Agenda Control in EU Referendum Campaigns:

The Power of the Anti-EU Side

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Abstract
European Union (EU) referendums provide unique opportunities to study voters' attitudes toward a distant level of governance. Scholars have long tried to understand whether EU referendum results reflect domestic (dis)satisfaction with the incumbent governments or actual attitudes toward the Union. Finding evidence supporting both domestic and European factors, the recent focus has thus turned to referendum campaigns. Recent studies emphasize the importance of the information provided to voters during these campaigns in order to analyse how domestic or European issues become salient in the minds of voters. These studies nonetheless overlook the asymmetrical political advantage in such campaigns. The broader literature on referendums and public opinion suggest that in a referendum the No side typically has the advantage since it can boost the public's fears by linking the proposal to unpopular issues. This article explores whether this dynamic applies to EU treaty ratification referendums. Does the anti-EU treaty campaign have more advantage than the pro-EU treaty campaign in these referendums? In this article, I analyse campaign strategies in 11 EU treaty ratification referendums, which provide a clear juxtaposition between pro-treaty (Yes) and anti-treaty (No) campaigns. Based on 140 interviews with campaigners in 11 referendums, a series of indicators on political setting and campaign characteristics, as well as an in-depth case study of the 2012 Irish Fiscal Compact referendum, I find that the anti-treaty side indeed holds the advantage if it engages the debate. Nonetheless, the findings also show that this advantage is not unconditional. The underlying mechanism rests on the multidimensionality of the issue. The extent to which the referendum debate includes a large variety of No campaign arguments correlates strongly with the campaigners' perceived advantage/disadvantage, and the referendum results. When the No side's arguments are limited (either through a single-issue treaty or guarantees from the EU), this provides the Yes side with a 'cleaner' agenda to work with. Importantly, the detailed data demonstrate that the availability of arguments is important for the Yes side as well. They tend to have the most advantage when they can tap into the economic costs of an anti-EU vote. This analysis has implications for other kinds of EU referendums such as the Brexit case, non-EU referendums such as independence referendums, and the future of European integration.

Key words
European integration, referendums, political campaigns, agenda setting, public opinion

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Since the Second World War, European integration has been the most frequent subject matter for referendums (Closa, 2007; de Vreese, 2004). European Union (EU) referendums provide a unique opportunity to study voters' attitudes toward a distant level of governance. Scholars have long tried to understand whether EU referendum results reflect domestic (dis)satisfaction with the incumbent governments (Franklin, 2002; Reif & Schmitt, 1980) or actual attitudes toward the EU (Garry, Marsh, & Sinnott, 2005; Siune, Svensson, & Tonsgaard, 1994). Finding evidence supporting both domestic and European factors (e.g. Aarts & van der Kolk, 2006; Brouard & Tiberj, 2006), the recent focus has thus turned to referendum campaigns. More specifically, scholars emphasize the importance of the *information* provided to voters during these campaigns in order to analyse how domestic or European issues become salient in the minds of voters (e.g. Elkink & Sinnott, 2015; Garry, 2013; Hobolt, 2009). Because EU citizens lack direct interaction with the Union in their daily lives, how domestic politicians present the referendum proposal to them matters. The extent to which they discuss the consequences of approving or rejecting the proposal influences voting behaviour. For instance, when politicians emphasize the negative consequences of voting in favour of a proposal, more people oppose it.

Despite this emphasis on EU referendum campaigns, the existing studies overlook an important aspect, namely the asymmetrical political advantage in such campaigns. The broader literature on referendums and public opinion suggests that in a referendum the No side typically has the advantage since it can boost the public's fears by linking the proposal to unpopular issues (e.g. LeDuc, 2005; Nadeau, Martin, & Blais, 1999). This article explores whether this dynamic applies to EU treaty ratification referendums, which are votes on the ratification of an EU amending treaty.[1] Does the anti-EU treaty campaign have more advantage than the pro-EU treaty campaign in these referendums? This aspect is all the more important because the existing studies of EU referendums show that the voting public usually starts with an early positive opinion toward EU treaties but that this positive attitude often melts away, culminating in rejections (Atikcan, 2015a). Does the anti-EU side have an easier task in

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[1] This classification thus excludes accession (membership) and policy referendums.

emphasizing the negative consequences of voting for further integration, than the pro-EU side trying to stress the negative consequences of voting against further integration?

Although the literature mentions the innate advantage often held by the No side, the factors that contribute to such an advantage are not specified; neither are the circumstances under which this advantage could potentially swap to the Yes side. I argue that the main factor behind this advantage is the agenda setting power, specifically concerning the negative consequences of the vote choice. Given that the No side does not need a coherent case and can attack a proposal from multiple angles, we would expect a multidimensional referendum proposal to provide more of an advantage to the No side by offering more material to campaign on and more risks to highlight. In contrast, when the proposal is limited to a single topic, we would expect such an advantage to be reduced. In such cases, where the No side's hand is restrained, the Yes side would have increased chances to set the agenda around the consequences of a No vote.

In this article, I analyse campaign strategies in 11 EU treaty ratification referendums, which provide a clear juxtaposition between pro-treaty (Yes) and anti-treaty (No) campaigns. Based on 140 interviews with campaigners in 11 referendums, a series of indicators on political setting and campaign characteristics, as well as an in-depth case study of the 2012 Irish Fiscal Compact referendum, I find that the anti-treaty side indeed holds the advantage if it engages the debate. Nonetheless, the findings also show that this advantage is not unconditional. The underlying mechanism rests on the multidimensionality of the issue. The extent to which the referendum debate includes a large variety of No campaign arguments correlates strongly with the campaigners' perceived advantage/disadvantage, and the referendum results. When the No side's arguments are limited (either through a single-issue treaty or guarantees from the EU), this provides the Yes side with a 'cleaner' agenda to work with. Importantly, the detailed data demonstrates that the availability of arguments is important for the Yes

side as well. They tend to have the most advantage when they can tap into the economic costs of an anti-EU vote.

Below I first explore the literature on referendums to understand how an asymmetrical political advantage might affect the functioning of direct democracy in the EU. Next, I present data from 11 EU treaty ratification referendums, as well as an in-depth study of an outlier case, which reveal the specific factors behind such an advantage. I conclude the article by a discussion of this research's implications for other kinds of EU and non-EU referendums.

How does the asymmetrical political advantage affect direct democracy in the EU?

Research into EU referendums has only recently turned its attention to referendum campaigns. This literature has three traditional explanations, linking referendum results to government approval rates ('second-order' approach), to European-level policy preferences ('issue-voting' approach) and party cues. The 'second-order' approach suggests that voting behaviour is strongly influenced by national factors such as the level of satisfaction with the government (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). The 'issue-voting' model on the other hand argues that citizens vote in line with their underlying broad attitudes toward European integration, primarily shaped by their socioeconomic status and views on immigration (e.g. Gabel & Palmer, 1995; McLaren, 2002; Siune et al., 1994). The fewer areas voters want included in European integration, the more they vote against the EU in referendums. Alternatively, research on party cues suggests that voters' identification with political parties, and the positioning of these parties, determine their voting behaviour (e.g. Ray, 2003). However, detailed survey-based analyses find that dissatisfaction with the government, attitudes toward European integration, and party identification *all* influence the vote choice (e.g. Aarts & van der Kolk, 2006; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2007; Hobolt, 2009).

