Context matters – a comparative analysis of issue-voting and campaign effects in two Danish referendums

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1. Introduction

Voters in EU referendums have the difficult task of making a choice about a novel and often very complicated proposition. In this type of context, we would expect that campaigns and the arguments and information they provide might play a significant role (Hobolt, 2009: 88; de Vreese, 2007; LeDuc 2002). Campaign effects are defined as a situation where campaign arguments shift intended or actual voter behavior away from the voter's underlying attitudes towards the issue. Can voters be 'persuaded' by campaign arguments, or do they take decisions based primarily on their underlying attitudes towards the EU (aka issue-voting)?

One of the central findings in the existing literature is that issue-voting dominates in 'high salience' referendums where voters perceive the issue to be important enough to invest the time and effort required to collect and process campaign information in order to make a choice that is consistent with their underlying attitudes (Svensson, 2002; Hobolt, 2009). In contrast, campaign effects and other factors (e.g. incumbent popularity and second-order

dynamics) are more prevalent in 'low salience' referendum contexts (LeDuc, 2002; Hobolt, 2009). The existing literature has with a few exceptions focused on *individual-level* variation in factors such as how important voters believe a given proposition is, and their levels of information and/or political sophistication (Schuck and de Vreese, 2008; Hobolt and Brouard, 2011; Beach and Finke, 2021).

However, a comparative analysis across referendums is required to investigate whether and how issue salience matters for voting behavior. There have been a few attempts at this. Hobolt's (2009) compares a variety of surveys across a sample of EU referendums, but where there are so many differences across the cases on causally important factors (national context, types of issues (treaties, membership, opt-out)) that it is difficult to isolate the potential impact of issue salience in any given referendum. Marsh (2007) compares the Nice I and II referendums in Ireland (finding few campaign effect differences), but as he admits, both were relatively low salience.

In this article, we assess whether differences in issue salience between two EU referendums in Denmark produce the expected differences in voting behavior (stronger/weaker campaign effects). We deployed similar before/after campaign panel surveys in the two EU referendums: the 2015 Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) opt-out (lower salience), and the 2022 Defense cooperation opt-out vote (higher salience). The similarity of the survey design enables us to engage in comparative analyses of voting behavior across the two referendums in which the primary difference between the two is issue salience.

At the comparative level, we expect to find that in the higher salience 2022 referendum, voters enter the fray feeling more informed, meaning they are on average less susceptible to campaign arguments from the start. During the campaign we expect that there will be fewer persuadable voters overall, with more voters either having made up their minds from the start (voters with strong EU attitudes), or voters who engage in motivated reasoning when processing campaign arguments (voters with moderate EU attitudes), meaning that there are fewer 'persuadable' voters in the higher salience referendum. We also assess voting behavior at the individual-level within the 2022 referendum in order to assess whether the findings of Beach and Finke's (2021) analysis of issue-voting and motivated reasoning travel at the individual-level to the 2022 context.

On a more empirical note, the two referendums produced different outcomes. In the December 2015 vote on the JHA opt-out, 53% of voters voted no, whereas in the June 2022 vote 67% votes in favor of the proposition. The decision to convene the Defense opt-out referendum that was announced on March 6, 2022 was expressly motivated by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia a few weeks earlier. The choice for voters was framed as choosing to be part of the emerging European security architecture post Russian invasion or on the outside; a situation in which even neutral Finland and Sweden were discussing joining NATO. In contrast, the JHA opt-out dealt with relatively technical issues related to the form of Danish participation (intergovernmental or supranational) in relatively minor areas of EU cooperation such as Europol and legal cooperation. In the 2022 referendum, voters may have felt better informed even before the proper start of the referendum campaign. Can differences in how salient the issue was for voters have resulted in the two different outcomes?

