Party ideologies and European foreign policy: examining the transnational foreign policy space

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ABSTRACT
The heterogeneity of foreign policy preferences has hampered a more effective Common Foreign and Security Policy. We examine the dimensionality of the EU foreign policy space by analyzing foreign policy votes in the European Parliament (1999–2019). As it contains the EU's full geographical and ideological diversity, it is an important laboratory for testing expectations about what predicts foreign policy positions. Party ideologies structure voting on foreign policy: party-political disagreements over the CFSP and military interventions matter more on foreign policy votes than others. The left-right dimension and the EU integration dimension still explain a considerable share of voting patterns, although they matter less on foreign policy votes than others.

Introduction

Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014 and the 'America first' policy of the Trump administration have revived ambitions for a more effective, coherent, and autonomous Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union (EU). Such ambitions have been hampered, however, by the heterogeneity of foreign policy interests, priorities, and approaches within the EU. Most analyses have highlighted the divisions among member states (Howorth, 2014; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 306) because decision-making power rests first and foremost in the Council. In contrast, we study divisions in the European Parliament (EP) because the full geographical and ideological diversity in the EU is represented there, including the far left and far right. For the longer-term prospects of a more effective

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and coherent CFSP, the divisions in the transnational foreign policy space in the EP are at least as good an indication as to the ones in the Council where only a subset of parties which are in government is represented.

While the (changing) foreign policy powers of the EP are highly relevant for the study of legislative-executive relations, they do not compromise the study of the political space because voting behaviour reveals policy positions in both binding and non-binding motions. We build on the work of Voeten (2000) on the United Nations General Assembly who uses non-binding resolutions to study cleavages in international politics. Our central question is *what structures voting on foreign policy in the European Parliament?*

We look at the role of four policy dimensions on EP voting: the left-right dimension, a dimension specifically on the use of military force, the EU integration dimension and a specific dimension on the CFSP. We know the left-right dimension matters both in foreign policy (Rathbun, 2004) and in the EP in general (Hix & Lord, 1997). Yet, recent research also shows that support for military intervention does not precisely follow the left-right dimension with parties of the far left being most opposed and parties of the centre-right most in favour and the centre-left and the far right standing in between (Wagner et al., 2018). We also expect that support for EU integration and specifically support for the CFSP matters for voting behaviour. Furthermore, we examine the role of country characteristics derived from the International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis literature. Specifically we examine the role of a power position, strategic culture, membership and integration into globalized markets. By studying both partisan and national predictors of voting behaviour, we advance the understanding of the European foreign policy space and the role of party politics for foreign policy.

This paper contributes to the debate about the dimensionality of the EP. Despite some interest in the issue-specific dimension (Kreppel & Tsebelis, 1999; Norrevik, 2021), students of the EP have settled on the model of the bidimensional European Parliament (Hix & Lord, 1997). While we do not contest that in general voting patterns reflect differences between the left and right and pro-European and Eurosceptic forces, we believe that it is useful to examine issue-specific dimensions to get a more nuanced understanding of politics in the EP. We build on earlier work on the European Parliament, that highlighted the importance of specific ideological conflicts in specific issue areas. This perspective has been applied to environmental and internal market issues, but so far not on foreign policy (Crespy & Gajewska, 2010; Kreppel, 1999; Lindberg, 2008; Tsebelis & Kalandrakis, 1999). Our paper tests the extent to which the divisions driving the voting patterns on foreign policy in the EP are specific to this issue area or reflect the general dividing lines in the EP.

We examine foreign policy voting by MEPs in the fifth to eighth EP (1999–2019). We connect voting data to data on party positions from the Chapel Hill

Expert Survey, while controlling for general foreign policy orientations of MEPs' home countries. We analyze parliamentary voting using the dyadic approach (Van der Veer, 2018) which examines the likelihood that any pair of MEPs vote alike: our dependent variable is the voting similarity of pairs of MEPs. This allows us to compare the importance of a number of factors simultaneously.

Our analysis confirms what previous studies have found in simpler, bivariate analyses (Raunio & Wagner, 2020, 2021): that external relations in the EP are primarily contested along party-political lines, rather than along conflicting national interests. We go beyond these studies by examining which specific ideological conflicts matter. Specifically, we show that divisions over the use of force have a much stronger impact on MEPs' foreign policy voting in general than other differences.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Firstly, we will justify our expectations on the basis of the existing literature on political parties and foreign policy. We will discuss and illustrate likely partisan and country-level factors. Next, we will introduce our analytical approach and our sources of data. This will be followed by brief descriptions of the actual empirical partisan pattern we expect to matter in the EP. Finally, we will discuss the results of our analyses and draw conclusions about our hypotheses and sketch an agenda for future research.

Partisan predictors of foreign policy voting

Political parties differ in their views about foreign policy (Hofmann & Martill, 2021). Recent scholarship has shown that these differences are first and foremost structured along the left-right dimension (Haesebrouck & Mello, 2020; Raunio & Wagner, 2020). Within the overall foreign policy space, different positions on the use of force stand out because they have ramifications on other fields such as development aid (Wenzelburger & Böller, 2020). In the EP, positions on foreign policy are further intertwined with positions on European integration and CFSP. The left-right dimension, positions on the use of force, on EU integration and on CFSP are therefore the four predictors that we examine in our analysis.

A key difference is between the left and the right (Noël & Thérien, 2008). The left and the right differ in their emphasis of fundamental moral values (Graham et al., 2009; Rathbun, 2004). The left is more strongly committed to the protection of others and to ensuring fairness and equality, even beyond their own borders. This leads to a more cosmopolitan outlook. Therefore, these parties are more prepared to provide development aid (Thérien & Noel, 2000), to pool and delegate sovereignty (Rapport & Rathbun, 2020, p. 282) and to support international treaties to protect human rights (Simmons, 2009) and ensure international humanitarian law (Wallace, 2012). Many far-left parties have kept a pacifist attitude towards using

force (Calossi et al., 2013; Wagner, 2020). Right-wing parties instead are more committed to moral values of loyalty and authority. They emphasize *national* interests and are more likely to support the use of force in defence of them. Moreover, the right tends to have a more pessimistic view of human nature and therefore is less trusting than the left and more sensitive to losses of national sovereignty (Rathbun, 2012). Far-right parties have become the main political force in opposition to international institutions and treaties (Ostermann & Wagner, 2022).

At the same time, right-wing parties tend to be more supportive of free trade (Milner & Judkins, 2004), whereas left-wing parties, at least in capital-rich countries, are more protectionist (Dutt & Mitra, 2005). In the European context, left-wing parties have been more supportive of a European security and defence policy (Hofmann, 2013) and more accommodating towards Russia (Martill, 2019) while right-wing parties have favoured a strong alliance with the USA (Chryssogelos, 2015).

All in all, there is good reason to expect that the left-right dimension structures how parties vote on foreign policy. The left-right dimension is also one of the two key dimensions in the Hix-Lord model of voting in the European Parliament (Hix & Lord, 1997). Many studies see the left-right dimension as an important predictor of how MEPs vote (Hix, 2001; Klüver & Spoon, 2015; Otjes & van der Veer, 2016), also in external relations votes (Raunio & Wagner, 2020).

