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Referendum campaign dynamics : news media, campaign effects and direct democracy

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CHAPTER 2

THE DUTCH NO TO THE EU CONSTITUTION: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF EU SKEPTICISM AND THE CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

In June 2005 the Dutch electorate rejected the EU constitutional treaty in a national referendum. The current study, which focuses on vote choice and the campaign, draws on complementary explanations for referendum voting behaviour. We investigated how attitudes towards the EU influenced the intention to vote No ahead of the campaign as well as the impact of the campaign and the media on the final vote. We combined a media content analysis (n=6,643) with panel survey data (n=1,379). Results reveal that prior to the start of the campaign, existing skepticism towards the EU was the strongest determinant for the intention to vote No and served as a mediator for the influence of other relevant factors such as disapproval of the incumbent government, feelings of national identity and fear of globalization. During the campaign the referendum topic was highly visible in the news with a positive tone towards the Constitution. In this context, higher levels of exposure to referendum news increased the likelihood of voters to switch over to the Yes side.

Introduction

Previous studies have put forward alternative explanations for the success or failure of national referendums on issues of European integration. The scientific debate thereby oscillates between the importance attached to EU issue-related attitudes (e.g., Svensson, 2002) and domestic considerations such as government evaluations (e.g., Franklin, 2002; Franklin et al., 1994). Much less attention has been devoted to the study of the effects of the campaign and campaign news coverage on the formation of public opinion and electoral behaviour in EU referendums. The present study aims to make two contributions: to explain how and to what extent attitudes towards the EU had an impact on the intention to vote No in the 2005 Dutch EU Constitution referendum, and to assess the role of the campaign in affecting the final vote choice.

The context for the current study is the Dutch national referendum in June 2005 in which a majority of 62% rejected the European Constitution, *de facto* marking the end of the ratification process. This was a remarkable result, considering that the vast majority of the Dutch political elite, the governing parties as well as the major opposition party, and all major news media were in support of the EU Constitution. In this study we specifically investigate the role of EU skepticism as a mediator for the influence of other political attitudes on the intention to vote No in the referendum, and discuss the degree to which the campaign mattered for voters to change their vote intention and switch over from one side to the other.

The Role of EU Skepticism in EU Referendums

A number of predispositions and attitudes are of particular importance when considering voting behaviour in referendums on issues of European integration. Both EU issue-related attitudes and more general political attitudes and domestic considerations have been put forward as key determinants for vote choice in EU referendums.

Several EU referendum studies have stressed the impact of issue-related factors and attitudes such as general *skepticism towards the EU* on vote choice (Siune & Svensson, 1993; Svensson, 2002). In referendum contexts in which involvement is high, citizens' voting decisions are more strongly orientated towards issue-related considerations (e.g., Garry et al., 2005; Hobolt, 2005; Svensson, 1994). Voters' pre-existing levels of support for the EU or European integration have indeed been shown to be one of the strongest predictors for vote choice in EU referendums also in a conservative multivariate test (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). A different stream of research, however, has emphasized that involvement in EU referendums is usually rather low, which attaches higher importance to considerations unrelated to the EU. In the context of such second-order type of elections, citizens are seen as more likely to direct their attention to domestic issues and, for example, use the referendum as an opportunity to rate the popularity of the incumbent government (Denver, 2002; Franklin, 2002; Franklin et al., 1995).

However, rather than seeing EU-related factors, such as general EU skepticism, and domestic considerations or general political attitudes as competing alternatives for the explanation

of referendum voting behaviour, the present study suggests an integrated dynamic of mediation. Indeed, there is recent evidence suggesting that second-order explanations for voting behaviour in referendums and EU issue voting have to be thought of as complementary rather than opposed to each other (Garry et al., 2005; Hobolt, 2006a). We suggest that general EU skepticism is the factor *through which* other political attitudes and predispositions – unrelated to the specific referendum issue – at least partially exert an influence on voting intentions in EU referendums. Accordingly, we integrate general EU skepticism into our model of explaining vote choice in EU referendums as a potential *mediator* which we expect to have a direct effect on voting intention, and which in itself we expect to be determined by more general political attitudes and predispositions.

How might such a mediated relationship help us to understand voting behaviour in EU referendums? Previous research has shown that there is a link between incumbent support and pro-European Union attitudes (e.g., Ray, 2003). Being in opposition to a government that promotes an EU proposal might thus translate into skepticism towards the EU itself and via this route exert an influence on the vote. Similarly, feelings of low political efficacy make it more likely for people to vote against a government proposal (Lowery & Sigelman, 1981). Thus, having little faith in political elites that support a referendum proposal can be expected to result in increased skepticism towards the EU.

Other attitudes and predispositions are usually directly related to general EU support. Among these factors are feelings of national identity (Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Denver, 2002), “national attachment” (e.g., Kritzinger, 2003) or related concepts like “national pride” (Carey, 2002) or “nationalism” (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2004). These concepts have all been shown to be negatively related to support for advanced EU integration. National identity thus can be expected to affect levels of EU skepticism and, through this route, also affect vote choice in EU referendums. The perception of economic benefits is another factor that has been shown to affect public support for the EU (Anderson & Reichert, 1996; Jenssen et al., 1998) and via this route also has the potential to influence what people vote for in a referendum. Furthermore, since pronounced left and right political orientations can be linked to lower levels of support for EU integration as compared to centrist ideological preferences, we also include political ideology in our analysis (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2004). Political interest is another factor that is usually associated with more positive attitudes towards Europe (Siune et al., 1994).

Finally, we expect fear of immigration and fear of globalization to exert an influence on vote choice in EU referendums. Being afraid of immigration contributes to people voting No in referendums on EU integration issues (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005). Fear of globalization, however, is a new factor we introduce in this study. We build on Oscarsson and Holmberg (2004) who have shown that being “cosmopolitan” was positively related to voting Yes in the Swedish Euro referendum (2003).¹ In addition, they found that “internationalism” (support for an internationalist society with fewer borders between people and countries) was positively related to voting Yes. Thus, in this study we expect both factors, fear of immigration as well as

fear of globalization, to be linked to EU skepticism and to exert their influence on the vote, at least partially, via the suggested indirect route. This translates into the mediated dynamic we suggest in this study and results in our first research hypothesis:

(H1): *EU skepticism is a mediator for the influence of other political attitudes and predispositions on the intention to vote No in EU referendums.*

When and Why Referendum Campaigns Matter

In order to more fully understand referendum voting we need to assess the dynamics and impact of the campaign. Referendum campaigns are considered unusually influential since the electoral context differs significantly from national elections and is characterized by a higher degree of electoral volatility. Referendums are often seen as second-order elections with low salience and low levels of involvement (e.g., Franklin et al., 1994; Reif & Schmitt, 1980). For example, referendum issues are not always immediately familiar to voters, who often do not have firm pre-existing attitudes towards the issue (Franklin, 2002; LeDuc, 2002). The resulting degree of uncertainty about what to vote for makes voters especially susceptible to campaign influences (Magleby, 1989). Late voting decision in a referendum, for instance, is an indicator of unfamiliarity with the issue and unclear elite cues and thus volatility and susceptibility for campaign effects in general (Chaffee & Choe, 1980; Chaffee & Rimal, 1996). “The timing of the vote decision, therefore, may be a useful indicator of the extent to which an ‘opinion formation’ process is actually taking place over the duration of a referendum campaign” (LeDuc, 2002: 720).

Previous EU referendum studies have counted a high number of voters taking their voting decision only very late in the campaign (e.g., de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). Fournier et al. (2004) have demonstrated that voting intentions of voters who decide during a campaign “are indeed more volatile *because* they respond to actual campaign events and coverage, not because they fluctuate haphazardly” (Fournier et al., 2004: 661; italics in original). As shown in previous studies there have indeed been significant shifts in public opinion over the course of a referendum campaign (LeDuc, 2002; Magleby, 1989; Neijens et al., 1998). However, the degree to which the campaign can exert an influence on people’s vote choice depends on the strength of pre-existing attitudes towards the issue at stake, which is contingent upon the respective referendum context.