Moreover, the Ukraine war likely elevated the debate over defense opt-out from a pro/anti-EU question to being a signal against Russian aggression and a matter of national security. By consequence, any pre-existing EU attitudes may have been less influential than during the 2015 campaign. Finally, the victory of the yes-side could be a result of Danes' increasingly positive view of the EU. The percentage of Danes with a positive image of the EU increased from 39% in 2015 to 51% in 2022. Similarly, the percentage of Danes who trusted the EU increased from 57% in 2015 to 65% in 2022 (Eurobarometer 83, 97). Notably this increase is found within the group of previously uncertain voters, leaving the percentage distrusting (32%) and holding a negative image (16%) of the EU almost unchanged.

2. Theory

Why would voters behave differently when issue salience is higher? To what extent are campaign effects minimized when voters perceive an issue to be important? The literature on issue-voting suggests that campaign messages do not really matter. Instead, at most they provide information that enables voters to make choices in EU referendums that map onto their underlying EU attitudes, enabling them to engage in issue-voting (e.g. Svensson, 2002; Hobolt, 2006, 2009; Schuck and de Vreese, 2008; Garry, 2013; Beach, Hansen and Larsen, 2018). When voters perceive issues to be less important, they will tend to expend fewer resources. The literature on campaign effects suggests that EU referendums often deal with complex topics that do not necessarily map onto normal political cleavages, creating a novel choice situation for the voters (Hobolt, 2006; LeDuc, 2002). Given that voters lack signposts to guide the formation of their opinion towards the proposition like partisanship, and in lower salience issues are unwilling to expend the resources required to map the proposition onto their underlying EU attitudes, campaign arguments can be very important for the ultimate vote choices (LeDuc 2002; de Vreese, 2007; Marsh, 2007; Schuck and de Vreese, 2008; Neijens and de Vreese, 2009). Irrespective of whether voters are actually 'persuaded' by arguments, or whether campaign effects work through either media effects and exposure to particular arguments (e.g. Schuck and de Vreese, 2008) or partisan endorsements and elite cues (e.g. Hobolt, 2006, 2009; Kriesi, 2005; Peterson, 2019), the logic remains the same: Campaign arguments are theorized to impact vote choices, meaning that voter intentions and choices are less influenced by their underlying attitudes towards the EU.

This leads to several hypotheses at the comparative level when comparing a higher and lower salience referendum.

H1 – in higher salience referendums, voters can be expected to feel more informed before campaign starts, and more voters will have already decided how to vote

H2 – in higher salience referendums, voters are on average less prone to be swayed by campaign arguments (more issue-voting)

At the individual level, based on the theory of motivated reasoning, we can expect that voter with strongly-held attitudes will respond to arguments *selectively* based on their compatibility with voters' underlying EU attitudes. While motivated reasoning cannot lead voters to conclude whatever they want, irrespective of 'the facts' (Kunda, 1990; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2017), it can lead voters to latch onto arguments that confirm their preferred worldview (e.g. Leeper and Slothuus, 2014). When voters have strongly-held and stable pre-existing attitudes, there is a large body of evidence that suggests that *citizens with stronger-held attitudes are more prone to engage in motivated reasoning*, other things equal (Holbrook et al, 2005; Taber et al., 2009; Druckman, 2012; Redlawsk, 2002; Houston and Fazio, 1989). Strong attitudes are views towards an issue that are 1) resistant to change; 2) persist over time, 3) guide information processing, and 4) direct behavior (Krosnick and Petty, 1995).

Critical to motivated reasoning is the degree to which voters have pre-existing attitudes towards an issue. Without underlying attitudes towards an issue, motivated reasoning cannot take place. This is a realistic assumption in EU referendums in many member states, where voters in places like Denmark are very familiar with the EU issue and therefore can be expected to have relatively well-defined and stable underlying attitudes about the EU and European integration in general.

Theories of motivated reasoning from political psychology suggest that voters with strong issue attitudes will feel better informed even before a campaign starts, and once it starts, they will engage in more biased processing of campaign arguments and make choices more in accordance with underlying attitudes than we would otherwise expect (aka issue-voting) (Druckman, 2012; Redlawsk, 2002; Houston and Fazio, 1989). In contrast, unbiased processing of arguments about the merits of a proposal is essentially a simple objective Bayesian model of updating where *priors are flat*, meaning that new information is used to update in a neutral fashion which position one should take on a given proposition based on the strength of the campaign arguments.

