the median voter’s mixed strategy between accepting and rejecting forces the weak government to rely on a probabilistic choice. It is the weak opposition that is forced to mix its strategy in the second equilibrium. Interestingly, only the government’s campaign affects the likelihood of acceptance in the first equilibrium. By contrast, in the second equilibrium only the opposition’s effort matters. Campaigns thus appear to be directed at the other camp rather than at the supporters.

In “bad times,” governments no longer have an incentive to engage in a campaign. This opens up possibilities for the opposition but does not exclude the potential for inefficient outcomes.

Proposition 2

Under incomplete information, the “bad times” ratification game has two major outcomes:

Equilibrium 1: If the constituent’s belief about facing a beneficial treaty is smaller than the threshold belief $p_0^* = (m + c_3)/(b + c_3)$, she will always reject the integration treaty. The opposition engages in a campaign against the treaty, whereas the government does not make a special effort.

Equilibrium 2: If the constituent’s belief about facing a beneficial treaty is larger than the threshold belief $p_0^* = (m + c_3)/(b + c_3)$, she will mix her strategy

between accepting and rejecting the integration treaty. This forces the weak opposition to mix its strategy, whereas its strong counterpart always engages in a campaign. The government does not promote the treaty.

The second proposition suggests again that the outcome of a ballot depends very much on whom the median voter trusts—the opposition or the government. Only a very skeptical constituent employs the dominating strategy of always rejecting. This means that an unpopular government is not completely impotent. The electorate might approve of the treaty although it will not reward the government after doing so.

Comparative statics of both propositions additionally show that the overall probability that voters will believe campaigners who are bluffing about the benefits of a treaty is not affected by changes in the deterrence costs; structural or institutional factors do not affect voters' decisions; the campaigns themselves do. Interestingly, the first-move advantage of the government does not have a profound effect on the outcome of referendums because no step by the government can sufficiently alter the electorate's uncertainty regarding the treaty.

What also matters for the potential success of a government bluff is whether the political system allows for rewarding or punishing campaign efforts. Can members of the government or opposition who deceive the electorate during a campaign be held accountable when the lie is revealed? If so, the incentive structure of the actors changes and with it their decisions. Further, a most counterintuitive finding of this study is that the probability of a successful bluff by the government grows with the size of the rewards and penalties to the opposition. Competitive campaigns thus offer advantages for weak governments that try to imitate their stronger counterparts.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE VOTER'S DILEMMA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

To illustrate the empirical relevance of our hypotheses, we analyze integration referendums. Although all but one of these ballots concerned ratification of the Maastricht treaty, there is significant variance in the value of the factors under investigation across these cases. In the ensuing discussion, we sketch the referendum campaigns and discuss how variations in single variables might have affected the outcome. Because we summarize the different carrot-and-stick measures as one predictor variable, our analysis focuses on six independent variables: government popularity as a measure of the success in managing domestic politics, the presence of carrot-and-stick measures, audience costs of

Table 1

Referendum Campaigns on the Maastricht Treaty and the EEA^a in a Comparative Perspective

Case	Share of Yes Votes (Turnout) in %	Popularity	Presence of Carrot-and-Stick Measures	Audience Costs Government	Audience Costs Opposition	Deterrence Costs Government	Deterrence Costs Opposition
Denmark I	49.3 (82.9)	Low	Yes	Low	High	Low	Low
Ireland	68.7 (57.0)	Moderate	Yes	High	Low	Low	High
France	51.0 (69.7)	Low	Yes	High	High	Low	High
Switzerland	49.7 (78.2)	High	No	Low	High	Low	Low
Denmark II	56.8 (85.0)	Moderate	Yes	High	Low	Low	High

Note. Double majority of the electorate and the states required in Switzerland (7 Cantons Yes, 16 Cantons No).

a. EEA = European Economic Area.

the government, audience costs of the challenger, and government and opposition deterrence costs. Table 1 summarizes the outcomes and the appearance of the predictor variables with regard to the five cases.

THE DANISH SHOCK

On June 2, 1992, the Danes voted against the Treaty on European Union in a national referendum. Opinion polls just preceding the vote had promised a surge in support of the Maastricht agreement and predicted a ratification by a narrow margin.

Although the No vote won by a mere 48,000 votes, the discrepancy between the opinion of the electorate and the political elites was striking. More than 80% of the Folketing (Danish Parliament) had voted in favor of ratification (Worre, 1993, p. 219). Support for Maastricht extended to the trade unions, all of the major business organizations, and most of the important Danish newspapers. Despite all of the elite backing, the Yes campaign encountered a number of difficulties; it was neither well organized nor effectively mobilized.