Political parties and their endorsements play an important role in referendum campaigns. They provide the most visible and important informational elite cues to voters in European referendums (Hobolt, 2007; Kriesi, 2005; Ray, 2003). However, parties are often more internally divided and send out more ambiguous cues in referendums (e.g., Franklin, 2002; LeDuc, 2002; Pierce et al., 1983) and large centrist parties also have a poor record in getting their voters to follow their voting recommendation (de Vreese, 2006). In general, party identification matters less in referendums (Butler & Ranney, 1994; Denver, 2002) or in a European context (van der

Eijk & Franklin, 1996) because voters feel that less is at stake as compared to national elections (Schneider & Weitsman, 1996). In European referendums EU attitudes may matter more than party loyalties and the strength of EU issue preferences influence the extent to which parties can persuade their followers (Hobolt, 2006b). Furthermore, the political space with regard to EU integration is oftentimes reshaped during referendum campaigns. The extreme political left and the extreme political right are frequently against further EU integration (often for very different reasons), whereas the centre is in support. This can result in very unusual political alliances between parties in public debate and add to confusion among voters (LeDuc, 2002; de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). In the case of the Dutch EU Constitution referendum in 2005, the Socialist Party (SP) as well as the right-wing populist Group Wilders (Groep Wilders) both campaigned for a No vote and two opposition parties (Green Party and Labour Party) lined up together with the government and campaigned for the Yes side. Since parties that show internal disagreement have less power in influencing voters' opinion (Franklin, 2002; Gabel & Scheve, 2007) we paid special attention to the question of how successful these two opposition parties were in affecting the vote choice of their followers.

In referendum campaigns, the media are of special importance for voters, being the main channel to provide new information (Bennett & Entman, 2001; Dalton, 2002; de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). In spite of the importance of understanding the dynamics of referendum campaigns, hardly any studies have systematically analyzed media content throughout a referendum campaign and modelled its effect on voting behaviour. With regard to European referendums, the importance of the information environment during a campaign has been acknowledged but not systematically studied for its effect on voting behaviour (e.g., Borg & Esaiasson, 1998; Denver, 2002; Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2004; Siune & Svensson, 1993). This is surprising given the evidence of the importance of the news media in interpreting referendum issues (e.g., Siune & Svensson, 1993) and given the fact that EU citizens have repeatedly reported TV news and newspapers to be their most important sources of information (e.g., Eurobarometer 60, 61), also during referendum campaigns (e.g., Jenssen et al., 1998).

There are only a few studies that have integrated media and information variables into a model that explains voting behaviour in a referendum. They found significant effects of campaign coverage on vote choice and showed these effects to be dependent on the characteristics of news coverage (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004).² Thinking about the mechanism through which media may have an impact on the vote, Druckman and Parkin (2005) as well as de Vreese and Semetko (2004) suggest *tone* and *quantity* of campaign coverage to be crucial. The tone of news coverage indicates if there is a bias in either a more positive or a more negative direction regarding the referendum proposal. This bias in turn carries the potential to affect people's attitudes towards the proposal. Furthermore, in order to potentially have an effect on public opinion, the referendum issue needs to be sufficiently visible in the news media. Previous studies have shown that only at key events, such as summits, does Europe

become highly visible in the news (e.g., Norris, 2000). The amount of campaign coverage is a prerequisite for any potential media-driven campaign effects. The potential impact per news outlet might differ across media, depending on the type of news outlet, the visibility and the tone of the referendum topic. In the study by de Vreese and Semetko (2004), exposure to specific newspapers and public broadcasting television news had an effect on voting Yes in the Danish Euro referendum because these outlets covered the actors of the Yes camp less negatively than the actors of the No camp. The specific way in which media variables are modelled cannot be decided *a priori* without analyzing media content first. Any kind of classification or prediction of the direction of potential effects has to be contextual (Slater, 2004) and is bound to the particularities of the respective campaign and referendum issue. Thus, we put forward the following research hypothesis:

(H2): *Campaign news coverage has an effect on vote choice contingent on its tone and amount.*

Methods

A multi-method research design including a content analysis and a two-wave panel survey was employed, first, to investigate how the different news media have covered the referendum campaign and, second, to assess the impact of political attitudes and predispositions as well as campaign and media variables on voting behaviour.

Content Analysis

Sample. The content analysis was carried out on news articles in national Dutch broadsheet and tabloid newspapers and national TV news and current affairs programs. Six national daily newspapers were included into the analysis: *de Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad*, and *Trouw* are all broadsheet newspapers and represent the Dutch national quality press. *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Dagblad* represent the national tabloid press. *Metro* is a free national tabloid.³ In addition, the most widely watched public and private Dutch evening news programs *NOS Journaal* (Nederland 1: 20.00–20.25), *RTL Nieuws* (RTL4: 19.30–19.55), and *Hart van Nederland* (SBS 6: 22.30–22.55) were analyzed as well as the main current affairs program *NOVA/Den Haag vandaag* (Nederland 2: 22.30–23.00).

Period of study. The content analysis was conducted for news articles and TV news items published or broadcast within the six weeks prior to the referendum (between 16 April 2005 and 1 June 2005) in order to cover the whole campaign time period.

Data collection. For the newspapers, all articles on the front page were coded. Additionally, all articles on one randomly chosen page were coded as well as all stories about the referendum or the Constitution in other parts of the paper.⁴ For the three national TV news

programs all items were coded. For current affairs programs only items that particularly concerned the referendum were coded. All news stories that dealt specifically with the referendum or the Constitution were coded in depth whereas non-referendum items were only coded on a short list of variables. In total, 5,157 newspaper articles (1,486 TV items) were coded, of which 1,146 articles (TV= 161 items) dealt with the referendum.⁵

Coding procedure. Six native Dutch speakers conducted the coding. An inter-coder reliability test was conducted based on 25 randomly chosen news articles and yielded satisfactory results (reported below). The unit of analysis and coding unit was the news story in its entirety.

Measures of content analysis

Visibility. For newspapers all front-page articles and all articles about the referendum inside the paper were coded, allowing an assessment of the overall visibility as well as the relative prominence of the referendum in newspaper coverage. For the three national TV programs all news items were coded, allowing for the same assessment as for newspapers. Visibility is expressed as the total number of referendum news items per outlet. Prominence is expressed in percentages as the relative share of referendum news compared to other news on the front page (for newspaper coverage) or per news show (for TV coverage).

Tone. We measured the overall tone towards the EU Constitution for all news stories dealing with the referendum. The tone was coded as either (1) more favourable for the Yes side than for the No side, (2) more favourable for the No side than for the Yes side, or as (3) balanced or containing (4) no valence.⁶ In order to measure an average tone for news items, only the two codes with an evaluative direction (negative or positive) were considered further and combined into a scale measurement, ranging from -1 (negative) to +1 (positive).⁷ Inter-coder reliability was assessed by calculating Krippendorff's $\alpha = .78$.

Two-Wave Panel Survey

Procedure. In the present study we made use of data from a two-wave panel survey conducted by CentERdata at the University of Tilburg (Netherlands). Field dates for the first wave included the week between 6 and 11 May and the second wave included the week right after the referendum, between 3 and 8 June. The response rate in the first wave was 68% (AAPOR RR1) and 81% of the wave 1 respondents participated in the second wave, resulting in a net panel of $n = 1379$.⁸

Sample characteristics. Respondents were sampled from the online CentERpanel, which consists of 2,000 Dutch households and is reflective of the Dutch adult population on key social demographics.⁹ Our sample contained 52.3% male respondents. Average age was 49.3 years ($SD = 15.42$). Compared to census data our sample is reflective of the Dutch electorate.¹⁰ Comparing the reported voting behaviour in our sample with the actual vote outcome, 56% of the respondents reported having voted against the EU Constitution in the referendum compared to the actual result of 62%.

Measures of Two-Wave Panel Survey

The specific wording of all items and the descriptives for the variables listed below can be found in Appendix E. We specified logistic regression models with vote intention (wave 1) and vote choice (wave 2) as the dependent variables. In our first model (wave 1) we sought to explain voting intention before the start of the campaign with a number of socio-demographic variables and a number of political predispositions and attitudes; previous research has shown these variables to affect the vote in EU integration referendums. In our second model (wave 2) we focused on *change* between our panel waves. We controlled for vote intention at time 1 and assessed the impact of media and campaign related variables on the final vote choice.