Overall, the causal relevance of motivated reasoning can be expected to increase linearly with attitude strength. However, there is evidence that voters with *very strong attitudes* require precious little new information in order to be convinced by attitude-consistent arguments and behave in accordance with their attitudes (Holbrook et al, 2005; Visser et al, 2017). Therefore, we can expect that voters with extreme attitudes will *not* be significantly impacted by campaign effects at all because they are convinced about arguments and know how they will vote even *before* the campaign really starts.

Taken together, the impact of campaign arguments will vary depending on the strength of pre-existing EU attitudes. This leads to three sets of hypotheses, depending on the level of attitude strength (see also Beach and Finke, 2021).

H3 –Voters with the most strongly-held attitudes will feel more informed about a proposition even *before* they receive campaign information.

H4 - Voters with the most strongly-held attitudes are more likely to take attitude-consistent positions related to key arguments *before* they receive campaign information.

H5 - Voters with the most strongly-held attitudes are more likely to have attitude-consistent voting intentions *before* they receive campaign information.

The next two hypotheses investigate whether there are systematic differences in how groups with moderately-strong and weakly-held attitudes respond differently to campaign arguments and how this responsiveness impacts changes in voting intentions.

Receptivity towards campaign arguments should in theory vary depending on the strength of voter attitudes. In order to assess receptivity, we analyze panel data to explore stability and changes in how voters evaluate key campaign arguments before and after the campaign. Theoretically, we should expect a U-shaped relationship between attitude strength and receptivity to attitude-consistent arguments. Voters with the most strongly-held attitudes,

because they already are convinced before the campaign starts, can be expected to *not change* their assessments of campaign arguments during the campaign. In contrast, we should expect motivated reasoning to be most evident for voters with moderately-strong attitudes, who can be expected to be very responsive to attitude-consistent arguments and irresponsive to attitude-inconsistent arguments. Finally, we should expect to find little effect of attitude-consistency amongst voters with weakly-held attitudes, meaning that campaign effects can matter for this group of voters. These expectations lead to three testable sub-hypotheses.

H6 – *Voters with strongly-held attitudes* will not change their assessment of arguments during the campaign.

H7 – *Voters with moderately-strong attitudes* will be *more likely* to change their beliefs about campaign arguments in an attitude-consistent direction than other voters.

H8 – *Voters with weak attitudes* will be *equally responsive* to attitude-consistent and inconsistent arguments provided during a campaign.

The third hypothesis deals with the behavioral consequences of changes in beliefs about campaign arguments. If motivated reasoning produces issue-voting, we should expect that changes in the position towards an argument will lead to a corresponding shift form voting intention at the start of the campaign to voting behavior on election day.

H9 – Changes in beliefs about an argument produce a change in voting intention in the same direction.

3. Research design

We leverage a two-wave panel design to carefully analyze voters' evaluation of competing arguments before and after the campaign for each of the Danish referendums. The real-world setting means that there are some confounders that cannot be eliminated as in a laboratory experiment due to events during the campaign. Nevertheless, we believe that the setting approximates a natural experiment because there is no reason to expect that these potentially confounding events would produces different effects across different groups of voters. The surveys were implemented as web surveys (CAWI) by the polling company Epinion, using an internet panel to recruit respondents. For both referendum, the first wave was collected seven weeks prior to the vote. This was before the campaign really started to provide information to voters on the propositions, as measured both through newspapers and TV, and in social media [include reference]. After the final vote, respondents re-invited to answer an almost identical set of questions [include information about numbers and response rate].The post-election surveys were undertaken using a combination of web surveys and telephone interviews in the weeks after the vote. Overall, we have no reason to suspect that that our sampling leads to biased result, yet we nevertheless suggest some caution with generalizing our findings to the full population of Danish voters in either referendum.