The popularity of the coalition government, composed of Det Konservative Folkeparti (Conservatives) and Venstre (Liberals), was very low. Prime Minister Poul Schlüter was involved in the *Tamildgate* affair. He was ultimately forced to retire after the referendum because of charges that he never clarified his role in the refusal to grant asylum to Tamils. This lingering scandal was used by the Socialdemokraterne (Social Democrats) in their leadership battle with the government. Although this main opposition party supported the Treaty on European Union, it did not engage in an intensive campaign and the majority of its supporters voted no. The leader of the Social Democrats, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, had only four public appearances sched-

uled in the 2 weeks prior to the referendum, and two of these appearances had nothing to do with Maastricht. Social Democratic politicians in favor of Maastricht strongly disapproved of the tactics that Foreign Minister Ellemann-Jensen employed in the pro-Maastricht campaign, which they believed to be tantamount to "scaremongering."

The government's campaign entailed the distribution of information pamphlets nationwide; copies of the treaty were made available at post offices around the country. Yet media coverage pertaining to the salient issues of Maastricht was largely independent of the government (Siune, 1993, p. 99). Headlines of Danish newspapers included anti-Maastricht sentiments, and papers with mass circulation were leaning toward the anti-integrationist side (Siune et al., 1992).

The opposition to the treaty was led by the two extremist parties that had voted against it in the Folketing, the *Fremskridtspartiet* (Progress Party), and the *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (Socialist People's Party). The No campaign also reactivated the *Folkebevægelsen mod EF* (People's Movement Against the EC), which had unsuccessfully campaigned against Danish EC membership in 1972. This group claimed that Maastricht would hamper the Danish welfare state and force the sick, old, and unemployed to "pay for themselves." *Fremskridtspartiet*, by contrast, maintained that the envisioned political union necessarily entailed "planned economy and centralism" (Worre, 1993, p. 221).

Other opposition groups included the *Nødvendigt Forum* (Necessary Forum) and *Danmark 92*. This latter movement claimed that the Common Foreign and Security Policy envisaged by the treaty would imply relinquishing Danish sovereignty to the EC (Worre, 1993, p. 221). Given the substantive questions that the domestic population had about the treaty and the lack of a mobilized campaign by the government, the opposition was organized and had little strategic disadvantage in entering the competition.

Disenchantment with broken pledges by the scandal-ridden government to better economic conditions and its "scaremongering tactics" made voter rejection of mainstream parliamentary view about Maastricht less surprising than observers might have otherwise supposed.

YES FOR A VERY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENT

The Irish case, later the same month, tells a completely different story than the Danish one. The government's commitment to the treaty was fairly strong, whereas the opposition had more trouble organizing its campaign. In addition, Prime Minister Albert Reynolds enjoyed moderate popularity. He had

taken office in February following the resignation of Charles Haughey. Reynold's and Haughey's party, Fianna Fáil, suffered from the scandal leading to the change in government leadership. However, the new prime minister was not identified with Haughey because conflict between the two culminated in Reynold's dismissal from his post of finance minister in November 1991 following a failed leadership challenge.

The Yes campaign focused on the subsidies that would flow to Ireland under the Delors II package of proposed EC budget increases. Reform of the cohesion fund promised that this relatively poor EC country would receive some £8 billion over the period 1994-1998 (double what it had received in 1989-1993). Prime Minister Reynolds prophesied doom if the electorate rejected the treaty. This provoked criticism from the forces opposing the Treaty on European Union, as well as from the opposition party, the Fine Gael. These objections intensified after the Council of Ministers rejected the Delors II package a little over a week before the Irish referendum. Although this vote was not binding, the Yes campaign consequently lost a significant amount of credibility.

The government mailed out a 16-page pamphlet to every home in Ireland detailing the prime minister's message. It invested a total of £600,000 in its Yes campaign, compared with the £13,000 spent by the most organized opposition group. The government budgeted nearly twice as much as it did for the Single European Act referendum campaign. The four main parties in the Irish Parliament also gave approximately £140,000 to the pro-Maastricht campaign (Holmes, 1993, p. 107). Nevertheless, there was internal disagreement within the coalition supporting the treaty; the Fianna Fáil came under attack by its allies for not effectively mobilizing its party workers to canvass for the pro-Maastricht cause. It is estimated that this party donated substantially less than its partners (Holmes, 1993, p. 107).