Vote intention model (intention to vote No, wave 1)

Dependent Variable

Being strongly determined to vote No and leaning towards voting No are coded together as “1”. Leaning towards voting Yes and being strongly determined to vote Yes are coded together as “0”. Undecided voters were removed from the analysis for this first regression model.¹¹

Independent Variables

Socio-demographics. In our analysis we controlled for age, gender and education. Higher levels of education and age are commonly associated with higher support for EU referendums (Inglehart, 1990). Furthermore, men have been shown to be more supportive of EU referendums than females (e.g., Jenssen et al., 1998).

Political Predispositions. Respondents’ *political ideology* often is a better predictor for voting behaviour in European elections and referendums than party identification (see e.g., van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996; van der Eijk & Niemöller, 1983; de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). In this study we distinguish between left and right political leaning with center orientation as the reference category. Previous research has shown left and right political preferences to be related to lower support for EU integration as compared to center preferences (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2004). *Political interest* is linked to higher support for EU integration (Siune et al., 1994) and was assessed through two questions about general political interest as well as interest in EU politics in particular. *Political efficacy* was tapped with one item and expected to be positively related to support for EU integration (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). Negative *economic expectations* (Anderson & Reichert, 1996) and *fear of globalization* were both measured with single items and expected to be linked to lower levels of support for EU integration. *Government disapproval* (Franklin, 2002) and *fear of immigration* (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005) were measured with single items and were both expected to contribute to the No vote. Feelings of *national identity* were assessed with one item and were expected to make it more likely for people to stand in opposition to further European integration (Christin & Trechsel, 2002).

Mediation analysis

We expected the impact of these political predispositions on vote intention not to be fully independent but rather to contribute, at least partially, to higher levels of EU skepticism and to exert an influence on the vote via this route. Thus, we tested for the mediating role of EU skepticism in explaining intentions to vote No (wave 1) in the referendum (see Figure 2.1). *EU skepticism* was measured with a multiple item index scale covering general EU support, support for the Euro, Turkish EU membership and the speed of EU enlargement. In our analysis, we ran three models: (1) an OLS regression model predicting EU skepticism with the independent variables, (2) a logistic regression model predicting voting intention with all independent variables except EU skepticism, and (3) a full logistic regression model including all independent variables and EU skepticism. The extent to which EU skepticism mediates the effect of the other predictors was then formally assessed with a series of Sobel tests.¹²

Campaign model (vote choice [no], wave 2)

Dependent Variable

Respondents indicated in the post-referendum survey (wave 2) if they had voted for or against the referendum proposal. Having voted No is coded as “1” and having voted Yes is coded as “0”.

Independent Variables

The second model controls for the intention to vote No and for being undecided at wave 1 and explains voting choice in the referendum by a number of media, campaign and party variables. Thus, this model seeks to explain the *change* between voting intention (wave 1) and the actual vote (wave 2) over the course of the campaign. We again controlled for education, age and gender as in the vote intention model.

Media and campaign variables. Exposure and attention to news media coverage was measured with a combined overall news exposure index. Therefore, we built an additive index measure (exposure plus attention)¹³ weighted by the amount of referendum coverage. Since the tone towards the Constitution in referendum coverage was positive without significant differences between the different media outlets (reported below), we only built in the amount of coverage into our news exposure measure and not the tone. For the *overall news exposure* measure we summed up individual exposure to each news outlet, weighted by the amount of referendum coverage, and added the measure for attention paid to referendum news during the campaign (see Appendix E). Furthermore, we controlled for a number of other campaign variables. *Personal campaign involvement* has only recently been included in the study of referendum voting behaviour (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). It is expected that people who get more personally involved in the campaign are also the ones obtaining more information and making more informed choices. In this study it was measured with three items asking respondents if they had attended a public meeting about the EU Constitution, read about the Constitution in a political party manifesto, and/or looked up information about the Constitution on the internet.

Furthermore, Beck et al. (2002) have demonstrated strong effects of *interpersonal communication* in US presidential elections, outweighing the media in affecting the vote. In the present study respondents reported how often they talked with their friends, family or colleagues about the referendum during the time of the campaign. We also assessed the *exposure to the public official information campaign* and its effect on the vote by asking respondents to what extent they had read the three official information leaflets that the government distributed during the final weeks before the referendum in order to win people over to the Yes side. A last factor we controlled for is *political cynicism*, which is known to alienate people from politics (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1993) and can, for example, have negative effects on confidence in government (Valentino et al., 2001). Political cynicism was measured in this study with two items assessing the degree of cynicism related to the campaign.

Party following behaviour. Parties are often more internally divided and send out more ambiguous cues in referendums (e.g., Franklin, 2002; LeDuc, 2002; Pierce et al., 1983). This can become an issue particularly for opposition parties lining up with government parties (Crum, 2007) and campaigning for a Yes while at the same time many of their voters tend to favour the No side (Hobolt, 2006b). In order to find out if the opposition parties that campaigned for a Yes were successful in their campaign we included dummy variables for support for (1) *opposition parties in favour of the EU Constitution (Green Party, Labour Party)*, (2) *opposition parties against the EU Constitution*, and for (3) *voters without party preference*. Preferences for government parties that campaigned in favour of the proposal established the reference category.

Results

Vote intention model (intention to vote No, wave 1)

As Model 1 in Table 2.1. below shows, and in line with our expectations, government disapproval, fear of immigration, fear of globalization, and national identity as well as low levels of political efficacy and political interest are all related to higher levels of EU skepticism. Furthermore, leaning to the political right as opposed to the centre and lower levels of education translate into higher levels of EU skepticism.¹⁴

In a next step we see that the same factors also account to a large extent for the intention to vote No in the referendum on the EU Constitution (Model 2a in Table 2.1.). Adding EU skepticism to the model (Model 2b in Table 2.1.), we see a great effect of EU skepticism on the intention to vote No in the referendum while most of the coefficients for the other variables decrease in magnitude. This gives a first indication of the mediating role of EU skepticism.

Table 2.1.: OLS regression predicting EU skepticism (model 1) and logistic regressions (model 2a and 2b) explaining intention to vote NO (wave 1) in the Dutch EU Constitution referendum