As mentioned above, our operationalization of the key variables is almost identical to the one presented in Beach and Finke (2021). Specifically, we measure the *EU attitudes of voters* by extracting the first component of answers to the following three question: Does Denmark have more advantages or disadvantages from being a member of the EU? How should Denmark's future cooperation with the EU look like? (exit the EU, less EU, Status quo, more EU, united states of Europe). Do you feel like an EU citizen? (totally agree, agree, neither nor, not agree, totally disagree). When we analyzed the responses to all three questions, we found that they were highly correlated ($r>0.65$), and explorative factor analysis returned a single latent dimension that explains 74% of the observed variation.

Being interested in the behavioral consequence of *attitude strength,* Beach and Finke (2021) deploy an operative conceptualization. By implication, attitude strength is

operationalized as the "extremity of EU attitudes", implying that extreme EU friendly or EU skeptic attitudes are stronger than moderate EU attitudes. To assess whether voters *feel informed about the proposition*, we asked respondents "In how far do you agree to the statement 'I have sufficient information to vote'?". We used five answer categories, ranging from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree'. Moreover, we asked them prior to the start of the campaign whether they had already made up their mind over how to vote, five categories ranging from still "*highly in doubt"* to "*absolutely not in doubt*".

Beliefs about core campaign arguments are measured in the survey by investigating how respondents evaluate the consequences of the vote on four questions that we identified as likely arguments for/against prior to the campaign starting. Specifically, the survey asked whether respondents believed that abandoning the opt-out would impact:

1. Denmark's participation in an EU army.
2. Denmark's influence in the EU.
3. Denmark's security.
4. The strength of NATO.

The survey measured respondents' agreement with the campaign arguments on scale with five categories ("totally agree", "agree", "neither nor", "disagree", "totally disagree"). The implied consistency of the evaluation of the arguments with pre-existing EU attitudes is self-explanatory: for EU-skeptic voters, abandoning the opt-out would weaken NATO and force Denmark's participation in an EU army. For EU-friendly voters, abandoning the opt-outs would strength Denmark's influence in the EU and its security.

4. Empirical analysis

In this section, we engage first in the comparative analysis across the two referendums, assessing the degree to which voters felt more informed, more had decided (H1), and whether they were less susceptible on average to campaign effects in the higher salience referendum (H2). In this part of the analysis, we do not yet leverage the panel design of our research but focus on the pre-campaign survey only.

Figure 1 plots the predicted probability that voters (dis)agree to feeling sufficiently informed prior to the start of the referendum campaign. The predictions are based on an ordered logit model that controls for age, education, and gender (see table 1). Regarding voters with extreme EU attitudes, the results are almost identical to the 2015 referendum. Most of the extremely EU friendly as well as EU sceptic voters felt sufficiently informed before the start of the campaign (H2a, H2c). The comparison is more interesting regarding voters with moderate EU attitudes (H2b). In 2015 moderate voters had a prob of p=0.35 for saying that they certainly do not have sufficient information to vote and a prob p=0.05 of saying that they certainly had sufficient information. By contrast, Figure 1 displays a predicted probability of p=0.15 for both categories. If we add to this the two weaker categories of the information variable those with moderate EU preference had an overall probability of p=0.40 for feeling sufficiently informed and p=0.35 for not feeling sufficiently informe.

Moreover, in 2015 voters with moderate EU attitudes had a probability of p=0.7 for being undecided. By contrast, in 2022 voters with moderate EU attitudes had a probability of p=0.39 for being undecided. Overall, voters with weak EU attitudes felt better informed in 2022 than they did in 2015, confirming H1. By implications, they had a higher level of conviction prior to the start of the campaign. Nevertheless, moderate voters felt significantly less well informed (and less convinced over what to vote) than voters with strongly held, extreme EU attitudes.

Like Beach and Finke (2020) we find that vote intentions prior to the campaign have been attitude consistent (table 1). By implication, EU attitudes are a powerful predictor for vote intention. Specifically, the probability that the 20 percent voters with the most extreme preferences votes either “yes” or “no” is larger than p=0.8.

Figure 1 Predicted probabilites that voters completely agree (dashed line) or disagree (solid line) to feeling sufficiently informed to vote at t-1, i.e. before the campaign. Note: 90% confidence intervals, estimates based on table 1, column 2.