The anti-Maastricht campaign in Ireland was led by an ad hoc coalition composed of radically different groups from conservative Catholics to ultraleftists. The most well organized group was the National Platform, which came into existence just 4 months prior to the referendum. Its budget was raised almost exclusively from individual donations. Groups opposed to Maastricht like the Democratic Left and the Worker's Party launched less effective campaigns than the one launched by the National Platform (Holmes, 1993, p. 107).

The intensity of the opposition's campaign increased following the Danish referendum. The debate was fueled by a controversial abortion case that received national attention not long before the referendum. Fears were heightened about the extent to which adhesion to the community would signify liberalization of the Irish constitution's restrictive abortion provisions.

Volunteers of the right-to-life groups told the electorate that voting for the Treaty on European Union would signify the legalization of abortion in Ireland.

The position of the Catholic Church was somewhat ambivalent. The Catholic Bishops' Conference printed and distributed a million copies of a brochure that expressed fears that the European Union would liberalize Ireland's abortion laws, although it did not go so far as to advocate voting No. In some rural areas, however, priests encouraged their congregations to oppose the treaty.

Just days before the referendum, the Irish government made the unprecedented move of ordering the state television and radio network to give air time to a broadcast calling for support of Maastricht by Prime Minister Reynolds. The government did not allow the opposition campaign the opportunity to respond. The weight of the opposition's deterrence costs was felt when a Fianna Fáil senator was expelled from the party after voting against the treaty (Holmes, 1993, p. 108).

The outcome of the Irish vote is better understood in the context of the value of the factors under investigation: a popular government engaged in a moderately intense campaign with high audience costs as opposed to the low costs to the opposition, and high deterrence costs to the anti-Maastricht campaign.

SAYING *OUI* (YES) TO MAASTRICHT BUT *NON* (NO) TO MITTERRAND

The French acceptance of Maastricht in September 1992 differed significantly from the Irish case. Because no major party in its entirety joined the opposition, deterrence costs were considerable. Despite this disadvantage, anti-Maastricht forces launched an intensive campaign.

Immediately following the news that Denmark had rejected the Treaty on European Union, President Mitterrand called for a referendum in France. Opinion polls showed a two-thirds majority in favor of the treaty (Keesing's Record of World Events, 1992, p. 39081), and Mitterrand saw the referendum as an opportunity to bolster his popularity as well as divide his opposition just in time for the national elections. The president hoped to illuminate the sharp divisions within the opposition parties, the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and L'Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF), over support for Maastricht.

The popularity of the Socialist government was exceedingly low following the disastrous appointment of Edith Cresson to prime minister and charges of corruption facing the ruling party. However, the government's campaign for ratification of the treaty was intense. The government brought

in an advertising executive to advise and to coordinate the Yes drive. Another tactic was the creation of the Comité National pour le Oui, which consisted of 300 celebrities to support Maastricht. All in all, the government set aside FF25 million to spend on its crusade, although it had to abandon some of its plans for lobbying on the radio and television stations following complaints from the broadcasting authorities. The Socialist Party budgeted an additional FF13 million and engaged its party machinery in the competition.

The opposition, an odd mix of groups with various agendas, launched an intense information campaign. The most important figures in the No camp included former ministers such as Philippe Séguin (mayor of Epinal since 1983, and RPR National Assembly deputy), Charles Pasqua (president of the RPR in the Senate), and minority faction leaders such as Phillippe de Villiers (UDF) and Jean-Pierre Chevènement (Socialists). Other nay sayers embarked on campaigns as well, like Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far right party, Front National.

Proponents of the treaty stressed that Europe and France needed Maastricht in order to contain the political and financial strength of a recently reunified Germany. The No camp warned that the European Union would increase unemployment and taxes and bring a flood of immigrants and criminals into France. Séguin's main argument was that the agreement would make the process of unification irreversible and deprive France of its veto right (Garaud & Séguin, 1992). The opposition to Maastricht also played on Mitterrand's unpopularity. Posters put out by the Front National advocated "Non à Maastricht et à Mitterrand." Séguin emphasized that a yes vote would profit Mitterrand significantly.