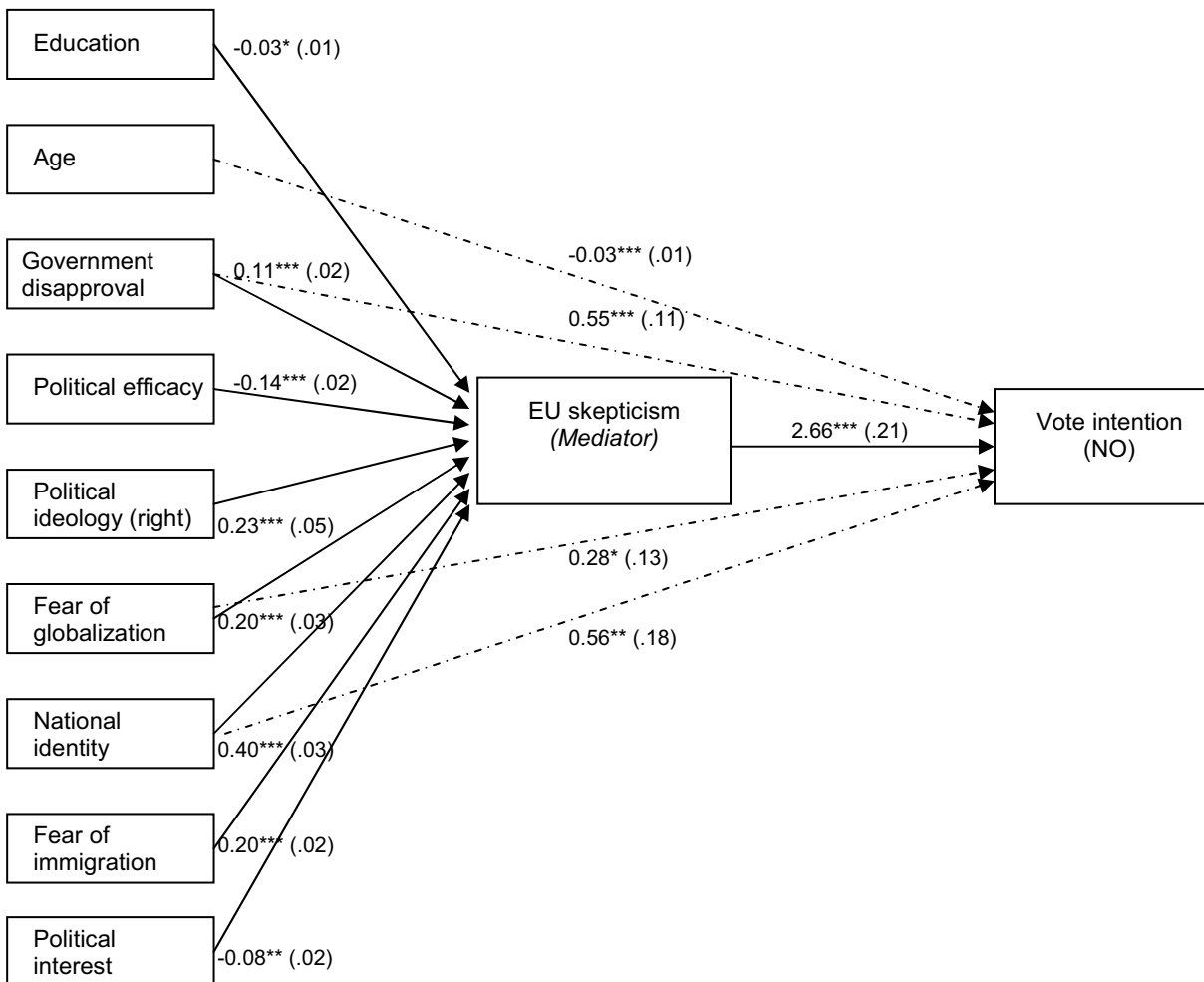
	<i>Predicting EU skepticism</i>	<i>Predicting Vote intention (NO)</i>	<i>Predicting Vote intention (NO)</i>
	<i>Model 1 (OLS)</i>	<i>Model 2a (Logistic)</i>	<i>Model 2b (Logistic)</i>
Education	-.029* (.013)	-.107* (.055) .898	-.043 (.066) .958
Age	.000 (.001)	-.023*** (.005) .977	-.034*** (.007) .967
Gender (female)	.069 (.039)	-.051 (.164) .950	-.283 (.197) .753
Political ideology (left)	.023 (.050)	.215 (.208) 1.240	.225 (.254) 1.252
Political ideology (right)	.230*** (.048)	.654** (.212) 1.923	.175 (.252) 1.192
Political efficacy	-.138*** (.020)	-.362*** (.083) .696	-.142 (.100) .868
Government disapproval	.110*** (.021)	.613*** (.093) 1.846	.551*** (.113) 1.735
Fear of immigration	.204*** (.021)	.355*** (.087) 1.427	-.050 (.110) .951
Fear of globalization	.198*** (.025)	.547*** (.108) 1.728	.280* (.131) 1.323
Political interest	-.075** (.024)	-.214* (.102) .807	-.060 (.122) .942
National identity	.398*** (.034)	1.242*** (.154) 3.462	.558** (.178) 1.748
Negative economic expectations	.042 (.024)	.141 (.102) 1.152	.062 (.125) 1.064
EU skepticism	--	--	2.661*** (.206) 14.305
Adjusted R square	.48	--	--
Nagelkerke Pseudo R-Square	--	.44	.65
Percentage correctly classified	--	77%	84%
N	1040	1040	1040

Note: Cell entries are unstandardised coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) for model 1 and log odds, standard errors (in parentheses) and odds ratios for models 2a and 2b.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed)

A series of Sobel tests, as formal tests for mediation, indeed confirms that EU skepticism mediates the effect of all of the above variables, in line with our first hypothesis (see Figure 2.1. below).¹⁵ In addition, age had an independent significant negative effect on the intention to vote No, meaning that with age the likelihood of an intention to vote Yes increased. EU skepticism is by far the strongest predictor for the intention to vote No before the actual start of the campaign (wave 1). Furthermore, government disapproval, national identity and fear of globalization have effects on the intention to vote No in the referendum; however these effects are not fully independent but are *partially* mediated by EU skepticism as well.¹⁶

Figure 2.1.: Mediation model for the effect on vote intention (No) at time 1



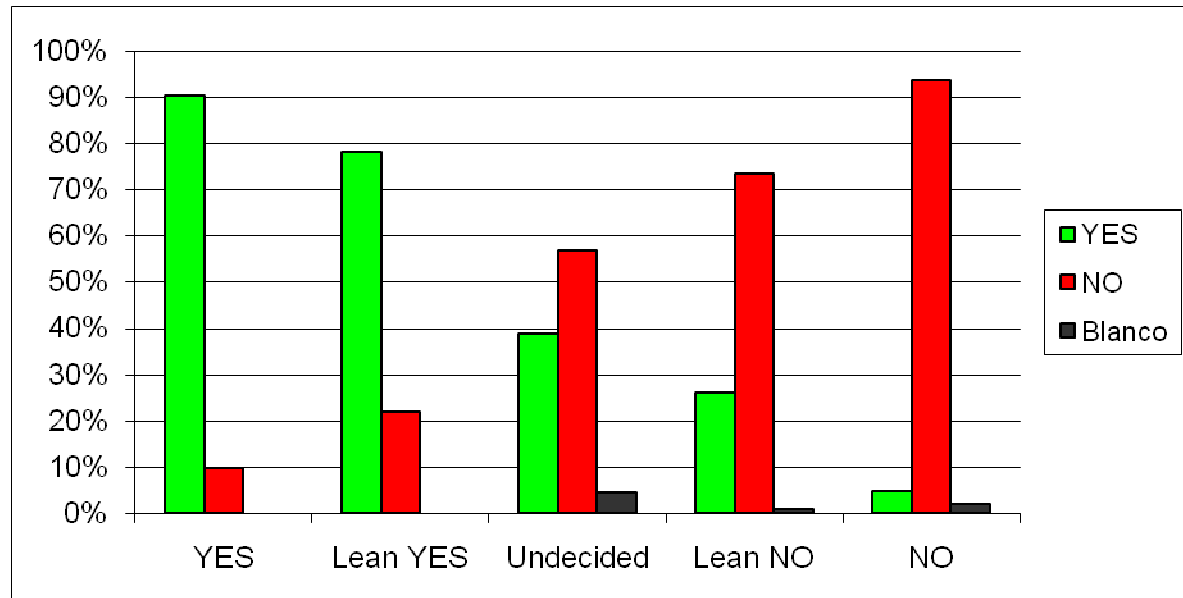
Note: Coefficients are unstandardized coefficients for the relationships between the socio-demographic and political attitude variables and EU skepticism (OLS) and log odds for the relationships between age, government disapproval, fear of globalization, national identity, and EU skepticism and vote intention (NO) (logistic regression). In all analyses standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed)

Campaign model (vote choice [no], wave 2)

Figure 2.2. below illustrates individual-level vote switching over the course of the campaign.¹⁷ Of those voters who were very likely to vote Yes before the campaign ($n = 156$), 9.6% ($n = 15$) ended up voting No. In addition, 21.9% ($n = 53$) of those who said they were leaning towards voting Yes before the campaign ($n = 242$) in the end reversed their decision.