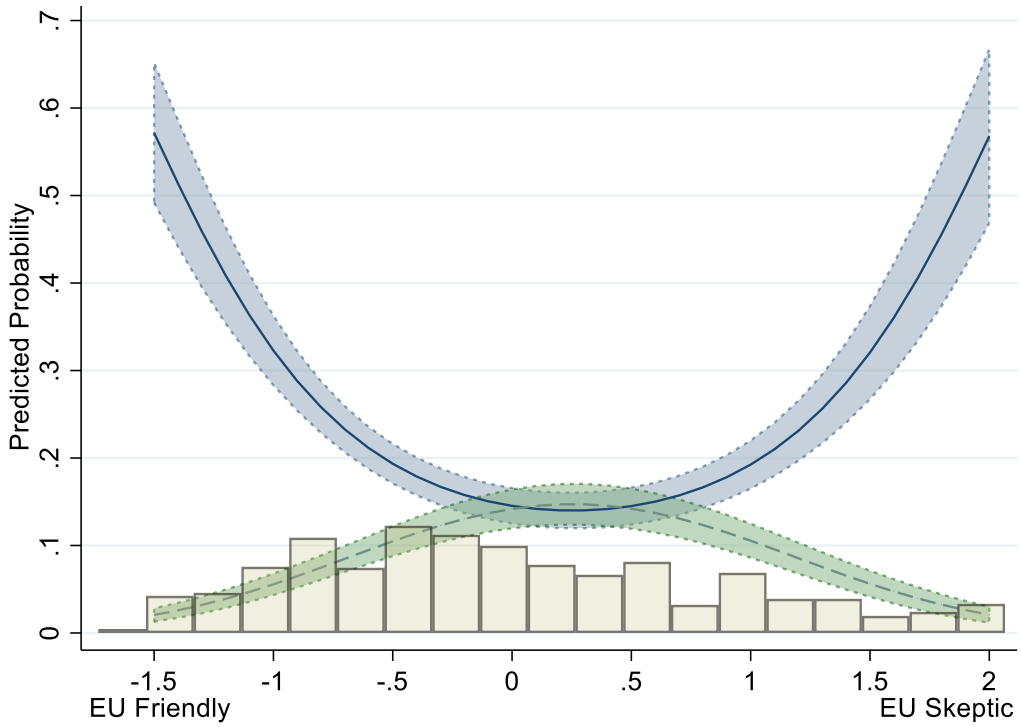


Table 1. Ordered logit regressions on level of information, vote intention and beliefs measured at t-1, i.e. before the campaign (replication of tab1 in WEP with 2022 data).

VARIABLES	Information Q25_pre	Decided Q9_pre	Vote Intention Q11_pre	EU Army Q29_1 _pre	Indflydelse Q29_2_pre	NATO weaker Q29_3 _pre	DKSecurity Q29_4_ pre
EUatt	0.381***	-0.302***	1.479***	-0.797***	1.366***	-0.564***	1.306***
	(0.0779)	(0.0853)	(0.102)	(0.0833)	(0.0920)	(0.0841)	(0.0919)
c.EUatte#c.EUatt	-0.717***	0.727***	0.0221	-0.0542	-0.174**	0.186**	-0.108
	(0.0778)	(0.0877)	(0.0964)	(0.0770)	(0.0775)	(0.0776)	(0.0810)
age	-0.0307***	0.0357***	-0.00878**	0.00930***	-0.00894**	0.0142***	-0.00751**
	(0.00331)	(0.00352)	(0.00377)	(0.00350)	(0.00357)	(0.00351)	(0.00353)
education	-0.0996***	0.0182	-0.00368	0.155***	-0.000378	0.0435	0.0143
	(0.0310)	(0.0325)	(0.0356)	(0.0336)	(0.0333)	(0.0325)	(0.0331)
gender	0.769***	-0.472***	-0.0402	-0.321**	-0.00416	-0.172	-0.267**
	(0.117)	(0.122)	(0.133)	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.124)
/cut1	-3.606***	-0.443*	-0.509*	-0.974***	-2.507***	-1.908***	-2.366***
	(0.256)	(0.249)	(0.271)	(0.262)	(0.274)	(0.277)	(0.272)
/cut2	-2.037***	1.220***	0.770***	0.598**	-0.511**	-0.610**	-0.762***
	(0.238)	(0.241)	(0.273)	(0.252)	(0.257)	(0.252)	(0.256)
/cut3	-0.868***	1.506***		1.459***	1.014***	0.646***	0.384
	(0.232)	(0.242)		(0.255)	(0.260)	(0.250)	(0.256)
/cut4	0.312	2.493***		2.497***	2.120***	1.673***	1.284***