Another indication of the intense competition between the two camps was evidenced by the 18 books written on the topic. Some of them sold out so quickly that bookstores had problems keeping them in stock. The bestseller was the treaty itself, a 600-page volume entitled *Traité de Maastricht, Mode d'Emploi*. It sold 55,000 copies. The biggest anti-Maastricht success was *De l'Europe et de la France*, written by Marie-France Garaud and Phillippe Séguin. Fifty thousand copies of this pamphlet were sold.

The nationally televised debate on September 3 between Mitterrand and Séguin lasted for 3 hours. It was the first time in 4 years that the French president took part in such an encounter. There was a brief increase in support for ratification following the program, yet the polls still predicted a very close vote. As the date of the referendum drew nearer, the margin between supporters and opponents diminished.

The government had a slight advantage in its campaign, as was evidenced in the allocation of air time by the broadcasting authority in France. Time was

divided according to the number of seats each party had in the National Assembly. This gave proponents of the treaty nearly 1½ hours of air time, whereas the No camp got only 11 minutes. The *Rassemblement pour la République*, because of the split in its party ranks, had to divide its assigned time between arguments for and against ratification. In all, both campaigns were very intense although the arguments in favor of Maastricht were largely defensive. The combination of highly organized government and opposition campaigns and the sagging popularity of Mitterrand's government produced a very close referendum in which the No vote came largely from the working class, rural areas, and forces opposing the government in general (Duhamel & Grunberg, 1993).

THE ABSENCE OF CARROT-AND-STICK MEASURES

Concurrent with the negotiations about the Maastricht treaty, the EC concluded an agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) for the creation of a European Economic Area (EEA). Only Switzerland and tiny Liechtenstein were required to hold a referendum on this treaty that would give EFTA member states access to the EC's internal market. On December 6, 1992, a majority of Swiss voters and of the cantons rejected this treaty. Because the question was important and the outcome unclear, turnout reached an exceptionally high level.

The campaign was dominated by the right-wing opposition to the treaty. The movement against the EEA took a surprising first step in July 1992 when Christoph Blocher, a member of the national Parliament, convinced his followers in the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party) of the Canton Zürich to vote against the agreement. The opposition gained a strategic advantage through the unprecedented move of starting a campaign prior to parliamentary debate. Blocher also succeeded in convincing the national party to oppose the agreement although not all state sections supported this position. The *Schweizerische Volkspartei* holds one seat in the seven-person government. Other right-wing forces mobilizing against the treaty were the populist *Lega dei Ticinesi* (League of the People from Ticino), the nationalist Swiss Democrats, and the antienvironmentalist Car Party. The left-wing opposition included the Greens and some Social Democrats. They feared a lowering of the environmental standards and restrictions on direct democracy.

The government had postponed a clear commitment to the integration process for some time. When it surprisingly altered this passive stance, its campaign became even more unconvincing. The announcement that EC

membership would be the long-term goal provoked the opposition's claim that the EEA represented a decisive step toward the definitive surrender of the Alpine republic to the Community.

A further sign of the weak government strategy was that a diplomat, Deputy Minister Blankart, was the leading proponent until some weeks before the ballot. The Yes campaign tried to stress economic advantages and downplayed fears that Switzerland would lose its identity in a unified Europe. The government garnered the support of a considerable majority in the Parliament: 62% of the members of the lower chamber and 85% of the members of the upper chamber supported the EEA. However, the support of all the three major government parties was far from unanimous. Many cantons in the German-speaking part of the country were against the treaty. The campaign intensified the rift between the two main linguistic groups. Whereas major parts of the Swiss German political elite rallied against the EEA, only marginal figures were against the agreement in the French-speaking part of the country. Surprisingly, some important interest groups like the artisan association did not oppose the agreement despite considerable opposition by their members.

Why did the government not engage in a more forceful campaign? One plausible reason is that Swiss direct democracy does not create enough incentives to strongly commit a government to a specific issue. The penalties for an unsuccessful campaign in Switzerland are nearly nonexistent because rejection of the treaty is not linked to the political survival of the government. As our models show, the lack of incentives opens the field for the opposition. Because the government was inactive and opposition against the agreement virulent, the No to the EEA did not come as a surprise.

SAYING YES TO A NEW GOVERNMENT AND A NEW TREATY

Less than a year after the first referendum, Denmark chose to reverse its decision of the previous year. On May 18, 1993, the Danes voted in favor of a more palatable agreement. In December 1992, the European Council granted the Scandinavian member state a number of "opt-outs" from the central treaty provisions. In January 1993, the Social Democrats, headed by Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, became the leading government party. The new administration was far more popular than its predecessor. Prime Minister Rasmussen led an effective and mobilized pro-Maastricht campaign. The government added a side payment to garner the support of reluctant voters. It proposed a tax reform that would be implemented if Maastricht was accepted by the electorate.