The new question is thus *how campaign information mediates* the extent to which different issues become salient in the minds of voters (Hobolt & Brouard, 2011, p. 310). For instance, people are

shown to rely more on their attitudes toward Europe if the campaign is intense (high-salience) (Garry et al., 2005; Hobolt, 2009). Existing research shows that political parties serve as information providers during these campaigns and frame the meaning of the choice that voters face in referendums (Atikcan, 2015a; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Hobolt, 2009; Laycock, 2013; Pammett & LeDuc, 2001). Importantly, the voting behaviour literature suggests that, in most instances, referendum campaigns are actually more influential than election campaigns (e.g. de Vreese & Semetko, 2004; Schuck & de Vreese, 2008; Suiter & Reidy, 2015). When parties line up in a non-traditional way, or the issue is unfamiliar to the mass public, referendum campaigns can be decisive (LeDuc, 2002). This is particularly the case in referendums on international treaties, as voters do not have well-formed opinions. The treaties of the European Union are particularly difficult to understand because the EU is highly complex and the public has a limited understanding of the EU's competences and institutions. Moreover, in EU referendums the government and all the mainstream political parties almost always campaign on the pro-treaty side as Euroscepticism is confined to the extremes of the political spectrum (De Vries, 2009; Taggart, 1998; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2013). The combination of these ad hoc unconventional political alliances and the technical nature of the EU treaties means that the public often needs the campaign information to make up their minds. Looking at the ideal types of opinion trends during referendum campaigns established by LeDuc (2002), referendums on EU treaty ratification belong to the *opinion formation* pattern, which is common to all referendums where there is little partisan or ideological basis, and where individuals take more time to make a decision and that decision becomes highly unpredictable. This is largely in line with the findings of the existing literature pointing to the initial positive attitudes toward EU treaties, which decline frequently in the process of referendum campaigns (Atikcan, 2015a).

While the existing studies of EU referendums emphasize the role of campaign intensity and information, they rarely study how political actors actively provide this information. In a comparative study of EU referendums, Hobolt (2009) finds that when the negative consequences of a No-vote/Yes-

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vote are stressed, more people favour/oppose the proposal. Garry (2013) similarly shows that perceptions of treaty implications matter the most to voters and that these are particularly open to short-term change in the context of intense campaigning by political actors. More specifically, Elkink and Sinnott (2015) demonstrate that the more voters' perceptions of the contents of the treaty are aligned with the No campaign, the more they vote No, and vice versa for the Yes campaign. Garry (2014) looks into the emotional basis of voting behavior in EU referendums, showing that campaign information can in fact lead to fear or anger, and that fearful citizens are more likely to vote for the option that is presented as less-risky (see Druckman & McDermott, 2008).

But the question of whether one side of the campaign, namely the anti-treaty side, has an advantage in making its case is overlooked. The literature on referendums suggests that No campaigners do not necessarily need to make a coherent and persuasive case against a proposal (Jerit, 2004; LeDuc, 2005). They need only to raise doubts or link the proposal to other less popular issues. The No side can prevail if it conducts careful research on what parts of the issue voters would not like and make effective commercials playing to these themes (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). However, the concrete mechanisms that lead to this advantage are underspecified in the literature. The core idea is that the No campaigners can use risk aversion, a powerful basis on which to appeal to some voters, and that the No side 'usually (but not always)' holds a monopoly on this emotion (LeDuc, 2005, p. 179). But what would make the Yes and No campaigns more or less able to have such leverage? Do the anti-EU treaty campaigners systematically succeed in setting the debate around the negative consequences of voting in favour of a new treaty? Are there factors that limit this asymmetrical advantage?

In order to answer these questions, I focus on the process of agenda setting. Theories of strategic communications focus on agenda setting, priming and framing in a political campaign. Agenda setting is the process in which competing political elites define their most relevant issues and present them to the public's attention. This process is crucial for political elites, as agenda foreshadows

outcomes and determines the path to final voting choice (Iyengar, 1993; Riker, 1993; Soroka, 2002). The issues placed on the agenda become primed; in other words, become the principal dimensions for evaluating candidates or parties. Framing theory takes a step further and looks into the ways in which politicians present particular ideas (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Goffman, 1974). A speaker's framing, an emphasis on a particular set of potentially relevant concerns, causes individuals to focus on these concerns when building their opinions.

In line with the findings of the referendum literature, we would expect the No campaign – which aims to reject the EU treaty on offer – to have more ability to control the agenda and to frame the debate around their themes, if it engaged the debate. Indeed, looking at the strategies used in EU referendums on treaty ratification, the anti-treaty campaigns typically argue that the treaty will cause loss of political autonomy in key fields such as social policy, citizenship rules, immigration, military neutrality and moral issues such as abortion, even when those themes are not present in the treaty at hand (e.g. Atikcan, 2015a; Hobolt, 2009; Mendez, Mendez, & Triga, 2016).

I argue that the underlying mechanism of this agenda setting advantage is the availability of arguments. We would expect a multidimensional proposal to maximize such an advantage, where the No campaign is free to attack the referendum proposal from a variety of angles without having to worry about the coherence of its arguments. In other words, a broader referendum topic would allow the No side to bring up different kinds of risks, as opposed to single-issue referendums, which would limit the range of such No camp arguments. In turn, in cases where the No side is constrained, the Yes side would have an easier job of stressing the negative consequences of a No vote.

Data

To investigate this phenomenon, I study the framing of the referendum proposal in 11 EU treaty ratification referendums. I conceptualize the political advantage as the control of the agenda setting in a

referendum campaign, and specifically on the negative consequences of the vote choice. There are usually different kinds of arguments that focus on the negative consequences in EU referendum campaigns, underlining the economic, political, social and cultural consequences relating to the proposal. In this research, setting the agenda around the consequences signifies advancing as many of these arguments as possible.

In order to assess the political advantage in these referendums, I use two kinds of data: first, a series of indicators on campaign characteristics and political setting to serve as controls, and interview data and content analyses to study the agenda setting. The data is helpful in testing two expectations. First, we would expect the interview data to confirm that the No side is perceived as more able than the Yes side to set the agenda around the consequences of the vote choice when it engages the debate and when the proposal is multidimensional. Second, we would expect these perceptions to correlate with certain campaign characteristics and referendum outcomes. In other words, if the No side was indeed perceived as more able than the Yes side to set the agenda, we would expect this factor to be correlated with an increase in negative vote intentions over the course of the campaign and a higher rejection rate. The theory would not hold if the Yes side was seen to have more advantage than the No side in a multidimensional debate, or if the referendum results were instead correlated with the control variables, or if there was no connection between the perceptions of the campaigners, the campaign characteristics and the referendum outcomes.

The 11 EU treaty ratification referendums at hand are shown in Table 1. The study includes all the treaty ratification referendums since 2005 as well as the treaty ratification referendums where the public was asked to vote twice on the same subject. The latter category is theoretically interesting because in all cases, the public first rejected but then accepted the same EU treaty. In all these repeated cases, the EU became involved between the two referendums, offering guarantees and taking certain

arguments off the table. These cases thus provide a unique opportunity to study how the campaign agenda shifted in the repeat referendums, keeping all else constant.

Table 1 here

Campaign characteristics and political setting

The goal of the indicators presented in Table 1 is to compare the various aspects of the campaigns and the political setting in these 11 EU referendums and to detect any regularities that might correlate with the referendum outcomes. To begin with, campaign intensity (salience) and turnout data help us understand the extent to which there was an active debate between rival campaigns.[2] If the anti-treaty side did not mount a substantive campaign, we would not expect them to have an advantage. Hobolt (2009, p. 93) measures campaign intensity based on three indicators: the partisan polarization (opposition to the ballot proposal in parliament), the perceived closeness of the race (difference between the two sides in the polls), and the news coverage (number of daily articles monitoring the referendum issue during the three months leading up to the referendum). This provides the most comparable measure in the literature as she measures the intensity of 19 EU referendum campaigns.

Second, the move in the voting intentions over the course of the long campaign (measured as the difference between the negative voting intentions six to eight months before the referendum and the percentage of the final No vote) shows the extent to which public opinion has potentially been sensitive to campaign information.[3] As discussed, in *opinion formation* campaigns, the referendum campaign can be decisive since public opinion is unpredictable. If public opinion moved significantly during the campaign, this would confirm that individuals' opinions on the subject were volatile. Similarly, the central themes of the No campaign, based on the interview data and the existing literature,

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[2] These two indicators, campaign intensity and turnout, are seen to be closely related in referendums (Hobolt, 2007; LeDuc, 2007).