> 1. *Left-Right Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' positions on the left/right dimension are, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

Whether a county should contribute to international peace and security missions has been contested between parties within a country (Rathbun, 2004; Wagner et al., 2018). The replacement of territorial defense by 'wars of choice' (Freedman, 2005, p. 98) as the main task of Western armies has further politicized the use of armed force. In general, support for military interventions has the shape of a skewed bell-curve with opposition strongest at the far left and support highest among parties of the center-right (Wagner, 2020). However, support for military missions also depends on the type of mission. Haesebrouck and Mello (2020) have shown that left-wing governments participate more frequently in military missions with inclusive goals such as humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations whereas right-wing governments use military force more often for strategic goals, such as counter-terrorism. Because of the defining nature of the use of force for strategic culture more broadly, it is likely that such divisions are also visible across the full spectrum of foreign policy votes in the EP.

> 2. *Military Intervention Preference Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' positions on military interventions are, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

Parties also differ in their support of multilateralism and European integration (Mudde, 2012). 'Hard Eurosceptics' are committed to maintaining the sovereignty of their country and reject their country's membership of the European Union; 'soft Eurosceptics' oppose the current or envisioned direction of European integration but not the European project per se (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008). We follow the so-called North Carolina School (Ray, 2007) and take these different positions on EU integration as a single pro-EU/Eurosceptic dimension. In the Hix-Lord Model, EU integration is seen as orthogonal to the left-right dimension (Hix & Lord, 1997). It is plausible that the commitment to the EU in general is also reflected in foreign policy voting in the EP. Support for European integration is correlated with support for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Cicchi et al., 2020). As we will see in greater detail below, support for EU integration in general is not identical to CFSP integration. We therefore examine parties' positions on European integration and on the CFSP separately:

> 3. *EU Integration Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' positions on the EU integration dimension are, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

> 4. *CFSP Integration Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' positions on Common Foreign and Security Policy are, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

National predictors of foreign policy voting

We draw on theories in International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis to examine the role of country characteristics in EP voting. We employ these to define the national interest and that can thus be expected to influence MEPs who are also motivated to advance the interests of their country. We identify a state's power position, its strategic culture and its degree of economic interdependence as relevant country characteristics.

Our first expectation, however, is that country in part structures EP voting. Although previous research found political ideology to be a stronger predictor of MEPs' foreign policy voting than nationality, the latter still matters (Raunio & Wagner, 2020). On a general level, this leads to expect that:

> 5. *Country Hypothesis:* MEPs from the same country are more likely to vote alike on foreign policy than MEPs from different countries.

The first country characteristic we examine is a state's power position. According to Waltz (1993, p. 45), 'the placement of states in the international system accounts for a good deal of their behavior'. Weak states that lack the military capabilities to carry out military threats, will chose diplomatic, non-military means. In contrast, powerful states that have the full spectrum of

foreign policy instruments at their disposal, frequently make use of it. This notion was popularized by Kagan (2002, p. 10) with a view to the USA and Europe: 'American military strength has produced a propensity to use that strength. Europe's military weakness has produced a perfectly understandable aversion to the exercise of military power'. The same logic applies to differences between European states, e.g., between France as a nuclear power and small states like the Baltic republics. Anders Wivel argues that the 'foreign policy dilemmas of small states are different from those experienced by great powers' (Wivel, 2005, p. 395). Whereas the large EU member states use the EU 'as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power, shaping ts "near abroad" in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests' (Hyde-Price, 2012, p. 29; see also Rynning, 2011) small states 'tend to accept the conditions of an order created by the stronger actors' (Wivel, 2005, p. 395)

> 6. *Power Position Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' countries' power positions, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

Countries also vary in terms of strategic culture and thus the roles envisioned for the military and the use of armed force (Johnston, 1995). Differences in strategic culture reflect states' threat perceptions and their historical experience. EU member states have been divided over both threat perceptions and the wisdom of military interventionism (Hyde-Price, 2018; Meijer & Brooks, 2021). Whereas some scholars see EU states' strategic cultures slowly converging (Meyer, 2005), others consider their differences to be remarkably stable (Lindley-French, 2002; Rynning, 2003).

> 7. *Strategic Culture Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' countries' strategic cultures, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

Commercial liberalism (Moravcsik, 1997; Schneider, 2017) or commercial pacifism (Doyle, 1997, chapter 7) argues that state behaviour is not a function of states' power positions but of their commercial interests. From this perspective, states whose economies are highly integrated in global markets dislike conflicts in general as they drive up the costs of international trade (Mansfield & Pollins, 2001; Rosecrance, 1986) or risk that investors re-allocate capital (Gartzke, 2007). According to Patrick McDonald, 'governments that adopt more restrictive policies toward international trade and investment flows are more likely to engage in military conflict' (McDonald, 2009, p. 18). Commercial pacifists refer to several causal mechanisms: citizens in advanced capitalist states 'habitually trust strangers in making contracts (…), learn to prefer free choice and the equal application of law, and they expect their government to behave accordingly in foreign affairs' (Mousseau, 2009, p. 53). International commerce creates domestic constituencies that suffer from international conflict and thus lobby the executive to avoid conflict

(Mansfield & Pollins, 2001). The elected leaders of democratic countries will therefore seek as little conflict with a country with which they are economically interdependent as possible, in order not to impose costs on their domestic constituencies. Secondly, merchants establish channels of communication across borders 'that help build a sense of shared identity among peoples' (Russett, 1998, p. 374).

> 8. *Economic Interdependence Hypothesis:* The more similar two MEPs' countries' levels of economic openness, the more likely they are to vote alike on foreign policy.

Methods

In order to compare the importance of predictors of foreign policy voting, one would need to use a regression-based technique. We use the dyadic approach developed by Van der Veer (2018). It builds further on the study of co-sponsorship of parliamentary proposals (Alemán et al., 2009). This approach examines parliamentary behaviour as a *relational characteristic.* In other words, rather than studying whether a legislator votes in favour of or against a proposal, the dyadic approach examines pairs of legislators and the extent to which they vote similarly. Combining this information with external indicators of the ideological distance between legislators on various dimensions or the similarity between the countries they represent allows one to assess the degree to which these factors influences voting, the relative importance of different factors, and whether these factors have a statistically significant effect. Compared to earlier research, the dyadic approach allows us to get a far more complete image of patterns in parliamentary voting. We can contrast it with two approaches: firstly, there are methods that aggregate voting patterns. These infer the most important patterns from parliamentary voting but disregard other sources of variance (Hix, 2001). Secondly, there are methods that analyse a specific subset of votes to examine specific patterns on these votes (Willumsen, 2018). Our method allows us to compare the voting patterns on *all* votes and it allows us to examine both major and minor patterns, for instance look at issue-specific dynamics once we control for the major explanations.