Figure 2.2.: Vote switching in the Dutch EU Constitution referendum: Vote choice at wave 2 compared to vote intention at wave 1

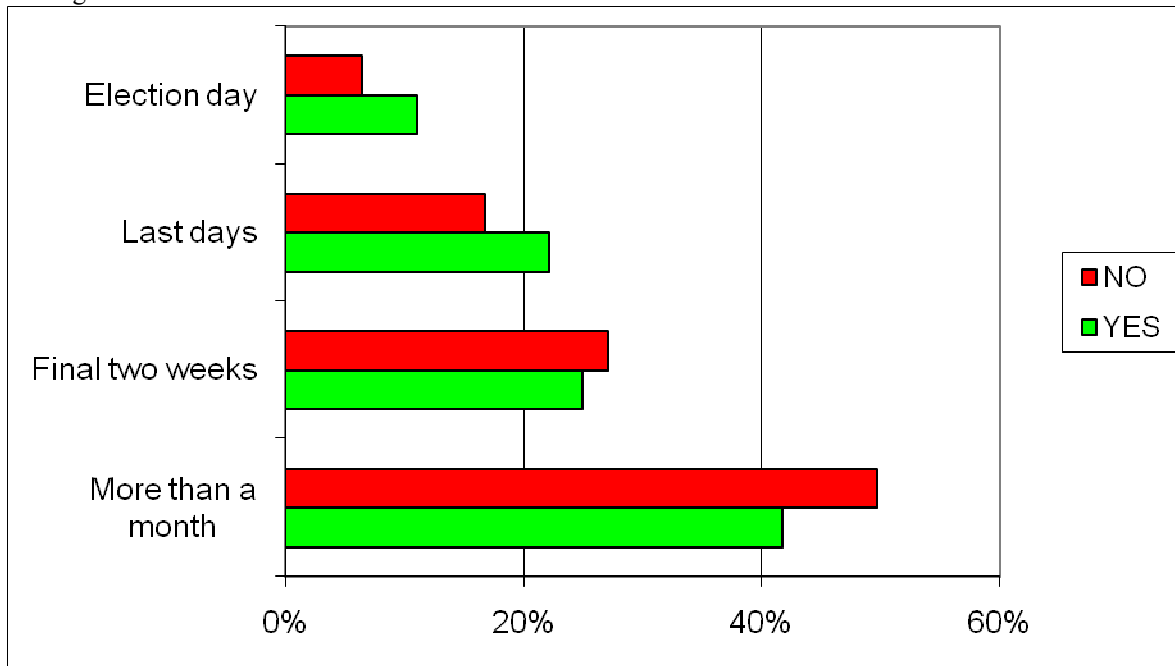


Note: Bars show percentages of respondents voting either yes or no at wave 2 compared to their initial vote intention at wave 1 ($N = 1,175$).

On the other side, 26% ($n = 75$) of those who tended towards voting No before the campaign ($n = 289$) switched over to the Yes side, the same holds true for 4.6% ($n = 12$) of voters who had said they were very likely to vote No ($n = 261$) three weeks earlier. Taken together, this shows that of those voters who tended towards the Yes side before the start of the campaign ($n = 398$), 17.1% ($n = 68$) switched over to the No side and of those who intended to vote No before the campaign ($n = 550$), 15.8% ($n = 87$) ended up voting Yes. This shows that although on the aggregate level it seemed as if not much had changed over the course of the campaign, there was change between vote intention and final vote choice in both directions on the individual level.

Figure 2.3. below shows that a considerable amount of voters decided on their final vote choice only very late in the campaign and later as compared to other referendums (e.g., de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). Yes voters took their voting decision significantly later than No voters, indicating a higher degree of volatility and campaign susceptibility for Yes voters.¹⁸ This is further supported by the fact that Yes voters were also significantly less determined about their vote choice in comparison with No voters.¹⁹

Figure 2.3.: ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ voters in the Dutch EU Constitution referendum and their time of decision-making



Note: Bars show percentages of Yes and No voters and their time of decision-making concerning their vote in the Dutch EU Constitution referendum (N= 1,173).

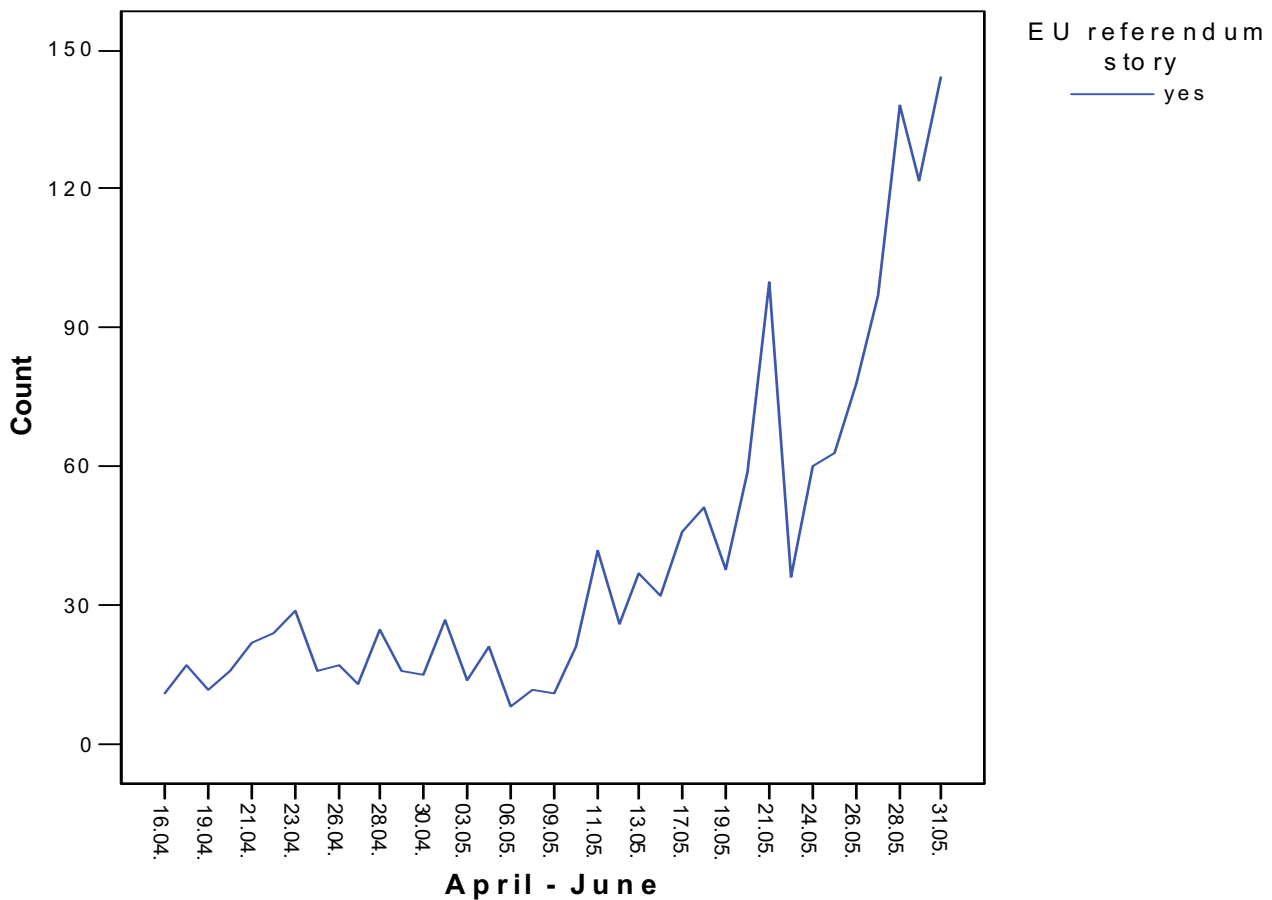
In order to assess the effect of the campaign and media variables on vote choice, we next look at the characteristics of how the news media covered the campaign.

Visibility of Campaign Coverage

As Figure 2.4. below illustrates, the referendum was a highly visible and prominent topic in the news during the weeks leading up to the referendum (see also Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2005). Until three weeks before the referendum, roughly 20–30 news stories about the referendum were published per day, taking all media outlets together. There was a significant increase in visibility during the last three weeks prior to the referendum, peaking at almost 150 referendum stories the day before the referendum.