[3] I use the CIS barometers in the Spanish case, the CSA polls in France, the SCP reports in the Netherlands, the TNS-ILRES polls in Luxembourg, and poll figures from secondary sources in the Danish and Irish cases (FitzGibbon, 2009, 2013; Sinnott & Elkink, 2010; Siune et al., 1994; Svensson, 2002).

demonstrate whether the anti-treaty campaigners mobilized various attack lines against the EU treaties to control the agenda on consequences and to drive down the support for these treaties.

Next, turning to the political setting, the figures on government popularity, EU support and party consensus (variables closely linked to alternative explanations – second-order, issue-voting and party cues approaches) are important to understand whether these factors pre-determined the referendum results. Government popularity figures are primarily based on national polls in the last six months leading up to the vote.[4] The figures on EU support and party consensus are based on the measurement of Mendez et al. (2016): the EU support represents the percentages of those who thought that EU membership is a 'good thing' in the Eurobarometer surveys directly preceding the vote, and party consensus is measured as the absolute difference between the percentage of seats held by political parties in favour of a Yes vote and those that favour a No vote (0 being no consensus and 100 being full consensus). To nuance the party cues point beyond the party consensus measure, the mentioned tendency of the government and all the mainstream political parties to campaign on the pro-treaty side (e.g. De Vries, 2009) applies to the 11 referendums studied here. Roughly speaking, the far right and far left parties are against the EU treaties and the parties in the middle are for them. The cases are thus comparable. Nonetheless, there are two points to be stressed. First, in the European Constitution referendums in France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the social democratic parties had official pro-treaty stances but were de facto divided. Second, in the Danish Maastricht Treaty referendums, the Socialist People's Party switched from the anti-treaty side to the pro-treaty side in the second referendum. Yet, a detailed debate in the literature links these issues to campaign information, arguing that these divisions and shifts nuanced the campaign information available to the public (e.g. Atikcan, 2015b; Hobolt, 2006; Svensson, 2002). This aspect is captured through the interview data. Finally, Table 1 presents information on the initiator of each referendum based on the measurement of Oppermann

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[4] I use the same sources listed in Footnote 3.

(2013) to assess whether the triggering mechanism of the referendum correlates with the results, for instance showing a higher rejection rate for referendums that were initiated by the opposition.[5]

Another important factor, in terms of the political setting, relates to the referendum laws on campaign broadcasting. Among the cases discussed, Ireland is the only one with peculiar laws in this regard. In the Irish case, through Supreme Court ruling *Coughlan v. Broadcasting Complaints Commission and RTÉ,* the No campaigners were granted equal airtime in referendum campaigns.[6] Coughlan's court case secured equal airtime on public broadcasting service RTE for the Yes and No camps, as opposed to the previous system of proportionality with the allocation of seats in the Parliament, the Dáil Éireann. This boosts the visibility of the No campaign's arguments, even when most parties are in favour of the EU treaty, increasing the asymmetrical political advantage further. Although the literature hints that the interpretation of this law could have had an impact on the referendum debate, this peculiarity does not correlate with the referendum outcomes in the cases under study (Atikcan, 2015b, p. 13).

Interview data

Interview data reveals the campaigners' perception of this political advantage, and content analyses provide systematic maps of these perceptions. I conducted field research in France, Spain, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in 2008 on the European Constitution referendums, in Denmark and Ireland in 2011 on the Nice, Maastricht and Lisbon Treaty referendums, and in Ireland again in 2015 on the Fiscal Compact referendum. I interviewed around 140 campaigners from all political parties and civil society groups that were active in the campaigns. These interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured, based on opportunity and snowball sampling.

Interviews with campaigners included questions on their campaign themes, campaign strategies and the difficulties they faced during their campaigns, as well as questions on the performance and

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[5] The repeat referendums on the Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties are more complicated to code than others as they are initiated as a mix of factors, involving the governments, opposition and the EU.
[6] See (Barrett, 2010) for a detailed discussion of this ruling.

mistakes of the rival campaigns. In Table 2 below, I manually coded their responses on whether they (or the rival campaign) had an 'advantage' or an 'easier job', and whether they (or the rival campaign) used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail', which provide direct information on their perception of who controlled the agenda on the negative consequences of the vote choice. More importantly, interview data is helpful also to understand the reasons behind these perceptions. In explaining their campaigning experience and the challenges they faced, campaigners highlight the factors that cause the political advantage to change hands.

Table 2 here

I take a step further in the case of the Fiscal Compact referendum in Ireland and present detailed interview data as well as data based on a content analysis of campaign statements. The reason for choosing this case for further study is twofold. First, it provides an outlier case at first glance, as it will become clear in the analysis below. Second, the Irish Parliament formed a Sub-Committee on the Fiscal Compact to stimulate the debate on the treaty (Sub-Committee Report, 2012), which provided an untapped source of data to analyse the campaign agenda further. I do a content analysis of the transcripts of 51 contributions, coming from social partners, academics, economists and Irish MEPs. A full list of the individuals interviewed, the interview questionnaire, the codebook of content analysis and some sample campaign posters are presented in the online appendix.

Setting the agenda in EU treaty ratification referendums

Looking closely at the two tables, the data on the political setting (Table 1) reveal that government popularity, EU support, party consensus or how the referendum was initiated do not have a systematic relation to the referendum outcomes. On the other hand, the indicators on campaign characteristics (Table 1) and the interview data (Table 2) tell a meaningful story about how these campaigns unfolded.

Where the campaign characteristics indicate high campaign intensity and high volatility in public opinion, campaigners perceive an advantage for the anti-treaty side. Importantly, these cases are also the ones in which the referendum proposal was more multidimensional, providing support for the proposed underlying mechanism for such an advantage.

Campaign intensity and turnout figures in Table 1 are helpful in identifying the cases where there was no active debate between the rival campaigns: the European Constitution campaign in Spain and the first campaign on the Nice Treaty in Ireland were among the lowest intensity ones. In the Spanish case, this is related to the lack of a substantive campaign by the anti-treaty side (Torreblanca, 2005). Not engaging the debate, the anti-treaty side would thus not be expected to have a political advantage. In the Irish case, the low intensity and turnout figures were linked to the absence of a thorough pro-treaty campaign (Laffan & Langan, 2005), which parallels the campaign perceptions below.

The No vote intention differential distinguishes the campaigns where public opinion was quite volatile from those where it was not. The figures in Table 1 show that negative public opinion increased significantly in most referendums. However, the anti-treaty vote intentions either did not increase or increased relatively little in the second referendums on Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties, as well as the Fiscal Compact referendum and the Spanish referendum on the European Constitution. In the Spanish case, it is in line with the expectations, as the anti-treaty campaign was not very vocal. As for the other cases, interview data sheds light on why the anti-treaty sides seem to benefit less from such an advantage.

Looking at the central themes of the campaign, in all cases the anti-treaty side mounted various themes on the agenda to highlight the negative consequences of the proposed EU treaty for the public. Only in the second referendums on the Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties this was impossible because the EU has provided guarantees on the anti-treaty themes used in the first referendums. In the repeat referendums, the pro-treaty side argued that the EU (or more precisely other member states acting

through the European Council) had listened to the Danish/Irish people and responded with legal guarantees. In line with the Edinburgh Agreement, Denmark would have four opt-outs in the fields of European citizenship, economic and monetary union, defence policy, and justice and home affairs. Ireland, on the other hand, gained a guarantee concerning its military neutrality with the Seville Declaration after the Nice referendum. Once again, after the Lisbon referendum, the Irish government obtained guarantees on the Irish commissioner, Irish competency over tax rates, abortion, neutrality, and workers' rights. These were the themes the anti-treaty campaigns raised in the first referendums but they could not do so in the repeat referendums due to the legal guarantees (Sinnott, 2003; Sinnott & Elkink, 2010; Siune et al., 1994).