The dyadic approach works as follows. The first step is that all possible pairs of legislators are created. Then the degree to which legislators vote similarly (yea-yea, nay-nay, or abstain-abstain) is calculated as a proportion of the total number of votes in which both legislators participate.[1] We gathered these data from the VoteWatch.eu database (VoteWatch, 2019). The number of cases is nearly equal to half the square of the number of MEPs in that parliament. The voting similarity score can have values between zero (the two MEPs vote completely differently on all votes) and one (the two MEPs vote exactly the same on all votes).

We specifically apply the dyadic approach in issue-comparative fashion: While examining the driving forces of foreign policy voting, we compare them to MEPs' voting behaviour on other issues in order to gauge whether the foreign policy space is a distinct one. This allows us to see whether specific dimensions matter more for foreign policy than for other issues. If we find a difference between MEPs from parties that support military intervention, compared to MEPs from parties that do not support military intervention in EP voting in general and not specifically on foreign affairs that likely means that this variable picks-up on something else than foreign policy differences.

In this study we examine patterns for the fifth to the eighth EP terms.[2] Every case is an MEP-MEP dyad. We include the data per parliamentary term. This means that pairs of MEPs who have been in parliament for multiple terms appear more than once. To differentiate between foreign policy and other votes, we use the policy area designation by VoteWatch.[3] Our dependent variable is voting similarity as introduced above. To test our hypotheses, we use party-level and country-level variables.

Theoretically motivated variables

At the party level we examine measures of party ideology. To this end, we use the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.[4] This has a specific measure on party positions on the use of military force.[5] This measure is only available for the 2010 and 2014 CHES and therefore only available for half our dyads. For the CFSP Hypothesis, we use an indicator on how parties stand specifically on Common Foreign and Security Policy, also from the CHES.[6] We also use the CHES' pro-/anti-EU dimension,[7] and the left-right dimension.[8] The CHES dimensions are converted to distances by taking the absolute difference between legislator A's position and legislator B's position recalculated to range from 0 to 1 by dividing these distances by the maximum distance.

At the country level, we look at same country, defense expenditure (both relative and absolute) and economic globalization. The first is based on whether MPs are elected in the same country. To measure power positions and strategic culture, we calculate the mean defense expenditure for the six year-period that corresponds to a legislative term in absolute (power position) terms and as a percentage of GDP (strategic culture). The share of national income spent on defense is 'a good barometer of how much weight or value [a country's] leaders and citizens attach to military might and defense preparedness as part of their nation's overall foreign policy strategy' (Trubowitz & Burgoon, forthcoming, p. 4) and has been established as a key indicator of strategic culture (Biehl et al., 2013, p. 16). Data come from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2020). We use the economic globalization variable the KOF

Globalization Index (Gygli et al., 2019) to measure the average economic openness during that specific period.[9]

Control variables

Finally, we control for a number of factors. At the party level, we include national party group. MEPs are member of national political parties, which are known for a high level of unity (Faas, 2003). The second is the EP group. In the Parliament, MEPs are likely to follow their political group in deciding how to vote (Hix et al., 2007). The third is the Grand Coalition of the S&D and EPP. These groups effectively function as an informal governing coalition (Kreppel & Tsebelis, 1999). Their MEPs are therefore likely to vote the same. The fourth is national government participation. Pressure to follow their own minister in the Council may cause MEPs from that minister's party to deviate from the common position of their political group (Mühlböck, 2013). Therefore, MEPs that are both from parties that are in a national government are more likely to vote the same. To this end, we include whether both legislators are members of national parties that govern in their member states at some point during that parliamentary term (Döring & Manow, 2012).[10]

Finally, we control for NATO membership as observers of European foreign policy making have often highlighted the differences in member states' positions on NATO's role in European security, ranging from Denmark, which exclusively relies on NATO and opted out of European Security and Defense Policy, to Ireland that considers NATO membership to be incompatible with their (post-)neutral security identity (Howorth, 2014, p. 117f.). Although Hofmann (2013) has shown the importance of the party-political orientation of governments, there still may be a country-level effect, i.e., MEPs from NATO countries voting more similarly. Table A1 and Table A2 in the Appendix lists the descriptives and the intercorrelations between the variables.

Modelling strategy

We use ordinary least-squares regression. The main advantage of this, besides its simplicity, is that we can compare the strength of different explanatory variables. Because the data on MEPs' ideological positions, membership of national governments and the grand coalition are collected at the party level, we run the model with cluster-robust standard errors. Given the dyadic structure, we run the model with two clusters for both parties involved in the dyad (specifically *ivreg2* procedure in Stata). We use a stacked approach, we include every triad (MEP$_1$, MEP$_2$, term) two times: once for foreign policy votes and once for votes on all other matters. We then

include an interaction term between every independent variable and dummy for foreign affairs votes. This allows us to see the difference between all votes and foreign affairs votes. In Table A5 in the Appendix, we test the robustness of our results by looking at a multilevel regression technique with levels for MEP_1, MEP_2 and EP term. One cannot use whether the vote concerned foreign policy vote or not as level because of a lack of degrees of freedom.