	(0.239)	(0.251)		(0.267)	(0.277)	(0.257)	(0.264)
Observations	1,016	999	1,000	865	901	877	876

Standard errors in parentheses*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Finally, we test whether beliefs on the most important campaign issues are consistent with voters' underlying EU attitudes (table1, columns 4-8). Overall, we find that the beliefs over all four campaign arguments are consistent, i.e. effects are in the expected direction. In other words, EU skeptics are more likely to belief that by abandoning the opt-out, Denmark can be forced to participate in an EU army and cooperation in NATO will be weakened. By comparison, EU friendly voters are more likely to belief that abandoning the opt-outs will contribute to Denmark's security and its influence in the EU. The size of the estimate effects is comparable to those found in Beach and Finke (2020) for the JHA opt-out referendum.

This comparative analysis leads to the following two findings. First, comparing the two referenda, EU attitudes have roughly similar effects on vote intention and beliefs. This means that the strength of EU attitudes constitutes a potentially relevant condition for motivated reasoning in the 2022 campaign also. Second, voters with moderate EU attitudes had a higher level of subjective information and conviction prior to the start of the campaign in 2022 than in 2015, confirming H1. Therefore, we should expect overall weaker campaign effects in 2022 because more voters were already decided on what to vote early on. However, the size of this information gap between the two referendums decreases with the strength of EU attitudes. Since motivated reasoning presumes strong EU attitudes, it can still be an important explanation for campaign effects in 2022.

Individual-level: motivated reasoning and changes in beliefs about campaign arguments

The core of motivated reasoning theory expects that voters are more easily persuaded by campaign arguments that are consistent with their pre-existing beliefs. These effects should increase in voters' attitude strength (H3a-c). In the previous section, we have shown that voters with very strongly-held attitudes hold firm, attitude-consistent beliefs about arguments even at the start of the campaign. These voters are unlikely to change their assessments during the campaign. By comparison, moderate voters with weak EU attitudes should be most open to arguments from both sides. Beach and Finke (2021:1494) argue that

"the most interesting group are voters with moderately-strong attitudes, i.e. voters who have a firm but not extreme attitudes toward the EU. They do not hold firm beliefs on the most important arguments at the start of the campaign, but we expected that they will be more responsive to attitude-consistent arguments during the campaign due to motivated reasoning".

To test this set of hypotheses (H4a-c), we compare voters' belief in four important campaign arguments prior to the campaign (t-1) to their beliefs immediately after the vote (t). Despite the ex-ante higher level of conviction (see above), voters in 2022 were just as prone to minor change of beliefs as they have been in 2015. For the JHA-opt-out referendum Beach and Finke (2020) find that, depending on the argument, between 40% and 45% of the voters held stable beliefs about the consequences of a yes-vote. In 2022, we find that 38% of the voters did not change their belief over the referendums impact on the likelihood of Danish participation in a "EU army". At the other end, we find that 48% of the voters did not change their belief over the referendum's relevance for Danish influence in the EU. Most observable changes were only one answer category with roughly 20% of the voters showing more fundamental changes of two or more categories. Those fundamental changes, however, have been more frequent in the 2015 referendum, when roughly 30% of voters changed their beliefs on key arguments two or more categories.