Interview data parallels these patterns and uncovers the perception of campaigners on who controlled the agenda. In responding to questions on campaign themes, strategies and the difficulties they faced, campaigners mention which side 'had an advantage' or an 'easier job', and whether they (or the rival campaign) used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail'. Table 2 categorizes their responses. The marked cells indicate that a majority of the respondents agreed with the mentioned statement.

There are two narratives in the interview data. The first one is visible in the European Constitution referendums and in the *first referendums* on the Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties. These treaties were hundreds of pages long and multidimensional, arming the anti-treaty side with a wide array of arguments. In the French, Dutch and Luxembourgish campaigns, a majority of the pro-treaty campaigners argue that the anti-treaty side had an advantage and controlled the campaign agenda on the negative consequences of the vote choice. To detail their arguments, they suggest that the anti-treaty side brought in (often unrelated) themes to advance the idea that the Constitution would have negative consequences in terms of social benefits, national sovereignty, immigration, and militarization. They argue that given the lack of knowledge on the EU, the anti-treaty side could mobilize these themes, which captured the public's mind easily. They explain that it was difficult to counter the

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multiplicity of anti-treaty arguments while trying to be coherent, and that when they were trying to achieve that they were cornered to a defensive campaign. They similarly add that they could not bring up any negative consequences relating to the rejection of the treaty. The anti-treaty campaigners do not accept that they held an advantage but they do not argue that the pro-treaty side controlled the campaign agenda either. They blame the pro-treaty side for not paying attention to people's existing worries and for discussing Europe only in an abstract manner.

Among the European Constitution referendums, the Spanish case provides an exception. There has not been a significant campaign against the Constitution, which can be seen in the relatively low campaign intensity and turnout figures as well as the smaller movement of negative public opinion during the campaign in Table 1. Campaigners suggested various reasons to explain the lack of the anti-treaty campaign: the lack of a far right movement, the weakness of the far left civil society, and the strong association between the EU and democracy. José Ignacio Torreblanca of the Elcano Royal Institute summarized the Spanish campaign in a few words: 'Instead of having a policy debate on what sort of Europe we want, we had sportsmen reading Article 7 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights on television'.[7] Campaigners from both sides agreed that there was no real debate and that given the lack of anti-treaty arguments, the pro-treaty campaigners were able to tap into what Europe stands for in Spain. The pro-treaty side does not hold a majoritarian view on who had an advantage but a majority of the anti-treaty campaigners say that the pro-treaty side had an easier job.

Continuing with the first narrative, the responses in the *first referendums* on the Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties are in fact surprisingly similar to those in the European Constitution referendums. Like the European Constitution, these treaties provided the anti-treaty side with diverse arguments. A majority of pro-treaty campaigners suggest that the anti-treaty side controlled the agenda on the negative consequences of the vote choice as they mention that the anti-treaty side had an easier job and used fearful arguments. To open up this data further, the pro-treaty campaigners in these first

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[7] Interview, 6 October 2008.

referendums complain that the anti-treaty side tied the treaties to unpopular themes such as loss of sovereignty, creation of a political Union, interference into national laws and brought in themes unrelated to the EU treaty ('red herrings') to boost fears. Specifically referring to the public's unfamiliarity with the EU, they add that they had difficulty responding to each and every anti-treaty argument, and that when they were trying to respond to these arguments they were getting into a defensive mode and could not specify their own arguments or the consequences of the rejection of the treaty. The anti-treaty campaigners do not necessarily share this perceptive but they do not say that the pro-treaty side had an advantage in setting the agenda either. They characterize their campaign as superior to the pro-treaty one arguing that the pro side took the positive result granted. This first narrative (coming from the three referendums on the European Constitution and the first referendums in the case of the repeated referendums), indicating a perception that the anti-treaty side had a political advantage, is largely paralleled by the high level of movement in negative public opinion in Table 1.

The second narrative comes from the *second referendums* on the Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon Treaties. Here, despite the fact that these treaties offered a multidimensional platform for the anti-treaty campaigners, the guarantees from the EU limited the subject considerably. A majority of both pro- and anti-treaty campaigners agree that this time the pro-treaty side controlled the agenda on the consequences of the vote choice. Once again, to detail these perceptions, campaigners on both sides argue that the EU guarantees removed the controversial first-referendum themes of the anti-treaty camps from the agenda, and that the pro-treaty side pitched the second referendum as a vote on EU membership and thereby named clear negative consequences to the rejection of the treaty. In the second referendums, the pro-treaty side could argue that the public no longer needed to fear the themes brought in by the anti-treaty side as the EU had now provided guarantees that they would not materialize. In the face of these assurances, the anti-treaty campaigners could only dispute the validity of the guarantees and lost their earlier advantage, as can also be observed in the change of their central

campaign themes in Table 1. The pro-treaty campaigners then advanced the idea that a second No vote would mean a rejection of the EU and loss of membership and economic benefits. In the second Lisbon referendum, in addition to this argument, the pro-treaty campaign also advanced the idea that a Yes vote would be the only solution to the unfolding economic crisis in Ireland (for campaign materials see appendix Figure A1). The pro-treaty side could thus control the campaign agenda on the negative consequences when the hands of the anti-treaty side were tied and when they could evoke an argument on economic loss. This second narrative, highlighting the perceived advantage of the pro-treaty side, is also in line with the relatively smaller movement of negative public opinion in the second referendums on Maastricht, Nice, and Lisbon Treaties in Table 1. There is one key difference in the Lisbon referendums. Although sharing the pattern of responses with the other repeated referendums, here, a majority of the anti-treaty campaigners actually accept that they had an advantage in the first referendum campaign. Their argument is that they learned from the Nice referendums that they could ask the public to vote No in the first referendum in order to get a 'better deal' (guarantees) in a not-yet-announced but almost-certain second referendum.

What this data shows is that when the anti-treaty campaign participates actively in the treaty ratification debate and when the referendum proposal is multidimensional, they can control the agenda setting and the pro-treaty side perceives the advantage of the rival campaign clearly (first narrative). This perception importantly parallels the figures on the movement of negative public opinion in Table 1. Nonetheless, the pro-treaty side is perceived to have the advantage in repeat referendums when the new guarantees from the EU block the arguments of the anti-treaty side and when the pro-treaty side can bring up the economic costs of an exclusion from the EU (second narrative). This perception once again overlaps with the figures on the movement of negative public opinion in Table 1. The Fiscal Compact presents an outlier at first glance, however. Table 2 shows that a majority of both pro- and anti-treaty campaigners argue that the pro-treaty side had the advantage and controlled the arguments on

fear, just as in the repeat referendums, despite this being a single referendum. The answer to the puzzle lies in the multidimensionality of the debate as I discuss in detail below.

Looking deeper: The Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact

The Fiscal Compact was accepted on 31 May 2012 (39.7% No vote). Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, and the Green Party campaigned for a Yes vote, while the Sinn Féin, the Socialist Party, and the Workers' Party called for a No vote. Civil society pro-treaty campaign Alliance for Ireland participated actively in the campaign. On the anti-treaty side, interestingly, the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) and the pro-life Catholic group Cóir, who are usual anti-treaty campaigners in Ireland, refrained from doing so in the Fiscal Compact campaign. Similarly, the People's Movement and Libertas, prominent anti-treaty campaigners in previous referendums, were considerably less active in this referendum.