Descriptive patterns

Before we turn to our regression results, it may be useful to examine the independent variables in greater detail to illustrate the actual empirical patterns of our expectations. Figures 1 and 2 show the party positions on the left-right and EU integration dimension and the military intervention and CFSP issue specifically. They illustrate the relevance of our multidimensional approach.
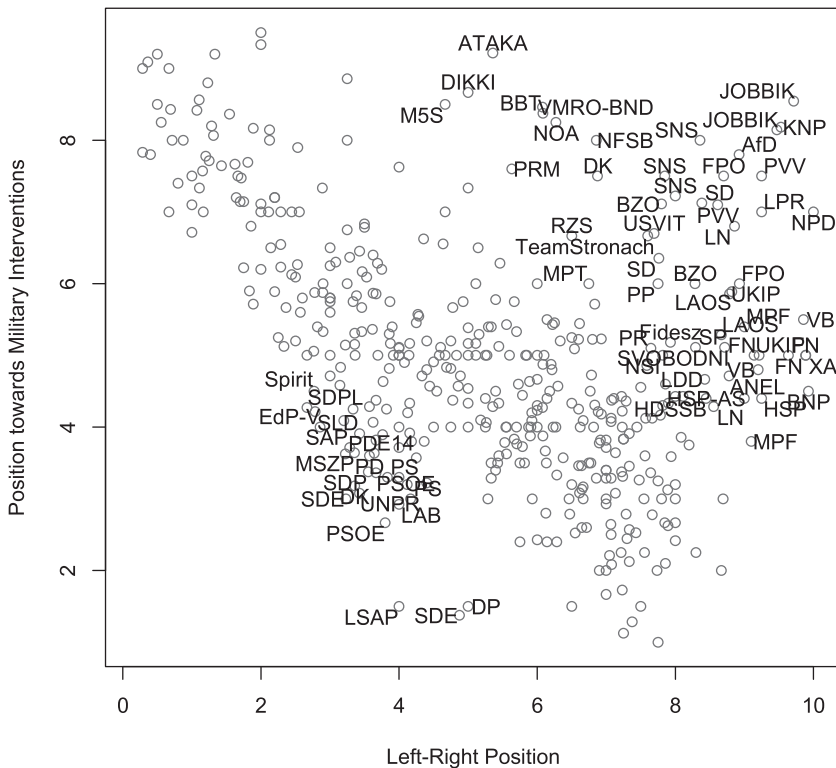
Figure 1. Party positions on military intervention and left-right position.
Source: CHES; 0 = left-wing and 10 = rightwing; 0 = strongly favours troop deployment and 10 = strongly opposes troop deployment; 1 = Strongly opposed to EU integration and 7 = strongly in favour of EU integration; 1 = Strongly opposed to EU foreign and security policy and 7 = strongly in favour of EU foreign and security policy.
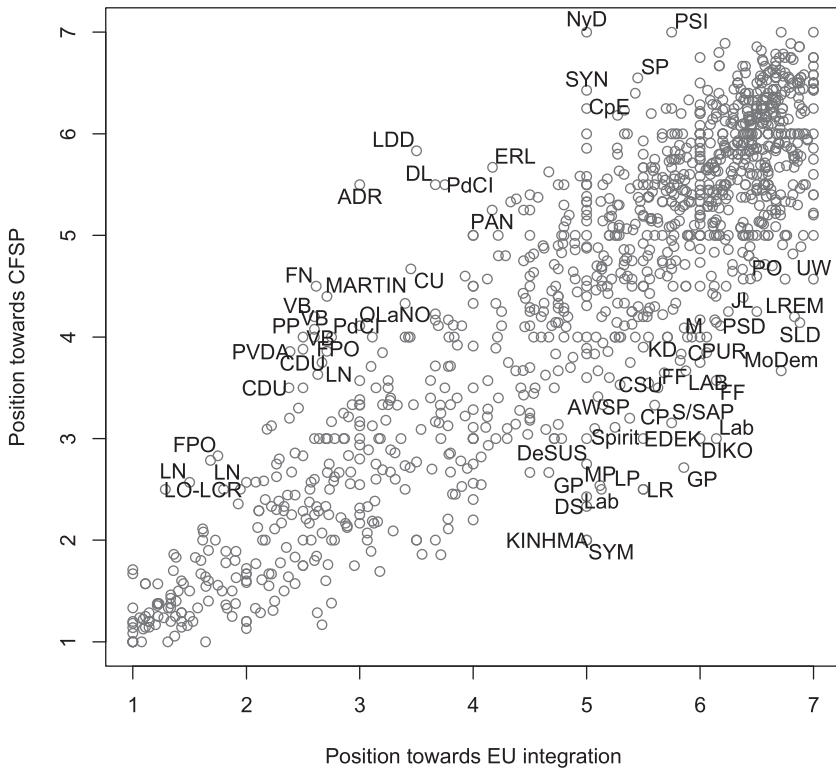
Figure 2. Party positions on CFSP and EU integration.
Source: CHES; 0 = left-wing and 10 = rightwing; 0 = strongly favours troop deployment and 10 = strongly opposes troop deployment; 1 = Strongly opposed to EU integration and 7 = strongly in favour of EU integration; 1 = Strongly opposed to EU foreign and security policy and 7 = strongly in favour of EU foreign and security policy.

Figure 1 graphs the relationship between support for military intervention and the left-right position. This shows the curvilinear pattern that we have also seen in recent research (Haesebrouck & Mello, 2020; Wagner, 2020): Support for military interventions has the shape of a skewed bell-curve with opposition strongest at the far left and support highest among parties of the center-right. If we move beyond the centre-right, the opposition to intervention rises. Parties like the Hungarian far-right JOBBIK are opposed to sending 'our boys' to get killed in 'some foreign country'. Most left-wing parties are opposed to military intervention. Yet, there are left-wing parties who favour the use of force in order to defend human rights, which we can find in the lower left, such as the Estonian social-democrats. The correlation between the left-right dimension and the military intervention dimension is only moderate.[11] Support for the CFSP reflects both their attitudes towards giving up sovereignty over foreign policy as well as their position

on the common choices made in the realm of foreign policy. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the support for EU integration and the specific attitude towards the CFSP. There is a strong relationship between the two.[12] Yet, there are still parties that are more favourably disposed towards the CFSP than one would expect on the basis of their position EU integration in general, such as the Austrian Freedom and Portuguese Communist Party. At the other side there are pro-European parties that are more sceptical about the CFSP, this includes *La République En Marche* from France.

Regression results

Our regression analyses put interactions front and centre: these allow us to determine whether the left-right, pro-/anti-EU, CFSP and military intervention dimensions matter more for foreign policy than other issues. To interpret these interactions, we use visualizations (Figures 3–10). These concern the theoretically motivated variables (the other figures are in the Appendix Figure A1 to A5). The regressions are presented in the Appendix (Table A3, A4, A5 and A6). Specifically, the figures are based on Model 2 in Table A3. These models include all the theoretically motivated variables and the controls. Model 1 does not include the military intervention variable, which is limited in terms of time period (and therefore in the number of cases).[13] All differences reported on are significant. A substantial share of the variance is captured by our models: The R-squared is 0.79 in Model 2 and 0.72 in Model 1.

We start by looking at the four theoretically motivated party-level variables: the left-right distance, the EU distance, CFSP distance and military intervention distance. For the left-right distance, the hypothesis was that on foreign policy issues, the distance on the left-right dimension would be more important for foreign policy, than it was on other issues. We find that in Figure 3 the lines for foreign and non-foreign policy issues are practically indistinguishable (at the 95 per cent confidence level). If two MEPs have an identical position on the left-right dimension they vote the same in over 70 per cent of the votes, if two MEPs have a completely different position on the left-right dimension they vote the same in over 40 per cent of the votes. The grey line is just above the black line, which means that foreign policy votes are slightly *less* related to left/right than votes on other policies (this is only significant at the 0.1-level). Next, we look at the EU dimension. We find that the EU integration dimension matters less on votes on foreign policy than on other issues. We can see this in Figure 4. Two MEPs who have an identical position on EU integration vote the same in about 70 per cent of the votes. Two MEPs who have a completely opposite position on EU integration vote the same in about 45 per cent of the non-foreign policy and 50 per cent of foreign policy votes. While the Left-Right and the EU Integration
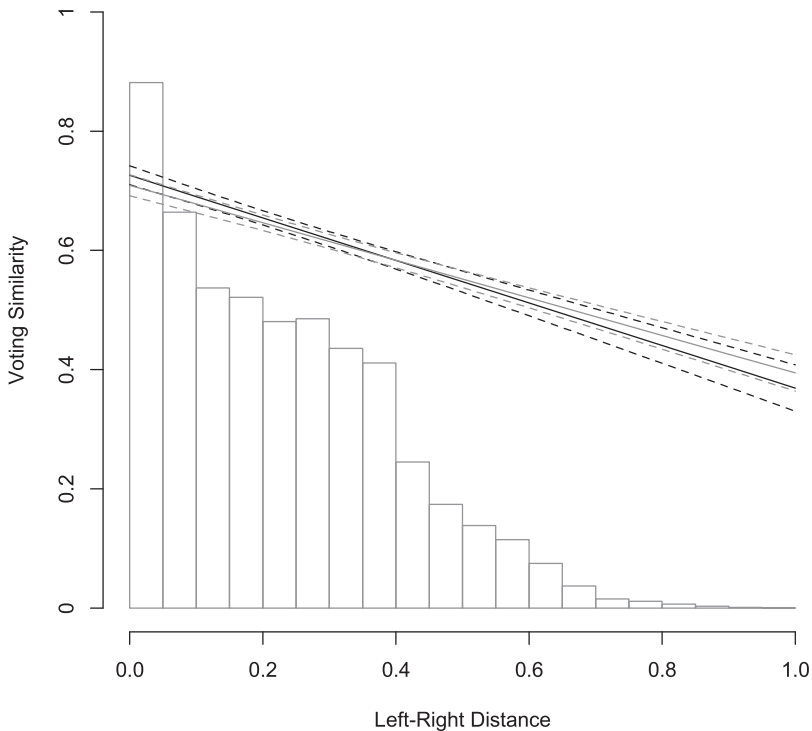
Figure 3. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on the left-right dimension.

dimensions matter on foreign policy, it is notable that these dimensions are less important in this domain than for other issues.