The Yes campaign emphasized the opt-outs, Denmark's ability to influence the course of European events from within the Community, and the need to resolve economic problems through coordination with the other member states. Supporters of the treaty did not employ the "scaremongering" tactics that were criticized in the first referendum campaign. Prime Minister Rasmussen succeeded in drawing 60% of his supporters to vote yes; 60% of his party base had voted no in the first referendum on Maastricht. Further, one of the opposition parties in the first referendum, the Socialistisk Folkeparti, surprisingly altered its stance.

The No campaign was composed once more of extreme leftists and extreme rightists. The dominant voice of the No campaign was the Juni Bevægelsen (June Movement). Its spokeswoman, Drude Dahlerup, played on Danish fears that Maastricht would bring a federal Europe. Folkebevægelsen mod EF, the other major grassroots opposition group, insisted that the Edinburgh summit did not change the substance of the Maastricht treaty. Other campaign tactics included the widely criticized move of inviting Lord Tebbit, a British Conservative cabinet minister, to speak in Copenhagen. The intervention of foreigners generated even more resentment when a British financier published a full-page advertisement in a Danish newspaper advocating a No.

The second Danish referendum was characterized by a more credible campaign by a more popular government on a more palatable treaty than in the first referendum. On May 18, 1993, a substantial majority of the electorate voted to ratify the Maastricht treaty. As survey results show, the highest reduction in No votes took place among workers, traditionally affiliated with the Social Democrats (Nielsen, 1993, pp. 57-59).

COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

The analysis of five referendums on international agreements revealed the extent to which campaigns affect the outcome of a ballot. The cases support the assumptions of our models. We found evidence for the notion that referendums are two-level games: Voters evaluated both the treaty under consideration and the performance of the government. In most cases, the governments had an institutionally stronger position than the opposition, that is, the deterrence costs to the government were tendentially lower than the deterrence costs of the opposition. However, this may not be sufficient to secure a success. The opposition profited on several occasions from the unpopularity of the governments. For this to happen, however, the opposition required at least partial support from the mainstream political elite. The

median voter did not trust an opposition from the margin. This explains one of the most frequent results of quantitative studies, namely, that party alignment affects the outcome of such ballots (Pierce et al., 1983). When the parties are split over the treaty up for ratification, the confidence of the voter will go down. If parties are divided as in the French case, traditional party cleavages will matter less in determining the outcome of a referendum (Habert, 1992).

CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed referendum campaigns from the vantage point of formal modeling. We have established that the electorate's uncertainty about the content of a treaty matters in two respects. First, our findings suggest that referendum campaigns will only become competitive in the presence of limited information. Because the median voter will never know how beneficial an agreement is, trusting the actors engaged in the campaign is the most central variable. Second, debates over international agreements are never completely dominated by domestic considerations if voters are imperfectly informed. In other words, there are no pure popularity contests in a world of uncertainty. The inevitable issue linkage, voters assessing the international dimension in light of the domestic performance of the government, leads to a punishment trap. The electorate risks rewarding an unpopular government or punishing a popular one.

The study also highlighted the importance of rewards for successful campaigns. Incentives must exist for a government or the opposition to engage in a campaign for or against the treaty. Without inducements, the referendum may not become competitive. Our analysis demonstrates that referendums on international agreements can be compared across states even when the status quo is located on the right of the political spectrum, as in Switzerland, or on the left, as it is in Denmark. However, there are a number of limitations of our study that inhibit the generalizability of our findings. First, our models do not include a third choice offered to the constituency, to abstain. Second, unlike endogenous tariff theory, our approach does not distinguish among types of voters that can be identified along social and economic lines. A third limitation of our study is that it does not resolve the dispute between the proponents of direct democracy and those who favor representative government. We do not know where the potential for manipulation is larger. Nevertheless, we did demonstrate that direct democracy must offer electoral incentives to make campaigns competitive.

Despite these caveats, we believe that employing rational choice models enhances our understanding of foreign policy making. Our findings suggest that the debate about the “second image” (Gourevitch, 1978) is not very salient in direct democracy: Domestic issues are not completely subjugated to international considerations; nor are international considerations completely dominated by domestic concerns. The rational but imperfectly informed voter always cares, to some extent, about the international dimension.

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