While the end of the Celtic Tiger was slowly becoming visible at the time of the first Lisbon referendum, the second referendum saw full-blown economic crisis. Between fall 2007 and June 2009, polls demonstrate a sharp increase in Irish citizens' concern with the *state of the economy*. While only 8% named it as one of the two most important issues in 2007, this figure rose to 48% by June 2009 (Eurobarometer, 2009). In 2012, *unemployment* (62%) and *economic situation* (55%) continued to be the top two concerns (Eurobarometer, 2012). Satisfaction with the government followed a similar pattern, as can be seen in Table 1. Surprisingly, voters rejected the Lisbon Treaty when they were more satisfied with their government and the economic situation, and accepted both the Lisbon Treaty and the Fiscal Compact when they were less so, going against the 'second-order' approach in the literature, which is why a close look at campaign dynamics is necessary.

The anti-treaty side pitched the Fiscal Compact as the 'Austerity Treaty', called it a financial straight-jacket and linked it to recent and unpopular household and water taxes. The pro-treaty side, on the other hand, decided to tie the vote to the economic crisis. They presented the treaty as the 'Stability

Treaty', emphasized its importance for investment, job creation and recovery in the crisis context, and argued that a No vote would not stop the ratification process but would effectively block Ireland's access to a major new source of funding through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) (for campaign materials see appendix Figure A2).

In the interviews, without exception, all campaigners argued that the pro-treaty side controlled the arguments on fear and the negative consequences, instead of being on defence as it had happened in many previous Irish referendums. Terry Murphy of Fine Gael said: '[The No side] certainly tried to make it into a referendum on austerity. ... But there was a more definitive risk that we could put out there. If we don't vote Yes, what might happen? ... It was all about jobs, the future of the economy, the economic security and our position within the EU'.[8] Fianna Fáil MP Timmy Dooley added: 'The fear was on the Yes side ... in other debates the fear was about all sorts of extreme circumstances ... this was hard cash. The fear was about the economy, it was about your job ... in the eye of the storm'.[9] Campaign Coordinator of Alliance for Ireland Brendan Halligan similarly said: 'Psychologically it was a reversal of previous situations. ... A very easy campaign to run. ... The strategy this time was a simple one, which was to repeat the message that this was ... absolutely critical to our economic survival'.[10] Joe Costello, Labour Party MP, also argued that it was the pro-treaty side that could use the fear tactic:[11]

> In a strange way, the argument was on the Yes side, not to change the status quo, because the Fiscal Compact was retaining the European solution. Whereas in many of the treaties before that, we were proposing a change in our relationship with the EU ... [This time) we were saying let's stick with what we know ... What did they have to offer as an alternative? ... You can go out there and burn the bond holders. ... Who were we going to borrow money from? ... So we played, to a degree, we played the fear tactic this time, whereas the other side had played the fear tactic in all the other treaties.

Anti-treaty campaigners all mentioned that fear was the overriding factor in the pro-treaty campaign. Peter Lacey of the People's Movement noted: 'They played it absolutely brilliantly. ... A lot of

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[8] Interview, 18 May 2015.
[9] Interview, 20 May 2015.
[10] Interview, 14 May 2015.
[11] Interview, 13 May 2015.

these [Yes] arguments that were put forward for the Fiscal Compact and for the Lisbon treaty [second referendum] were exactly the same. It was simply based on fear ... bringing Ireland back from economic ruin'.[12] Michael Taft, economist at Unite, resented that the campaign boiled down to the access to bailout funds without a detailed discussion: 'The idea that you would follow a cyclically adjusted balanced budget [in the Fiscal Compact] is loony. ... But the overriding question was that if we didn't pass this referendum we wouldn't get any bailout money'.[13]

The anti-treaty side tried to counter this specific argument. Paul Murphy, Socialist Party MP, said: 'There was no way that if we didn't sign we couldn't get access to the money. ... It's all a political decision to be made'.[14] Nonetheless, Sinn Féin's Campaign Director Eoin Ó Broin explained the difficulty of advancing these types of arguments:[15]

> We were trying to say, 'look, given the level of exposure of German, French and British banks to the Irish banking system and given the negative economic, financial and political impact of denying a member state like Ireland a second bailout if it was required, it would not happen'. But you are still asking people to take a big risk ... we found it very difficult to counter that [Yes side] argument.

Michael Taft, economist at Unite, similarly said: 'Those arguments didn't wash, understandably. Nobody wanted to take that chance'.[16] Anthony Coughlan of the National Platform agreed: 'There were technicalities of that kind which were hard to explain'.[17]

As such, there was no credible alternative to the ESM funding in the campaign, and this was highly problematic given the uncertainty surrounding the future of the economy. Fianna Fáil MP Timmy Dooley noted: 'Being anti-austerity is not a policy response. ... They were talking against it, but they didn't have a concrete alternative'.[18] Blair Horan of the Charter Group said: 'The No side didn't really

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[12] Interview, 19 May 2015. He emphasized that this was his personal perspective and not of his organization.
[13] Interview, 21 May 2015.
[14] Interview, 12 May 2015.
[15] Interview, 13 May 2015.
[16] Interview, 21 May 2015.
[17] Interview, 22 May 2015.
[18] Interview, 20 May 2015.

have as good a campaign because they could never answer that question: How could you get the funds if it was rejected?'[19]

In addition to mentioning the pro-treaty side's effective use of fear, the campaigners underlined the narrow focus of the treaty as making the anti-treaty side's job harder. Put differently, this treaty was not multidimensional. The anti-treaty camp simply lacked its usual members and arguments. In Ireland, neutrality organizations (PANA) and pro-life Catholic groups consistently campaign against the EU treaties. They decided not to campaign in this particular referendum. When asked about the reasons behind this choice, President of PANA Roger Cole said that their focus was militarization and that their main reason to not campaign was a lack of expertise.[20] Pro-life Iona Institute offered the same reasoning.[21] The fact that the Fiscal Compact was on a very limited subject changed campaign dynamics. Pro-treaty campaigners argued that this made it easier for them to campaign because it was harder for the anti-treaty side to link the proposal to a wide variety of themes such as neutrality or moral issues, in striking contrast with the Nice and Lisbon campaigns. Labour Party MP Joe Costello said: 'Previous treaties were about a plethora of issues. ... This was entirely on the economy. ... So less easy for red herrings to be introduced, which causes doubt in people's minds... It was easier for us to be coherent'.[22] Fianna Fáil MP Timmy Dooley agreed: 'It was very narrowly defined. ... We weren't dealing with the Charter of Fundamental Rights ... the extraneous arguments were not as prevalent'.[23]

To complement the interview data, I conducted a content analysis of campaign statements (see online appendix), which reveals similar patterns. As expected, the pro-treaty campaigners relied on keywords such as stability, foreign direct investment and responsible budgeting, whereas the anti-treaty campaigners brought up austerity, property tax, and blamed the EU for the poor economic conditions. Yet, interestingly, the pro-treaty speakers used the word 'risk', mentioned 'Greece' and brought up the

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[19] Interview, 20 May 2015.
[20] Interview, 14 May 2015.
[21] Interview with Ben Conroy, 13 May 2015.
[22] Interview, 13 May 2015.
[23] Interview, 20 May 2015.

issue of future eligibility for European bailout funds, more than the anti-treaty side did. This confirms that the pro-treaty side centred their campaign on catastrophic consequences, particularly on losing access to a major new source of bailout funding for future crises. The anti-treaty campaigners, on the other hand, used more empirical data and referred to economists in their argumentation.[24] This could be read as a reflection of the anti-treaty side's difficulty in explaining why a No vote would *not* block access to future bailout funds. Nonetheless, less than half of them proposed an alternative funding solution in relation to future crises, which echoes the interviewees' comments on the anti-treaty side's inability to propose a credible alternative.

Looking at the detailed data in the case of the Fiscal Compact, it is not surprising that the campaigners perceived the pro-treaty side to be more able to control the campaign agenda on the consequences of the vote choice. Although this is a narrative observed in repeat referendums and that the Fiscal Compact is a single referendum, what this case shares with repeat referendums is the limited availability of arguments for the anti-EU campaigners, confirming the importance of issue multidimensionality. The Fiscal Compact was on a very specific theme, which limited the role the usual anti-treaty campaigners can play in the debate.