Next, we examine two dimensions related specifically to foreign policy: disagreement over the CFSP and military intervention. We find that the CFSP distance does not have a strong effect on voting patterns in the EP in general: MEPs that agree on CFSP vote the same in around 65 per cent of the votes. MEPs from parties that disagree on CFSP vote the same in just below 60 per cent of the votes when it comes to issues other than foreign policy. On foreign policy issues, the effect of disagreement over CFSP is greater. These MEPs vote the same in about 50 per cent of the votes (see Figure 5). This is in line with our expectations. This effect is particularly notable given the inclusion of the general position of EU integration positions in the model. This is highly correlated with position on the CFSP. Yet, a party's position on the CFSP does have separate effect on voting on foreign policy while general EU integration does not. As we can see in Figure 6, disagreements over military interventions do not affect voting on non-foreign policy issues: both those who agree the most on this issue and those who agree the least vote the same in about two-thirds of the votes. However, if we
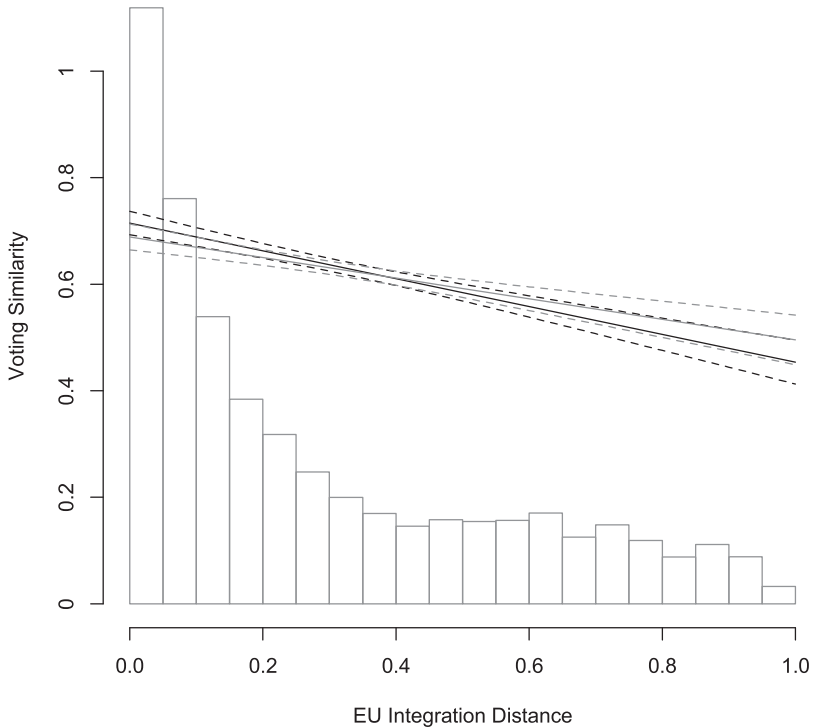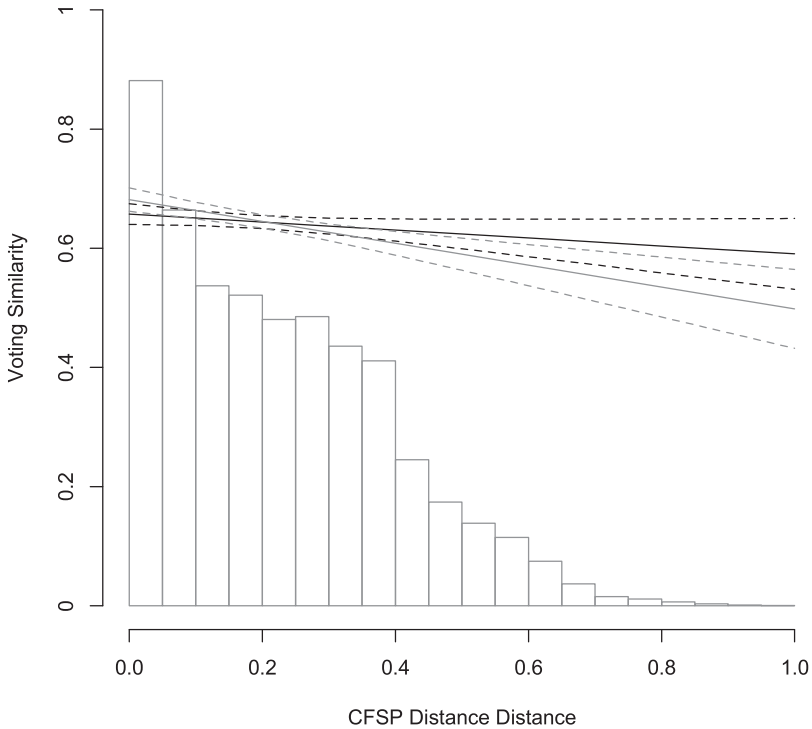
Figure 4. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on the EU Integration dimension.

look at the foreign policy domain the chance of voting the same, those who agree vote the same in two out of three votes, while those who disagree the most vote the same in one out of two votes. This means that these two dimensions specifically linked to foreign policy only substantively affect voting on foreign policy. They do not affect voting in other domains.

Where it comes to country characteristics, we find that on foreign policy MEPs from the same country are *less* likely to vote the same than on other issues. Two MEPs from the same or different countries vote the same in just below 65 per cent of the votes. On foreign policy, coming from the same country reduces the chance of voting the same from 63 per cent to 61 per cent. A small but significant decrease (at the 0.01-level) and furthermore, one that implies that sharing a country does not increase the chances of voting the same. One should note here that this is only the case when other variables are included: this implies that our country-level variables do a very good job at picking up our country-level variance.

We find an effect for relative military expenditure. MEPs from countries with similar levels of defense spending are more likely to vote similarly

All figures are based on Model 2 with 95% confidence intervals. Black lines: other issues; grey lines: foreign policy. With histogram of dependent variable in the background.