Concerning the overall number of referendum news articles, the topic was both most visibly and also most prominently covered in the three broadsheet newspapers *NRC Handelsblad* (7.6%, n = 373), *Volkscrant* (7.2%, n = 231) and *Trouw* (4.9%, n= 163).²⁰ In TV news coverage, the referendum topic was more visible in the main public TV news show *NOS Journaal* (7.8%, n = 43) than in the main private TV news show *RTL Nieuws* (6.3%, n = 37), both in the total number of news stories devoted to the topic as well as in the relative share of referendum stories compared to other news. However, in terms of the total number of stories devoted to the referendum, the topic was most prominently covered in the public current affairs program *NOVA* (n = 78) and almost invisible in the private TV news show *Hart van Nederland* (n = 3).²¹

Figure 2.4.: Visibility of referendum news coverage (total amount of news items over time)



Note: Time line shows total amount of referendum stories published or broadcast per day across all media outlets that were included into the analysis (N= 1,307).

Tone of Campaign Coverage

The largest share (36.5%, $n = 475$) of all referendum stories carried no valence towards the EU Constitution and an additional 8.5% ($n = 111$) of all items were balanced in tone towards the Constitution; 34.8% ($n = 454$) were positive in tone towards the EU Constitution and only 20.2% ($n = 263$) were negative. Thus, the overall tone of reporting towards the Constitution was positive. In order to test for differences between the different media outlets we built a scale (ranging from -1 to $+1$) for our tone measurement, which is based only on those news items with either a positive or negative evaluation of the EU Constitution ($M = .27$, $SD = .96$, $n = 717$).²² There were no significant differences in tone of reporting between the different outlets ($F(9, 706) = 1.79$, $p > .05$) which is why we built an additive media exposure index for our subsequent analysis.

We now turn to our vote choice model that shows the impact of the campaign and the media on the vote. Our second research hypothesis expected campaign news coverage to have an effect on vote choice dependent on its tone and amount. Since our content analysis has shown that the tone towards the EU Constitution was positive we can now be more specific about our

expectations: that campaign news exposure should have an effect on the Yes vote. As Table 2.2. below shows, we indeed find that higher levels of exposure to campaign news increased the likelihood of voters switching over to the Yes side (see Model 2).²³

Table 2.2.: Logistic regression explaining the NO vote (wave 2) in the Dutch EU Constitution referendum

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Controls</i>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Campaign effects</i>	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Party preferences</i>
INTENTION to VOTE NO at time 1	3.140*** (.180) 23.115	3.059*** (.183) 21.315	2.751*** (.191) 15.662
UNDECIDED VOTE INTENTION at time 1	1.783*** (.200) 5.948	1.756*** (.206) 5.788	1.684*** (.212) 5.387
EDUCATION	-.274*** (.052) .760	-.279*** (.055) .757	-.264*** (.057) .768
AGE	-.014** (.005) .986	-.006 (.006) .994	-.002 (.006) .998
GENDER (FEMALE)	.041 (.157) 1.042	.095 (.160) 1.099	.120 (.165) 1.128
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION	--	.176 (.104) 1.192	.198 (.108) 1.219
PERSONAL CAMPAIGN INVOLVEMENT	--	.461** (.167) 1.585	.421* (.174) 1.523
CYNICISM ABOUT CAMPAIGN	--	.366*** (.098) 1.441	.334*** (.102) 1.396
OFFICIAL INFORMATION CAMPAIGN	--	-.145 (.097) .865	-.145 (.100) .865
CAMPAIGN NEWS EXPOSURE	--	-.019* (.009) .981	-.019* (.010) .982
PREFERENCE OPPOSITION PARTIES (YES)	--	--	.774*** (.182) 2.169
PREFERENCE OPPOSITION PARTIES (NO)	--	--	1.595*** (.235) 4.928
NO PARTY PREFERENCE	--	--	1.269*** (.329) 3.557
Nagelkerke Pseudo R-Square	.46	.48	.52
Percentage correctly classified	80.2%	80.2%	80.4%
N	1153	1153	1153

Note: Cell entries are log odds, standard errors in parentheses and odds ratios.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed)

However, the campaign as such did not only have positive effects on the vote. Higher levels of personal campaign involvement as well as higher levels of cynicism towards the campaign boosted the No vote. Finally, compared to the government parties the two opposition parties campaigning for a Yes vote (Green party and Labour party) were less successful in influencing their voters to support the proposal (Model 3). Followers of these two opposition parties were significantly more likely to turn out and vote No as compared to supporters of government parties.

Discussion

As the results of this study show, the opposition towards the EU Constitution as expressed in the 2005 Dutch national referendum is, to a large extent, a manifestation of general skepticism towards the EU. This general skepticism is the dominant factor explaining why people intended

to vote against the proposed treaty three weeks prior to the referendum. Furthermore, our findings suggest conceptualizing EU skepticism as a mediator for the effects of other, more general political attitudes on voting intention in EU referendums. The effects of all of the other key predictors in our analysis have been either fully or at least partially mediated by EU skepticism and exerted their influence on the vote via this indirect route. However, attitudes unrelated to the referendum issue also mattered and we did find at least some second-order effects above and beyond the mediated relationship. Feelings of national identity had a considerable impact on the intention to vote No in the referendum and also disapproval of the incumbent government contributed to the No vote. Thus, a more popular government could have contributed to a different dynamic during the campaign.

However, our findings suggest that a generally skeptical attitude towards the EU dominated in this referendum, and this attitude was inherent in the voters' decision to reject the Constitution. Indeed, the high turnout of 63% and the high visibility of the referendum issue in the media suggest that this referendum cannot be seen as a typical example of a second-order election (e.g., Franklin et al., 1994; Reif & Schmitt, 1980) and therefore the EU and EU-related attitudes mattered more for voters. This is in line with research that has shown that issue voting is activated when the intensity of campaigns is high (Hobolt, 2005). As our findings suggest, it was a rather conscious act of the Dutch electorate to reject the Constitution and not just an inconvenient accident or the result of domestic (second-order) considerations alone. As one example, more than 73% of the No voters in our survey reported that the speed of EU integration has been an important criterion for their decision to reject the referendum proposal.

Our argument is not that the Dutch have turned into firm Euroskeptics in general, but rather that the Dutch No vote in 2005 can be seen as the culmination of an overall skeptical attitude towards the EU which in itself has been the consequence of a chain of events and developments in the time leading up to the referendum. In recent years support for EU membership in the Netherlands has declined and opposition has increased even though diffuse EU support in the Netherlands is still among the highest in the EU. Several observers have pointed out that the debate about further European integration in the Netherlands has become more critical and skeptical in the 1990s (see e.g., Harmsen, 2004). There was an increasing awareness among citizens about a perceived discrepancy between national interests and the current trajectory of the European Union. The fact that the Netherlands is the largest net contributor per capita to the EU budget has fuelled skepticism. The Euro became a more pressing issue not only in the referendum campaign when Henk Brouwer, member of the board of directors of the Dutch Central Bank, publicly stated that the exchange rate for the Dutch national currency had been disadvantageous for the Netherlands. The European election in 2004 saw the rise of a new, explicitly Euroskeptical party (Europe Transparent Party) and a general increase in vote share for parties critical towards the EU. At the same time turnout increased from 29.8% to 39.1% and campaign intensity and visibility increased compared to previous elections. This increased interest in EU politics was further boosted in the autumn of

2004 when the Netherlands held the EU Presidency and during the negotiations with Turkey, which sparked unusually intense media coverage in the Netherlands (de Vreese et al., 2006) and a decline in support for Turkish EU membership (Eurobarometer, 2005). By June 2005, EU skepticism had emerged as a significant characteristic of the political landscape in the Netherlands and thus played a crucial role in the referendum on the EU Constitution.

This study not only assessed the role of EU skepticism in affecting the vote but also paid special attention to the impact of the referendum campaign. On the individual level, we saw voters switching from one side to the other over the course of the campaign and many decided relatively late what to vote for. Particularly Yes voters showed a higher degree of volatility since they decided later in the campaign what to vote for and also were less determined about their vote choice as compared to No voters. This volatility, especially for Yes voters, suggests that voters have been susceptible to campaign influences to some extent (e.g., LeDuc, 2002).