Conclusion

In this research, I seek to theorize agenda setting in referendums on EU treaty ratification. The EU referendum literature, despite emphasizing the importance of campaigns, is silent on the asymmetrical advantage that exists in referendum politics, which gives the upper hand to the No side. I study 11 referendum campaigns closely to understand whether the anti-treaty side mounted a significant campaign and use interview data to observe the extent to which campaigners perceived an asymmetrical advantage in setting the agenda on the consequences of the vote choice, while looking closely into the political setting to control for alternative explanations. Empirically this in-depth analysis contributes to

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[24] In this context, data means outside sources, studies and surveys.

the growing scholarship on EU referendum campaigns and how campaign information mediates the extent to which different aspects of the referendum proposal become salient in the minds of voters.

I find that the anti-treaty campaigners, as expected, enjoy a political advantage in EU treaty ratification referendums when they actively participate in the debate. Nevertheless, I also specify the underlying mechanism of this advantage and the conditions in which this advantage becomes constrained. The asymmetrical advantage depends essentially on the availability of arguments. The more multidimensional the topic is, the more campaign material the No side has. When the typical anti-treaty campaigners cannot advance their arguments either because the guarantees from the EU removed their themes from the agenda (repeat referendum) or because the treaty is a very specific one (Fiscal Compact), this advantage disappears. These findings confirm that the EU referendum votes are not inherently based on national or European factors, as the second-order and issue-voting approaches suggest. Instead, the degree to which national or European factors relate to the vote depends on whether and how the rival campaigns bring them up.

This research speaks to the broader referendum literature as well. The findings demonstrate that in EU referendums, under certain conditions, the Yes side is also able to attach drastic consequences to a vote against the proposal and play the same game as No campaigners. The sample of EU referendums under study suggests two factors. First, the Yes side has increased chances to set the agenda when the No side is restrained. Second, for both sides the availability of certain arguments matters. In the interview data, the pro-treaty campaigners suggest that they control the agenda best if they can use arguments on a potential exclusion from the economic benefits of EU membership either because it is a second vote and a second rejection is presented as a rejection of the EU (repeat referendum) or because the vote is tied directly to access to EU bailout funds (Fiscal Compact). As Billie Sparks, a pro-Lisbon campaigner, put it: 'In the second round, the Yes side played the No side at their own game. ... This time

the messages were simpler, such as "Yes for jobs"'.[25] Ciarán Toland, a pro-Nice campaigner, compared the 'jobs' argument of the Yes campaign to the 'abortion' and 'neutrality' arguments of the No campaign, in that they both had nothing to do with the treaty in question.[26] Importantly, however, the Yes campaigners played this game only when they were not cornered in a defensive campaign by an aggressive No side. Comparative research designs could further investigate the circumstances in which the Yes side gains such control in different kinds of referendums, whether this happens only when the No side's hands are tied, and the kinds of arguments they raise when they do so.

While this research has focused on agenda setting on negative consequences at the aggregate level, another question for future research could be the relationship between the asymmetrical advantage in referendum campaigns and the status quo bias. There are numerous studies at the individual level, which show that individuals weigh losses heavier than gains in making decisions (e.g. Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, 1984; Kam & Simas, 2010; Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988; Thaler, 1980). To understand the relationship between the No side's advantage and a status quo bias, future work could study the degree to which individuals respond to rival campaign arguments around 'risk'. Individuals are shown to alter their preferences when they hear different but logically equivalent descriptions, e.g. 90% employment vs. 10% unemployment (Tversky & Kahneman, 1990), responding more to negatively presented ones.[27] Detailed data linking the campaign messages to individual-level change in attitudes would provide a fruitful research agenda.

Future research should also compare the political advantage and the availability of arguments in different kinds of referendums. This article studied votes on the ratification of EU treaties because the treaty amendment referendums provide a particular kind of debate, which is highly comparable across

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[25] Interview, 27 April 2011.
[26] Interview, 11 April 2011.
[27] This equivalency framing (Tversky & Kahneman, 1990) is different from the issue framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007) that I refer to in this paper. Equivalency framing involves casting the *same* information in either a positive or negative light. Issue framing concerns the ways in which a speaker might shift public opinion by emphasizing certain themes and deemphasizing others.

cases. Nevertheless, the findings could be applicable to referendums on EU policies as well. For instance, in the Swedish and Danish votes on the adoption of the common currency Euro, the anti-EU sides framed the proposals strategically to raise fundamental questions on the future of Europe such as enlargement, social welfare or national sovereignty (e.g. de Vreese & Semetko, 2004; LeDuc, 2005). In the recent Dutch referendum on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement too, the anti-EU campaigners strategically moved beyond the proposal itself (Cleppe, 2015). Instead of focusing on Ukraine, the activists who initiated the referendum openly acknowledged that their aim was to give voters a chance to express their frustration at the EU (Forsyth, 2016). In policy referendums, like in treaty amendment ones, campaign strategies and the ability to broaden the debate arguably play an important role.

Another important category will likely be 'exit' referendums. The Brexit referendum was the first of this kind. Most people predicted the Remain side to win precisely because of the clear consequences of leaving the EU and the potential status quo bias. But this case is more nuanced than the treaty ratification ones because there was no clear 'No side', and the campaign was run on a different dichotomy of Remain and Leave. Both campaigns held key advantages in the Brexit referendum. First, in terms of the availability of campaign arguments, the Leave side could bring up anything they disliked about the Union because the referendum was not limited to a single issue and was about everything the EU implied (unlike the Fiscal Compact). The public's lack of familiarity with the institutions and competences of the EU has arguably helped the anti-EU side in that sense, as the interview data suggests. Second, in terms of the agenda control, although the Remain side arguably had the political advantage of presenting Brexit as having drastic *economic* consequences (a departure from the status quo), the Leave side not only challenged these economic figures but also brought up different consequences of remaining in the EU (consequences of the continuation of the status quo), suggesting that the UK would lose control of its *immigration* policy. The slim victory of the Leave side might not be surprising as both campaigns highlighted the negative consequences of the vote, in contrast with the

usual picture in EU treaty ratification campaigns where one side tends to collect them all. Although David Cameron secured a deal with the EU before the referendum to block the Leave side from advancing those types of arguments, which could have worked just as guarantees in repeat referendums, this deal was not seen as a substantial one. The campaign ground in a potential referendum on the final 'Brexit deal', after exit negotiations, could be very similar to those in repeat referendums. Going beyond the EU referendums, independence referendums have important similarities to the Brexit case and thereby 'exit' referendums. The findings would be applicable to these referendums as well, where both pro- and anti-independence groups actively seek to define the consequences of the vote choice.

These questions also have important policy implications. Dinan (2012, p. 95) describes referendums as 'a lightning-rod for Eurosceptics and a scourge for EU politicians and officials' because Eurosceptics can easily manipulate them and they are 'notoriously difficult to win'. This article sheds light on the mechanisms that lead to such an advantage. Nonetheless, under certain circumstances, the Yes side is able to gain control of the agenda. If the EU decides to draft more specific treaties outside of the main treaty reform framework and to attach concrete costs to referendum outcomes, as they did in the case of Fiscal Compact, this might limit the No side's hand in future campaigns, for better or for worse. Future referendum outcomes will depend on the content of the proposals and the strategies used by the government, the rival campaigns and the EU.