Figure 5. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on the CFSP dimension.

than members from other countries: MEPs from the most similar countries vote together in 65 per cent of the foreign policy votes and MEPs from the leas similar countries vote together in 58 per cent of the foreign policy votes. On non-foreign policy votes this decline goes from 65 per cent to 61 per cent. This effect is significant (at the 0.001-level) but substantively smaller than the policy-related variables. We do not find this pattern for absolute defense spending: whether they have a similar level of spending on defense or a different level; whether they vote on foreign policy or on other policies they all have just below 65 per cent chance of voting the same. Economic globalization also does not affect voting patterns: whether two MEPs countries' share the same levels of economic globalization or whether they are completely different in their levels of globalization, they all have an about two in three chance of voting the same.

The Appendix shows the patterns for the party-level and country-level control variables (sharing national government participation, Grand
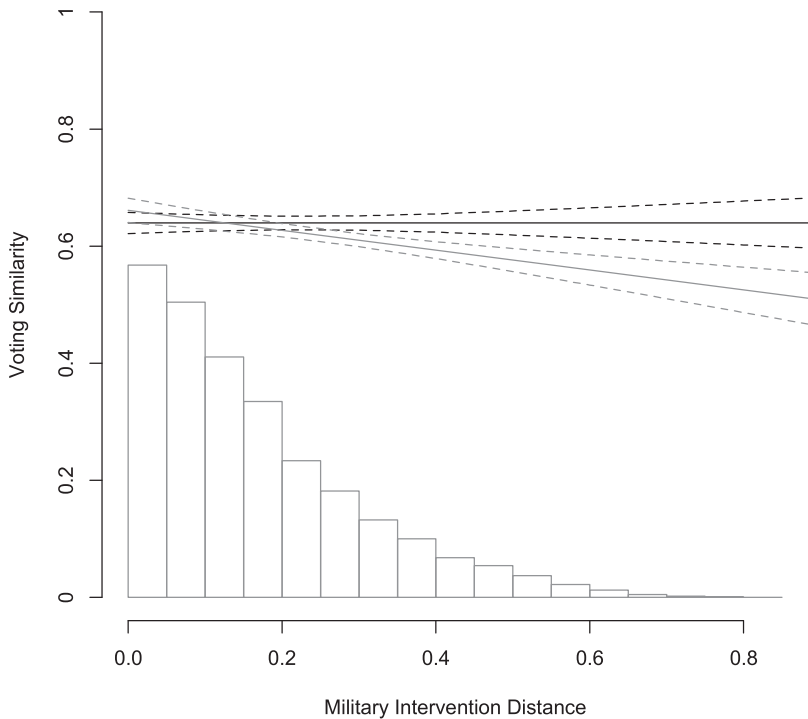
All figures are based on Model 2 with 95% confidence intervals. Black lines: other issues; grey lines: foreign policy. With histogram of dependent variable in the background.

Figure 6. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on the military intervention dimension.

Coalition participation, parties and EPGs and NATO-membership): MEPs whose parties both serve in the national government have a larger chance of voting the same on foreign policy than on other policies: MEPs on different sides of the national governments vote the same in 63 per cent of the votes on non-foreign policy issues and in 61 per cent of the votes on foreign policy issues. Those who are on the same side vote the same on 65 per cent of non-foreign policy issues and 66 per cent on foreign policy issues. MEPs from the Grand Coalition see a similar sign of voting the same on foreign policy: they vote the same in 62 per cent of the non-foreign policy votes if they are on different sides and 60 per cent of the foreign policy votes if they are on different sides of the Grand Coalition; they vote the same on 68 per cent (non-foreign policy) and 69 per cent (foreign policy) if they are on the same side of the Grand Coalition. MEPs from the same party vote *more* dissimilarly on foreign policy than other issues. One should note here that all included variables are related with the same party variable: the ideological and
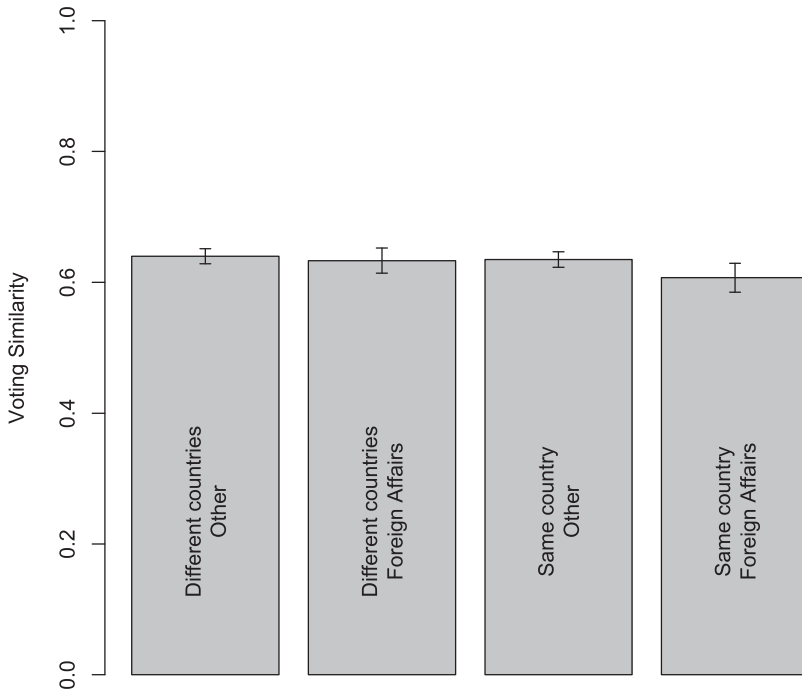
Figure 7. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for those from the same and different countries.

country-level distances between these MEPs is always zero. The negative pattern implies that the variables that we use have captured all the relevant inter-party differences. The same is true for membership of the same EPGs: we find a small reduction in voting the same on foreign policy. NATO-membership finally does not increase the chance of voting the same. This means that the ideological differences between the groups on foreign policy are captured sufficiently by our ideological variables.

Our results thus sustain our four party-level hypotheses: firstly, the left-right dimension and the EU integration dimension are the strongest predictors of foreign policy voting. Although they affect voting on foreign policy slightly *less* well than voting on other matters, the left-right and EU integration dimension still are the strongest predictors of foreign policy voting. Secondly, specific foreign policy dimensions related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the use of force are more likely to affect voting on foreign policy specifically. The models in the Appendix sustain the results presented in the paper.[14] Only one of the country-level variables finds support: the larger the differences in relative defense spending between countries, the more likely that MEPs vote differently. This effect is weaker than
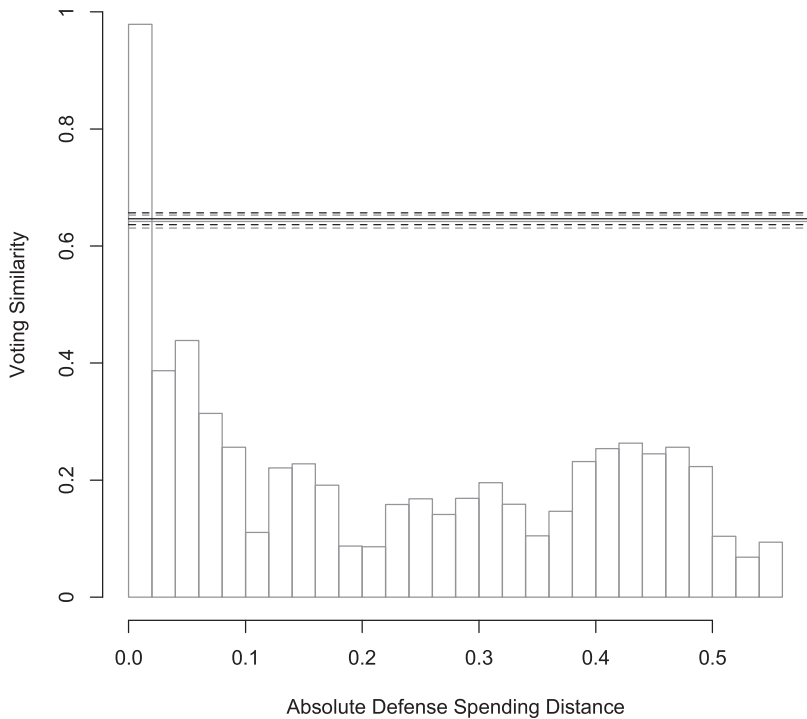
Figure 8. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on absolute defense spending.