And indeed our analysis shows that the campaign mattered – only to a limited extent, however, and not only in one direction. Clearly, the referendum outcome is dominated by other considerations and the existence of strong pre-existing attitudes towards the EU certainly sets a limit on any potential campaign effects. Nevertheless, the campaign adds to our understanding of voting behaviour in this referendum. In the present study we paid special attention to the role of campaign coverage in the news. Previous studies have identified the tone and amount of campaign coverage to be of special importance in explaining campaign effects on voting choice (Druckman & Parkin, 2005; de Vreese & Semetko, 2004). In our example, the tone of campaign coverage was predominantly positive and the topic was highly visible in the weeks leading up to the referendum. In this context, we found that news coverage supported the Yes rather than the No vote and that higher exposure to referendum news contributed to voters shifting over to the Yes side. One can only assume that with less or more negative news coverage, the No vote might have triumphed even more impressively than it did.

The overall campaign effect we found is not huge. However, in a referendum even small shifts can often turn out to be crucial when the contest is close. In the present referendum, with strong pre-existing attitudes such as widespread skepticism towards the EU and a historically unpopular government, the net amount of voters switching over from one side to the other really only balanced each other out. And indeed, the campaign did not only shift the vote in one direction. Even if the news environment was overall positive towards the Constitution and higher exposure to news coverage pulled voters over to the Yes side, there have been other factors that counterbalanced this effect. Many people perceived the campaign itself cynically, which contributed to the No vote. Along the same line, higher levels of personal campaign involvement also contributed to the No vote. Thus, while the news media evaluated the Constitution positively and supported the proposal, the campaign as such was criticized by many, and many commentators agreed that it was of poor quality. However, news coverage did not boost cynicism about the campaign.²⁴ Cynicism was high across the board and did not vary

by the level of news exposure.²⁵

Finally, the present study paid special attention to the role of political parties and their role in influencing the vote. Followers of the two opposition parties campaigning for a Yes vote (Green party, Labour party) were significantly more likely to end up voting No as compared to those in support of government parties. Thus, these two opposition parties were less successful in their Yes campaign, which is in line with previous research which has shown that parties with internal disagreement and those that send out ambiguous cues have less power in affecting their voters' opinion (Franklin, 2002; Gabel & Scheve, 2007). From a second-order perspective, in which referendums are primarily the test ground for incumbent government support, one could argue that it simply was too difficult for these two opposition parties to effectively boost the Yes vote since the referendum is, at least to some extent, perceived as a government project by voters (see e.g., Crum, 2007). Thus, opposition voters are inclined to vote No and it is up to the government parties to win the referendum. In a different perspective, however, one could argue that voters of the two opposition parties campaigning for a Yes might have held issue preferences on the EU which were opposed to the official standpoint of their parties. Since in referendums these considerations matter more than party loyalties, voters simply did not follow the cues they received from their parties (Hobolt, 2006b).

Conclusion

The present study focused on the mediating role of EU skepticism and the role of the campaign in explaining the outcome of the Dutch 2005 EU Constitution referendum. Rather than seeing EU attitudes and domestic considerations as competing alternatives for the explanation of voting behaviour in EU referendums, future studies should expand on the link between the two and think of the dynamics as we have done in this study by conceptualizing EU skepticism as a mediator for the influence of other political attitudes. Future studies should for example investigate how this mediation dynamic might look different in referendums in which involvement is even higher or much lower. There are also some more theoretical implications and questions that arise as a result of this study. We investigated the role of EU skepticism both as an outcome variable as well as a mediator in order to understand voting behaviour in EU referendums. However, with more people taking an interest in topics such as EU integration or further integration (e.g., Turkey) the EU might become electorally more important in the future. Thus, EU skepticism might become an antecedent variable to understand electoral behaviour also in national elections (see e.g., de Vries, 2007) and for satisfaction with the incumbent government.

What are the implications of this study for the EU? First of all, it is good news for the EU that it has attracted such a high level of interest and participation among voters during the Dutch 2005 EU Constitution referendum. However, it also adds to the seriousness of the

problem: whereas it often has been seen as a problem that people would feel indifferent about the EU, with regard to the proposed EU Constitution they proved to actively hold a negative attitude. This again has implications for the future of the EU integration project as well as, more theoretically, for the nature of EU elections and referendums. Citizens did not necessarily vote against the contents of the proposed Constitution in the Dutch 2005 referendum but rather used the opportunity to express their general skepticism towards the EU. Thus, whereas previous research has suggested that people use the opportunity of EU elections and referendums mainly to punish their national governments and base their voting decision mainly on domestic (national) considerations and not the actual issue at stake, the EU itself might move towards becoming a target of the “punishment trap” (Schneider & Weitsman, 1996). Citizens might more and more often use the opportunity of a referendum for a popularity rating of “Europe” and thus not vote on the concrete issue at stake (such as the EU Constitution) but rather punish the EU as such on the basis of a conglomerate of different negative attitudes or a diffuse overall skepticism towards the EU.

Another implication of this study for future referendum studies is to consider *fear of globalization* as a relevant determinant for voting choice in EU integration referendums. Being afraid of globalization was not only shown to contribute to higher levels of skepticism towards the EU but also had a direct influence on the decision to reject the Constitution. Taking these findings into account and considering the increasing speed of globalization, the importance of public attitudes towards globalization is likely to increase in the future, making it even more important to consider fear of globalization as a relevant concept in future studies on voting behaviour in EU referendums.

With regard to the analysis of media campaign effects our study stresses the importance of considering concrete content features of news coverage in order to better understand campaign effects. Looking at the effects of campaign news coverage more specifically (not reported here), we find that in particular exposure to one public broadcasting news show (*NOS Journaal*) and one quality broadsheet newspaper (*NRC Handelsblad*) mattered for the vote. In these outlets the tone towards the Constitution was positive while at the same time the referendum topic was more visible and prominent as compared to other news outlets. This suggests that the amount of campaign coverage is of special importance for determining effects of campaign coverage on the vote. Furthermore, the coverage in these two outlets was more “European” in focus, the potential consequences of a common Constitution were presented more positively compared to other outlets and several aspects of the Constitution have been evaluated most positively (e.g., the role of the EU parliament, European civil rights, or the reform of the EU commission). Future studies should work on identifying more (concrete) news media content features, other than just tone and amount, with the potential to explain effects on subsequent voting behaviour in more detail.

The present study advances our understanding of media campaign effects in referendums and contributes to the ongoing discussion about further development of the EU. It does this by

making sense of the underlying reasons and implications of why people have rejected the proposal. Future development of the EU is contingent on referendums, which makes it necessary to also understand more about the dynamics of referendum campaigns. Based on the findings of this study, the media cannot always be blamed for the increasing lack of support for the EU among the public. Rather, considering the example of the Dutch EU Constitution referendum campaign, it might be more legitimate to say that the media sometimes fail to effectively prevent the consequences of widespread skepticism towards Europe, which has its origin in the EU's own actions.

NOTES

¹ Covering the following dimensions: attitudes towards immigration, foreign aid, and the building up of a multi-cultural society.

² Only in some national election studies actual content characteristics and the tone of news media coverage have been analyzed in order to explain voting behaviour (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis & Fan, 1999).

³ *Metro* is published with an identical core part but in different regional editions. For our analysis we chose the regional edition of The Hague since it is the seat of government and as such represents the center of Dutch national politics.

⁴ This procedure makes sure that all articles about the referendum were included in the analysis while at the same time it is possible to assess the relative prominence of the referendum issue compared to other news. For newspapers the randomly chosen page could be a page between 2 and 10. Coders were asked to choose page 2 as the randomly chosen page for the first newspaper they coded and then move one page further for every other newspaper and start back at page 2 once they had reached page 10. If the page they turned to was not a news page (e.g., full-page advertisement, stock market figures, etc.) coders were asked to turn one page further until they reached another news page.

⁵ Stories were considered to be *about* the referendum if either the referendum, or the constitution, or any aspect of either one were specifically mentioned at least twice throughout the story (TV) or mentioned at least once in the headline, sub-headline or the first paragraph (newspapers). Total amount of coded news stories per media outlet (number of referendum stories in brackets): *de Volkskrant*: 966 (231), *NRC Handelsblad*: 1143 (373), *Trouw*: 660 (163), *De Telegraaf*: 758 (123), *Algemeen Dagblad*: 893 (147), *Metro*: 737 (109), *NOS Journaal*: 549 (43), *RTL Nieuws*: 586 (37), *Hart van Nederland*: 273 (3), *NOVA/Den Haag vandaag*: 78 (78).