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	Campaign intensity	Turnout	Yes vote	No vote intention differential	Central themes of the No side	Government popularity (%)	EU support (%)	Party consensus (%)	Initiator
Maastricht Treaty									
Denmark I *1992*	11	83.1	**49.3**	+23	Creation of a political 'Union' Loss of sovereignty, citizenship, currency	35	57	61	Mandated by the constitution
Denmark II *1993*	9	86.5	56.7	-10	The validity of Danish 'opt-outs'	45	61	61	
Nice Treaty									
Ireland I *2001*	4	34.8	**46.1**	+31[2]	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Changes in laws on abortion, military neutrality Enlargement	60	72	78	Mandated by the constitution
Ireland II *2002*	6	49.5	62.9	+10	The validity of the 'guarantees'	30	78	68	
European Constitution									
Spain *2005*	5	42.3	76.7	+13	Loss of social standards Militarization Language recognition (in the regions)	56	72	77	Government
France *2005*	12	69.3	**45.3**	+23	Loss of social standards and public services Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	44	56	40	Government
The Netherlands *2005*	8	62.8	**38.5**	+50	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Euro Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	48	75	67	Opposition
Luxembourg *2005*	6	90.4[1]	56.5	+26	Loss of social standards and public services Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	71	85	77	Government
Lisbon Treaty									
Ireland I *2008*	8	53.1	**46.6**	+30	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Changes in laws on abortion, military neutrality and corporate tax rate	32	73	73	Mandated by the constitution
Ireland II *2009*		59.0	67.1	+5	The validity of the 'guarantees'	10	69	73	
Fiscal Treaty									
Ireland *2012*		50.6	60.3	+5	Negative effects of 'austerity' policies	23	63	61	Mandated by the constitution

Note: Rejections in bold. [1] Luxembourg has compulsory voting. [2] Undecided not included.

Table 1: Campaign characteristics and political setting

		They had an 'advantage' or 'easier job'	They used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail'	We had an 'advantage' or 'easier job'	We used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail'
Maastricht Treaty					
Denmark I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Denmark II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
Nice Treaty					
Ireland I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Ireland II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
European Constitution					
Spain	Yes side				
	No side	X			
France	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
The Netherlands	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Luxembourg	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Lisbon Treaty					
Ireland I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side			X	
Ireland II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
Fiscal Treaty					
Ireland	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		

Note: Marked cells indicate that a majority of the respondents agreed with the mentioned statement.

Table 2: Interview data on the perception of agenda setting on negative consequences of the vote choice

ONLINE APPENDIX

Interview Questionnaire

1. What were the main issues/arguments raised in your campaign (and second campaign if a repeat referendum)?
2. Why did you specifically choose these issues and arguments?
3. Did your party/organization have a campaigning strategy (and did your party/organization change its campaign strategy in the second referendum if a repeat referendum)?
4. How did you organize your campaign (and was your preparation different for the second referendum if a repeat referendum)?
5. What were the main challenges you faced during your campaign?
6. How well do you think the other side has performed?
7. What would you say were the main challenges the other side faced?

Codebook for Content Analysis

The content analysis is based on the transcripts of 51 contributions, coming from social partners, academics, economists and Irish MEPs. 24 speakers recommended a No vote, while 27 of them were in favor of the treaty. The analysis was conducted manually.

	YES	NO
Does the statement mention 'Greece'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'risk'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'stability'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'austerity'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'foreign investment'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'property tax'?	1	0
Does the statement bring up the concept of increased austerity?	1	0
Does the statement blame the EU for the current poor economic situation?	1	0
Does the statement bring up the concept of future bailout funds?	1	0
Does the statement bring up the concept of responsible budgeting?	1	0
Does the statement use any data? (i.e. footnotes, outside sources, literature, studies, surveys etc.)	1	0
Does the statement refer to economists?	1	0
Does the statement propose an alternative solution for the governance of potential future economic crises?	1	0

Figure A1: Campaign posters in Lisbon Treaty referendums
(Top row first round, bottom row second round)

Figure A2: Campaign posters in the Fiscal Compact referendum

SPAIN
Political parties
Yes campaigners

o Juan Fernando López Aguilar (PSOE, MP, Minister of Justice and Interior Affairs)
o Juan Moscoso del Prado Hernández (PSOE, MP)
o Enrique Baron Crespo (PSOE, MEP, the chairman of the Party of European Socialists Group in the EP between 1999 and 2004)
o Orestes Suárez Antón (PSOE, International Secretary)
o Alejando Muñoz Alonso (PP, Senator)
o Ignacio Cosidó Gutiérrez (PP, MP)
o Jordi Xuclà i Costa (CiU, MP)
o José Ramón Beloki Guerra (PNV, MP)
o Carles Llorens I Vila (CDC, International Secretary)

No campaigners

o José Manuel Fernández Fernández (IU, Coordinator of the Parliamentary Group, and mayor of Bustarviejo)
o Joaquim Puig Vilamala and Oriol Duran Torres (ERC, Coordinator, and Spokesperson of the Parliamentary Group)
o *Marc Giménez Villahoz* (ICV, European Politics Coordinator)
o Mikel Irujo Amezaga (EA, MEP)

Civil society

o Jaime Pastor (IU, ATTAC, Alternative Space)
o Ricardo Gómez Muñoz (ATTAC)
o Carlos Girbau Costa (Social Forum, IU)
o Luis González Reyes (Ecologists in Action)
o *José* Ignacio *Torreblanca* (Senior Analyst for EU Affairs, Elcano Royal Institute for International Affairs)
o Jordi Vaquer i Fanés (Europe Programme Co-ordinator, CIDOB Foundation)

FRANCE
Political parties
Yes campaigners

o Olivier Ubéda (UMP, Deputy Director of Communications and European Affairs Delegate)
o Alain Bergounioux (PS, S**ecretary General of the PS Scientific Council)**
o Pierre Kanuty (PS, International and European Affairs Political Assistant)
o *Patrick Farbiaz* (The Greens, International Secretary)
o Isabelle Sicart (UDF)

No campaigners

o Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (UMP, MP)
o Jacques Myard (UMP, MP)

- o Jacques Généreux (PS)
- o Francine Bavay (The Greens Executive Committee Member, and the Vice-President of the Regional Council of Île-de-France)
- o Daniel Cirera (PCF, International Secretary)
- o Dominique Touraine (PCF)
- o Alain Krivine (LCR)
- o Catherine Salagnac (National Front)

Civil society
- o Yves Salesse (Co-President of Copernic Foundation, Conseil d'État Member, Co-initiator of the Appeal of 200)
- o Claude Debons (General Workers' Confederation CGT, Co-initiator of the Appeal of 200)
- o Pierre Khalfa (ATTAC, and *Solidarity* Unity Democracy)
- o Susan George (ATTAC)
- o Aurélie Trouvé (ATTAC)
- o Maxime Combes (ATTAC)
- o Christophe Beaudouin (Secretary General of the "Group for a Confederation of the States of Europe," campaigned with the MPF)
- o Raoul-Marc Jennar (Member of the No Committee)
- o *Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul* (Secretary General of Notre Europe)

THE NETHERLANDS
Political parties
Yes campaigners
- o Atzo Nicolaï (VVD, MP, Minister of European Affairs)
- o Jan Jacob van Dijk (CDA, MP)
- o Marije Laffeber (PvdA, International Secretary)
- o Bas Eickhout (GreenLeft, Delegate in the European Green Party)
- o Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (D66, Secretary of the D66 Parliamentary Group)
- o Michiel van Hulten (Director of Foundation for a Better Europe)
- o Hilde Laffeber (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Member of the Yes Campaign Team)
- o Delphine Pronk (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Head of the EU Communications Unit)
- o Marco Pastors (Political Leader of the local party Liveable Rotterdam, Member of the City Council, and deputy mayor of Rotterdam)
- o Otto Ter Haar (The Greens, International Secretary)

No campaigners
- o Harry van Bommel (SP, MP)
- o Renske Leijten (SP, leader of the ROOD, SP's youth organization)
- o Hans van Heijningen (SP, Secretary-General)
- o Esme Wiegman (CU, MP)
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- o Alexander van Hattem (Young Fortuynists, Youth Organization of the now defunct LPF)

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- o Willem Bos (President of the ConstitutionNo, and ATTAC Netherlands)