the partisan-level explanations. It does indicate that differences in strategic culture matter in how MEPs vote.

When interpreting these results, two things should be noted: firstly, our country-, party- and EPG-level variables affect voting on foreign policies less strongly than voting on other policies. This implies that there is *less* unexplained variance at the party, EPG or country level for foreign policy than for other issues. MEPs who come from national government coalitions vote the same more often. This may imply that in foreign policy, we see the tension between what Mair (2009) called responsive and responsible government, between those who want to respond to public opinion and those who operate within the constraints on the real policy world. In foreign policy, the difference between MEPs from parties that do and do not take responsibility are larger than on other issues. This implies that real-world constraints loom larger over the foreign policy domain than over other policy issues. Finally, we also find that the effective EU government coalition, the Grand Coalition, votes the same more often. Unity in the Grand Coalition is particularly valuable when the power of the EP is challenged by other EU actors (Kreppel & Tsebelis, 1999).[15]
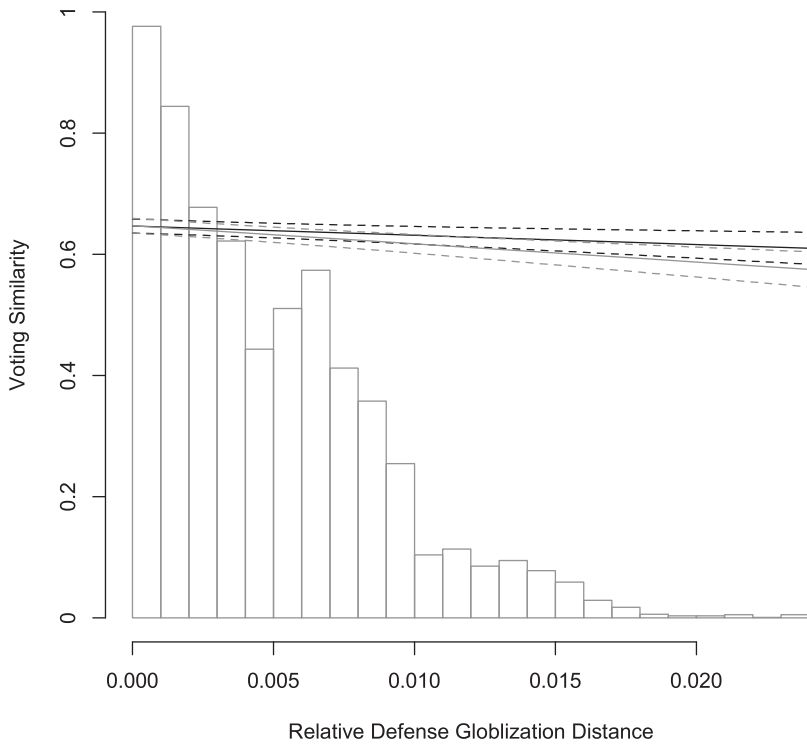
All figures are based on Model 2 with 95% confidence intervals. Black lines: other issues; grey lines: foreign policy. With histogram of dependent variable in the background.

Figure 9. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on relative defense spending.

Conclusion

A more effective, coherent, and autonomous Common Foreign and Security Policy has again been high on the European agenda. Progress, however, has been hampered by the heterogeneity of foreign policy preferences. We have examined the European foreign policy space by testing party-level predictors of foreign policy voting in the EP. In general, we find strong evidence that voting on foreign policy in the EP is structured by party ideologies: We find that while the left-right dimension and the EU integration dimension matter less on foreign policy than other issues, they still explain a considerable share of voting patterns. Moreover, party-political disagreements over the Common Foreign Policy and Security Policy and the military intervention matter more on foreign policy votes than on other votes. This provides strong evidence for the notion that voting on foreign policy is not identical to voting on other issues in the
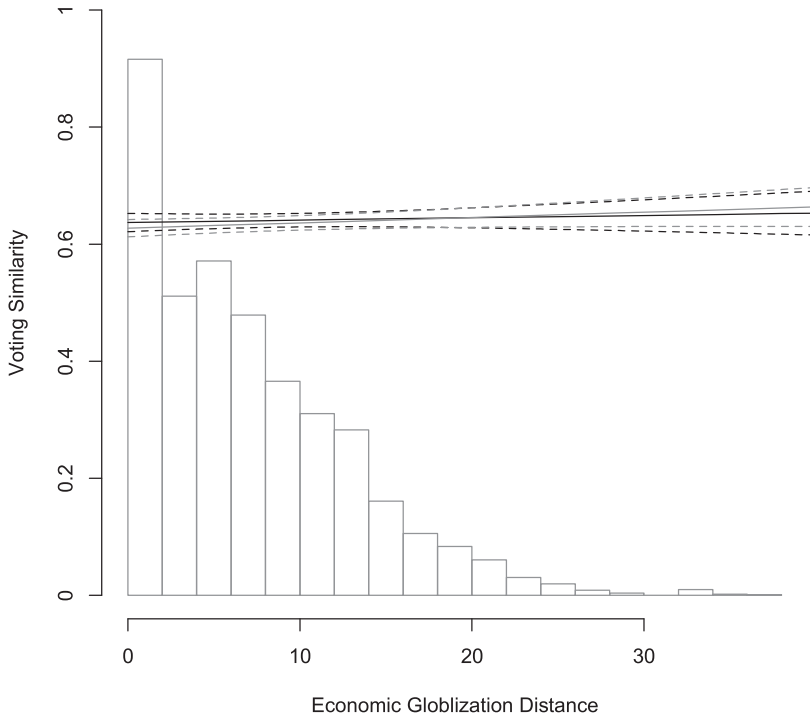
All figures are based on Model 2 with 95% confidence intervals. Black lines: other issues; grey lines: foreign policy. With histogram of dependent variable in the background.

Figure 10. Voting Similarity on foreign affairs and other issues for different levels of similarity on their country's economic globalization.