⁶ The coding decision was based on the sum of explicit statements per news item that had a qualitative dimension and that thematically referred to the EU Constitution.

⁷ For evaluation of EU Constitution: 828 news stories were coded as having any kind of inherent valence – 111 stories were coded as “balanced” so that in total 717 stories about the referendum were included in the analysis.

⁸ Respondents participated in three media effect experiments. For the analysis in this study one group was excluded and only the respondents of the two other experiments have been included since the experimental manipulation for these groups did not show an effect on the dependent variables of interest for this study (n=1379).

⁹ Participants of the CentERdata panel are first contacted via telephone and asked if they are generally willing to become regular panel members. If that is the case their socio-demographic information is entered into a database and based on this information a panel of 2,000 Dutch households, representative of the Dutch population, has been established which has been used since 1991 for both small and large scale studies (such as the De Nederlandsche Bank [DNB – The Dutch Central Bank] Household Survey). If a household stops participating it is replaced by a new household which mirrors the characteristics of the old household. The potential new household then receives a letter and is asked if it is willing to become a new member of the panel. The surveys are filled out by the panel members online. However, if there is no computer or internet connection available in a household then CentERdata provides the technical devices to enable participants to fill out the questionnaires at home.

¹⁰ Most respondents are household heads (62.7%), loan workers (49.4%), and have a net income of more than €2,600 per month (34.7%). Compared to Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS – Central Office for Statistics) census data and with regard to gender, age, and education we have to report the following slight under- or over-representations. There is a slight over-representation of men in our net panel (52.3% versus 49.5%). Regarding age groups, 15–24 year olds are slightly under-represented (8% versus 11.9%), 45–54 year olds are slightly over-represented (22.8% versus 14%) and 65+ year olds are slightly over-represented (19.3% versus 13.7%). And finally, with regard to education, we report an over-representation of people with higher professional education (HBO) (22.4% versus 16%) and an under-representation of people with upper secondary vocational education (MBO) (19% versus 32%).

¹¹ It showed that the considerable number of undecided voters (more than 300 in our sample) differed in their political attitudes from voters who leaned towards a YES vote in such a way that it was inappropriate to combine undecided voters and voters leaning to a YES vote into one common category.

¹² Therefore, we use the Sobel test equation: $a*b/\text{SQRT}(b^2*s_a^2 + a^2*s_b^2)$ where a = raw (unstandardized) regression coefficient for the association between independent variable and mediator, s_a = standard error of a , b = raw coefficient for the association between the mediator and the dependent variable (controlling for the independent variable), and s_b = standard error of b (for an introduction to mediation analysis and the Sobel test see e.g., Baron and Kenny, 1986; Goodman, 1960; MacKinnon et al., 1995; Sobel, 1982). Whereas the Sobel test is appropriate for large sample sizes (as in our study), other methods such as bootstrapping should be applied to formally assess mediation in smaller samples (see e.g., Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

¹³ Weighting media exposure by attention has been suggested by e.g. Chaffee & Schleuder (1986). Slater (2004) warns that this procedure might produce effects which are mainly due to antecedents of attention, not exposure, and thus exaggerate effects. For this study we built an additive news exposure index weighted by the amount of referendum news and added a measure for the attention paid to referendum news, rather than weight by attention.

¹⁴ A correlation matrix was calculated and confirmed that there was no multi-collinearity problem for our set of independent variables. The highest correlations exist between the following variables: economic expectations x government disapproval: $r=.46$; economic expectations x fear of globalization: $r=.45$; EU skepticism x national identity: $r=.43$; EU skepticism x fear of immigration: $r=.40$.

¹⁵ EU skepticism x Fear of immigration - Sobel test statistic: 7.76, $p < .001$; EU skepticism x Political efficacy - Sobel test statistic: -6.09, $p < .001$; EU skepticism x Political interest - Sobel test statistic -3.04, $p < .01$; EU skepticism x Fear of globalization - Sobel test statistic: 6.75, $p < .001$; EU skepticism x National identity - Sobel test statistic: 8.67, $p < .001$; EU skepticism x Government disapproval - Sobel test statistic: 4.85, $p < .001$.

¹⁶ An alternative model (not reported here) tapping EU skepticism with one single item (general support for the EU) rather than a multi-item index mirrors the findings of the model reported here with the only exception being that fear of immigration also remains significant in the full model. In another alternative model (not reported here) we included all four single components of the index as individual variables (attitude towards EU in general, attitude towards the Euro, attitude towards integration of Turkey, attitude towards EU enlargement). We find that all of them have a significant impact on the intention to vote No in the referendum and that general support for the EU has the biggest impact compared to the other three factors.

¹⁷ Respondents were asked for their voting intention in wave 1 on a scale from 1 (certain to vote No) to 5 (certain to vote Yes). Voters who reported either being likely or being certain to vote Yes (No) in wave 1 and reported having voted No (Yes) in wave 2 were categorized as vote switchers.

¹⁸ The percentage of Yes voters who decided on what to vote for within the last two weeks before the referendum and thus the most intense phase of the campaign is higher than for No voters. Building a scale measurement ranging from 1 (deciding more than a month before referendum) to 4 (deciding on election day) we find a significant mean difference between Yes voters ($M=2.03$, $SD=1.04$) and No voters ($M=1.80$, $SD=.94$) for the time they took their voting decision ($t(1173)=3.896$, $p<.001$). As an example: Every third Yes voter (33.3%) took her/his voting decision during the last couple of days of the campaign or on the day of the referendum. By comparison, less than every fourth No voter (23.2%) decided on voting No only at this late stage of the campaign.

¹⁹ On a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very insecure about own vote choice) to 5 (very certain about own vote choice) we find a significant mean difference between Yes ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.11$) and No voters ($M=4.47$, $SD=.79$) in the level of determination for one's own voting decision ($t(1173)=-10.129$, $p<.001$).

²⁰ Visibility and prominence (percentage of front page news/total number of stories about the referendum) of other newspapers: *Algemeen Dagblad*: 3.3%/n=147, *Telegraaf*: 2.2%/n=123, *Metro*: 3.3%/n=109.

²¹ This is in line with earlier findings, e.g. by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) who also report a very low share of political news in *Hart van Nederland/SBS6*.

²² *NOS Journaal*: $M=.30$, $SD=.98$, $n=20$; *RTL Nieuws*: $M=.33$, $SD=1$, $n=9$; *Hart van Nederland/ SBS6*: $M=+/-0$, $SD=1.41$, $n=2$; *NOVA Den Haag vandaag*: $M=.40$, $SD=.92$, $n=47$; *Telegraaf*: $M=.20$, $SD=.99$, $n=70$; *Volkscrant*: $M=.23$, $SD=.98$, $n=148$; *NRC Handelsblad*: $M=.42$, $SD=.91$, $n=192$; *Trouw*: $M=.33$, $SD=.95$, $n=93$; *Algemeen Dagblad*: $M=-.03$, $SD=1$, $n=80$; *Metro*: $M=.09$, $SD=1$, $n=55$.

²³ We also tested another model (not reported here) in which we applied corrective weighting in order to correct for the slight under-representation of reported No voters in our sample. This analysis yielded the same significant results as the model we report here.

²⁴ Another OLS regression (not reported here) has been run predicting cynicism about the campaign by overall news exposure and did not yield a significant effect of news exposure on cynicism.

²⁵ Adding up the exposure to each individual media outlet divided by the number of media outlets yields a mean for average overall exposure of $M=1.40$ ($SD=.67$). Respondents who fall below this mean score, in a next step, have been coded as 0 (low exposure) and respondents who fall above the mean have been coded as 1 (high exposure). A t-test yields no significant mean difference in cynicism ($t(1321)=-.378$, $p>.05$) between respondents with low media exposure ($M=3.58$, $SD=.80$) and high media exposure ($M=3.60$, $SD=.83$).

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