- Erik Wesselius (ConstitutionNo)
- Wim van de Donk (President of the WRR, Scientific Council for Government Policy)
- Monica Sie Dhian Ho (WRR, Scientific Council for Government Policy)
- Patrick van Schie (Director of the Liberal think tank that is related to the VVD)

LUXEMBOURG
Political parties
Yes campaigners
- François Biltgen (CSV, MP, Chairman of the CSV and Minister of Labor and Employment)
- Laurent Mosar (CSV, MP)
- Ben Fayot (LSAP, MP, President of the Parliamentary Group)
- Charles Goerens (DP, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs)
- Abbes Jacoby (The Greens, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Group)
- Dan Michels (The Greens, Parliamentary Attaché)

No campaigners
- Jacques-Yves Henckes (ADR, MP)
- Henri Wehenkel (The Left)

Civil society
- André Kremer (Coordinator and Leader of the No Committee)
- Pierre *Gramegna* (Director-General of the Chamber of Commerce)
- Nico Clement (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Luxembourg OGBL)
- Nico Wennmacher (President of the Railways Trade Union FNCTTFEL-Landesverband)
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- Adrien Thomas (National Union of Luxembourgish Students UNEL)
- Frédéric Krier (National Union of Luxembourgish Students UNEL)
- Alfred Groff (Luxembourg Social Forum)
- Jürgen Stoldt (Political communication expert and Editor of Forum)
- Thomas Rupp (Organizer of the European No Campaign)

DENMARK
Political parties
Yes campaigners
- Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1992 and Leader of the Liberal Party)
- Niels Helveg Petersen (Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1993 and Social Liberal Party MP)
- Mogens Lykketoft (Social Democrat MP)
- Jacob Buksti (Social Democrat MP)
- Charlotte Antonsen (Liberal Party MP)
- Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller (State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

No campaigners
- Holger K. Nielsen (Leader of the Socialist People's Party, MP)
- Steen Gade (Socialist People's Party MP)

- o Søren Krarup (Progress Party)
- o Kenneth Kristensen Berth (Danish People's Party)

Civil society
- o Ole Krarup (President of the People's Movement against the EU)
- o Jens-Peter Bonde (President of the June Movement)
- o Erik Boel (President of the European Movement)

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Political parties
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- o Timmy Dooley (Fianna Fáil, MP) (2 interviews, in 2011 and 2015)
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- o Seán Dorgan (Fianna Fáil, General Secretary)
- o Lucinda Creighton (Fine Gael, MP)
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- o Joe Costello (Labour Party, MP) (2 interviews, in 2011 and 2015)
- o Thomas Broughan (Labour Party, MP)
- o Déirdre de Búrca (Green Party, MP)

No campaigners
- o Mary Lou McDonald (Sinn Féin, MP)
- o Eoin Ó'Broin (Sinn Féin, Campaign Director) (2 interviews, in 2011 and 2015)
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- Caroline Erskine (Ireland for Europe, Communications Director)
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- Michelle O'Donnell Keating (Women for Europe, Co-founder)
- Jillian van Turnhout (Ireland for Europe)
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- Michael Taft (Economist, Unite)
- Andy Storey (University professor and No campaigner)
- Paul Hand (Press Liaison Officer to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Fiscal Compact)
- Ciarán Toland (Civil society Yes campaigner in the Nice Treaty referendums)

	Campaign intensity	Turnout	Yes vote	No vote intention differential	Central themes of the No side	Government popularity (%)	EU support (%)	Party consensus (%)	Initiator
Maastricht Treaty									
Denmark I *1992*	11	83.1	**49.3**	+23	Creation of a political 'Union' Loss of sovereignty, citizenship, currency	35	57	61	Mandated by the constitution
Denmark II *1993*	9	86.5	56.7	-10	The validity of Danish 'opt-outs'	45	61	61	
Nice Treaty									
Ireland I *2001*	4	34.8	**46.1**	+31[2]	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Changes in laws on abortion, military neutrality Enlargement	60	72	78	Mandated by the constitution
Ireland II *2002*	6	49.5	62.9	+10	The validity of the 'guarantees'	30	78	68	
European Constitution									
Spain *2005*	5	42.3	76.7	+13	Loss of social standards Militarization Language recognition (in the regions)	56	72	77	Government
France *2005*	12	69.3	**45.3**	+23	Loss of social standards and public services Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	44	56	40	Government
The Netherlands *2005*	8	62.8	**38.5**	+50	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Euro Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	48	75	67	Opposition
Luxembourg *2005*	6	90.4[1]	56.5	+26	Loss of social standards and public services Enlargement, Islam, Turkey's EU membership Militarization	71	85	77	Government
Lisbon Treaty									
Ireland I *2008*	8	53.1	**46.6**	+30	Loss of sovereignty, power, social standards Changes in laws on abortion, military neutrality and corporate tax rate	32	73	73	Mandated by the constitution
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Ireland *2012*		50.6	60.3	+5	Negative effects of 'austerity' policies	23	63	61	Mandated by the constitution

Note: Rejections in bold. [1] Luxembourg has compulsory voting. [2] Undecided not included.

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		They had an 'advantage' or 'easier job'	They used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail'	We had an 'advantage' or 'easier job'	We used 'fear' or 'threats' or 'blackmail'
Maastricht Treaty					
Denmark I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Denmark II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
Nice Treaty					
Ireland I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Ireland II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
European Constitution					
Spain	Yes side				
	No side	X			
France	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
The Netherlands	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Luxembourg	Yes side	X	X		
	No side				
Lisbon Treaty					
Ireland I	Yes side	X	X		
	No side			X	
Ireland II	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		
Fiscal Treaty					
Ireland	Yes side			X	X
	No side	X	X		

Note: Marked cells indicate that a majority of the respondents agreed with the mentioned statement.

Table 2: Interview data on the perception of agenda setting on negative consequences of the vote choice

ONLINE APPENDIX

Interview Questionnaire

1. What were the main issues/arguments raised in your campaign (and second campaign if a repeat referendum)?
2. Why did you specifically choose these issues and arguments?
3. Did your party/organization have a campaigning strategy (and did your party/organization change its campaign strategy in the second referendum if a repeat referendum)?
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	YES	NO
Does the statement mention 'Greece'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'risk'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'stability'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'austerity'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'foreign investment'?	1	0
Does the statement mention 'property tax'?	1	0
Does the statement bring up the concept of increased austerity?	1	0
Does the statement blame the EU for the current poor economic situation?	1	0
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Does the statement bring up the concept of responsible budgeting?	1	0
Does the statement use any data? (i.e. footnotes, outside sources, literature, studies, surveys etc.)	1	0
Does the statement refer to economists?	1	0
Does the statement propose an alternative solution for the governance of potential future economic crises?	1	0

Figure A1: Campaign posters in Lisbon Treaty referendums
(Top row first round, bottom row second round)

Figure A2: Campaign posters in the Fiscal Compact referendum

SPAIN
Political parties
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- o Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (D66, Secretary of the D66 Parliamentary Group)
- o Michiel van Hulten (Director of Foundation for a Better Europe)
- o Hilde Laffeber (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Member of the Yes Campaign Team)
- o Delphine Pronk (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Head of the EU Communications Unit)
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- Jacob Buksti (Social Democrat MP)
- Charlotte Antonsen (Liberal Party MP)
- Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller (State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

No campaigners
- Holger K. Nielsen (Leader of the Socialist People's Party, MP)
- Steen Gade (Socialist People's Party MP)

- o Søren Krarup (Progress Party)
- o Kenneth Kristensen Berth (Danish People's Party)

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Political parties
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- Dan O'Brien, (Economist, Institute of International and European Affairs)
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- Andy Storey (University professor and No campaigner)
- Paul Hand (Press Liaison Officer to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Fiscal Compact)
- Ciarán Toland (Civil society Yes campaigner in the Nice Treaty referendums)