EP and that this follows ideological lines. In part these are ideological conflicts specific to the foreign policy domain.

Where it comes to foreign policy, the EP appears to be a transnational ideological space, rather than an international one. EP politics does not simply mirror Council politics and its culture of consensus-seeking among national executives. In the EP, European foreign policy is contested on ideological grounds. We contribute to the debate on political parties and foreign policy by showing that differences over the use of force, in addition to the well-known left/right-dimension, have an independent structuring effect on the foreign policy space more broadly. In other words: a party's position on the use of force is a good predictor for the party's positions on a broad range of foreign policy questions from human rights to international treaties.

Where it comes to the literature on the European Parliament, our paper shows the value of moving beyond the bidimensional Hix-Lord model. Yes, these dimension matter in general but on specific issues there are issue-

specific patterns. The EU integration and left-right dimension as superissues may integrate those dimensions in the aggregate but in the disaggregated analyses, one can see considerably more diversity.

At the same time, however, EP politics is not entirely shielded from member state politics. Our study goes beyond a further confirmation of party politics trumping intergovernmental conflict. Because the latter does not entirely replace the former, we have included country-level variables in our analysis, which previous studies did not. We find that MEPs from countries that both invest heavily into its military or both prefer non-military means are more likely to vote the same than MEPs from countries that have different strategic cultures. Different positions on the use of force thus structure the foreign policy space both among countries and between political parties. We also see differences in whether MEPs' parties being part of the ruling coalition in a member state has an impact on their voting behaviour as well. This also suggests that government responsibility and the concomitant exposure to external threats and alliance pressures plays a role.

Future research may want to pursue several different avenues. First of all, the war in Ukraine in 2022 comes as an external shock to European foreign policy. As spectacular policy changes in some countries indicate, it may restructure the European foreign policy space, not only between member states but also along party-political lines. One obvious avenue of future research is to examine possible changes in the transnational foreign policy space as a result of Russia's aggression.

Secondly, with mounting evidence that the politics of foreign policy in the EP is structured along ideological lines, future research could examine the European foreign policy space in more detail. While the large-N analysis of votes can detect the dimensionality of the foreign policy space, case studies can advance our understanding how political groups' commitments to basic political principles and values translate into specific foreign policy positions and coalition patterns. Distinguishing different foreign policy issues such as human rights, military interventions or international agreements can further nuance our understanding of the European foreign policy space.

Finally, in this paper, we find promising results for the importance of specific foreign policy related dynamics in the plenary. Our understanding of EP politics may be enriched if authors look at the importance of disagreements about the Common Agricultural Policy for voting on agriculture policies specifically, disagreements over cohesion policy for voting on regional development issues specifically, disagreements on environmental policy for voting on environmental questions specifically. Two subject areas that may be of special interests for the foreign policy literature: development and international trade (Raunio & Wagner, 2021; Van den Putte et al., 2015). The voting dynamics on trade may be affected by attitudes of parties towards

protectionism. The voting dynamics on development may be affected by attitudes of parties towards an international redistribution.

Notes

1. One should note that voting similarity is calculated for the share of votes in which both MPs were present. This means that the number of votes this is calculated for differs between pairs. In order to prevent voting similarity on a small number of votes biasing the results, pairs of legislators are coded as missing when they together participate in less than 2.5% of all votes during a legislative term.
2. Note that before and after 2009 there is a difference in whether roll call votes are merely requested by EPGs or whether they are mandated by the rules of procedure. Hix et al. (2018) do not find large differences in voting patterns where it comes to this change. Høyland (2010) shows that rollcall votes overestimate partisan differences but because our method analyses relative rather than absolute distances that should not affect our results.
3. We use the issue area coding from VoteWatch (which in turn derives from the secretariat of the EP) to identify issue area. We limit ourselves to votes specifically related to foreign affairs. We use the codes 'Foreign affairs', 'Foreign Affairs', 'Foreign Afffairs' (sic), 'Foreign Affairs, institutional', 'Foreign Affairs, Research' 'Foreign & security policy'. These codes reflect the committee that prepared the issue, but these labels are also attached to plenary motions. Note that foreign policy considerations may also concern votes in other issues such as trade, development and enlargement. In this paper we restrict ourselves to foreign policy proper. It is likely that in these other areas related to foreign policy specific dimensions matter. Where it comes trade protectionism and environmentalism may matter; where it comes to development cooperation, the views about international redistribution may matter more; and on enlargement, views about whether the EU should be small or large.
4. We choose the closest CHES wave to the start of the term.
5. The specific question: 'position towards international security and peacekeeping missions.' with 'strong favours COUNTRY troop deployment' and 'strongly opposes COUNTRY troop deployment' as extremes.
6. The specific question: 'position of the party leadership in YEAR on EU foreign and security policy' with 'strongly favours' and 'strongly opposes' as extremes.
7. The specific question: 'overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in YEAR' with 'strongly opposed' and 'strong in favour' as extremes.
8. The specific question: 'We now turn to a few questions on the ideological positions of political parties in [country] in [year]. Please tick the box that best describes each party's overall ideology on a scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right)'.
9. KOF distinguishes de jure and de facto dimensions of globalization. For economic openness we use the variable combining both dimensions, which in turn are composed of trade in goods, trade in services, trade partner diversity, trade regulations, trade taxes, tariffs and trade agreements.
10. In recent decades, the cultural dimension has become more important in European politics. This divides nationalist parties from cosmopolitan/multiculturalist

parties. Key issues are immigration and civic integration. This is likely to have fed into the EU's foreign policy because immigration has become an important part of it. In the Appendix we control for this difference in terms of nationalism, multiculturalism and/or the so-called green/alternative/libertarian-traditional/authoritarian/nationalist dimension ('gal-tan').

11. Pearson's R is −0.47, significant at the 0.001-level
12. Pearson's R is 0.89, significant at the 0.001-level
13. Model 3 does not include the military intervention variable but only uses the cases for which we have data on this variable. This allows us to interpret more precisely what the added explanatory power of this variable is. The AIC indicates that including this variable markedly increases the explanatory power of this model.
14. Model 1 in Appendix A3 uses the same set-up but now without the distance on the military intervention which doubled the number of cases. If we remove this variable, our interpretation of the three remaining hypotheses are sustained, in particular we find evidence for the CFSP distance and the importance of relative military expenditure. In Table A4, we look at a number of different set-ups: in particular we look at more party-level variables in particular the GAL-TAN dimension, multiculturalism and nationalism. We find no evidence that these affect voting behaviour on foreign policy (beyond a 0.05-level of significance). We also look at the effect of the inclusion and exclusion of some party-level variables. We find that when we exclude the CFSP distance variable the EU integration distance variable matters more on foreign policy. This implies that an important element in the foreign policy domain is whether this is a national or EU responsibility and that in the absence of a specific dimension on the CFSP the EU integration dimension picks this up.

Table A5 shows a number of multilevel models with MEP party and EP term as level. These models confirm our findings where it comes to the left-right distance, the EU distance, the CFSP distance and the distance on military intervention.

15. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this possible explanation.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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