To analyze and present the effect of EU attitudes on changing beliefs into the four most important campaign arguments, we follow a slightly different approach than Beach and Finke (2021). As explained above, our belief questions had five answer categories, asking respondents whether they "totally agree", "agree", "neither nor", "disagree", "totally disagree" with a campaign argument. For the sake of tractability, we combine the two positive and the two negative categories, hence our dependent variable has three categories. This choice has no effect on the substantive findings. The key explanatory variable is the "*EU attitude^3*", which allows for testing the non-monotone relationship between attitudes strength and change in beliefs postulated in H3a-H3c. This attitude variable is interacted with an indicator that equals "0" for pre-campaign beliefs (t-1) and "1" for beliefs on election day (t) We include the same set of control variables, i.e. age, education, left-right placement and gender. In addition, we control for respondents' beliefs in all four major campaign arguments at t-1, i.e. at the start of the campaign. Numerical results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Ordered logistic regression on belief in four arguments before and after the campaign.

n=2032	EU Army	EU Influence	NATO weaker	DKSecurity
EUattitude	-0.931***	1.232***	-0.997***	1.109***
	(0.150)	(0.151)	(0.146)	(0.154)
EUattitude^2	-0.0159	0.181	-0.000394	0.375***
	(0.124)	(0.119)	(0.116)	(0.103)
EUattitude^3	-0.0258	-0.0896	0.0450	-0.0390
	(0.0913)	(0.0887)	(0.0854)	(0.0947)
Campaign	-0.538***	0.884***	0.126	0.434***
	(0.123)	(0.124)	(0.124)	(0.115)
Campaign#EUattitude	0.337	-0.249	0.507**	0.0544
	(0.205)	(0.206)	(0.205)	(0.211)
Campaign#EUattitude^2	-0.0689	-0.350**	0.184	-0.331**
	(0.156)	(0.164)	(0.164)	(0.144)
Campaign#EUattitude**^3**	0.0390	0.135	-0.0848	-0.0663
	(0.120)	(0.123)	(0.120)	(0.126)
age	0.00519**	-0.0134***	0.00473*	-0.0165***
	(0.00260)	(0.00264)	(0.00263)	(0.00252)
education	0.0751***	-0.0718***	0.0612**	-0.0304
	(0.0242)	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0237)
gender	-0.202**	0.403***	0.00775	0.00924
	(0.0917)	(0.0923)	(0.0926)	(0.0893)
/cut1	-0.766***	-0.212	-0.980***	-1.089***
	(0.198)	(0.197)	(0.199)	(0.189)
/cut2	-0.0774	0.995***	0.138	-0.105
	(0.197)	(0.199)	(0.196)	(0.187)

Note: Columns show unstandardized b coefficients with standard errors in brackets. *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Figure 2 plots the predicted probabilities that respondents either disagree (circle) or agree (diamonds) with a campaign argument. Green lines indicate the probable beliefs prior to the campaign (t-1), whereas red lines indicate the beliefs at voting day (t). Overall, we find attitude consistent changes of beliefs. However, not all campaign arguments were equally relevant for EU friendly as compared to EU skeptic voters.

First, we asked voters whether they believed that abandoning the defense opt-out would result in Denmark having to participate in an EU army (an argument that was false). The campaign had virtually no effect on Eurosceptic voters' propensity to agree with this

argument. By contrast, we find that on voting day moderate and EU friendly voters were significantly less likely to belief the argument than they have been prior to the start of the campaign. Specifically, the probability that they disagreed with the argument increased from roughly 62% to 83%.

Second, we asked voters whether they believed that a "yes"-vote would increase Denmark's influence in the EU. This campaign argument, too, had no effect on extremely Eurosceptic voters, yet neither did the campaign change extremely Eurofriendly voters' beliefs. By contrast, we find a significant change of beliefs for moderately EU-Friendly voters. Before the campaign, these moderate voters had a 50% probability to disagree with the argument that a Yes-vote may increase Danish EU influence. On election day, this probability had risen to 75%. This effect is strongest for moderate yet EU-friendly voters, hence fully supportive of the motivated reasoning argument proposed in Beach and Finke (2021).

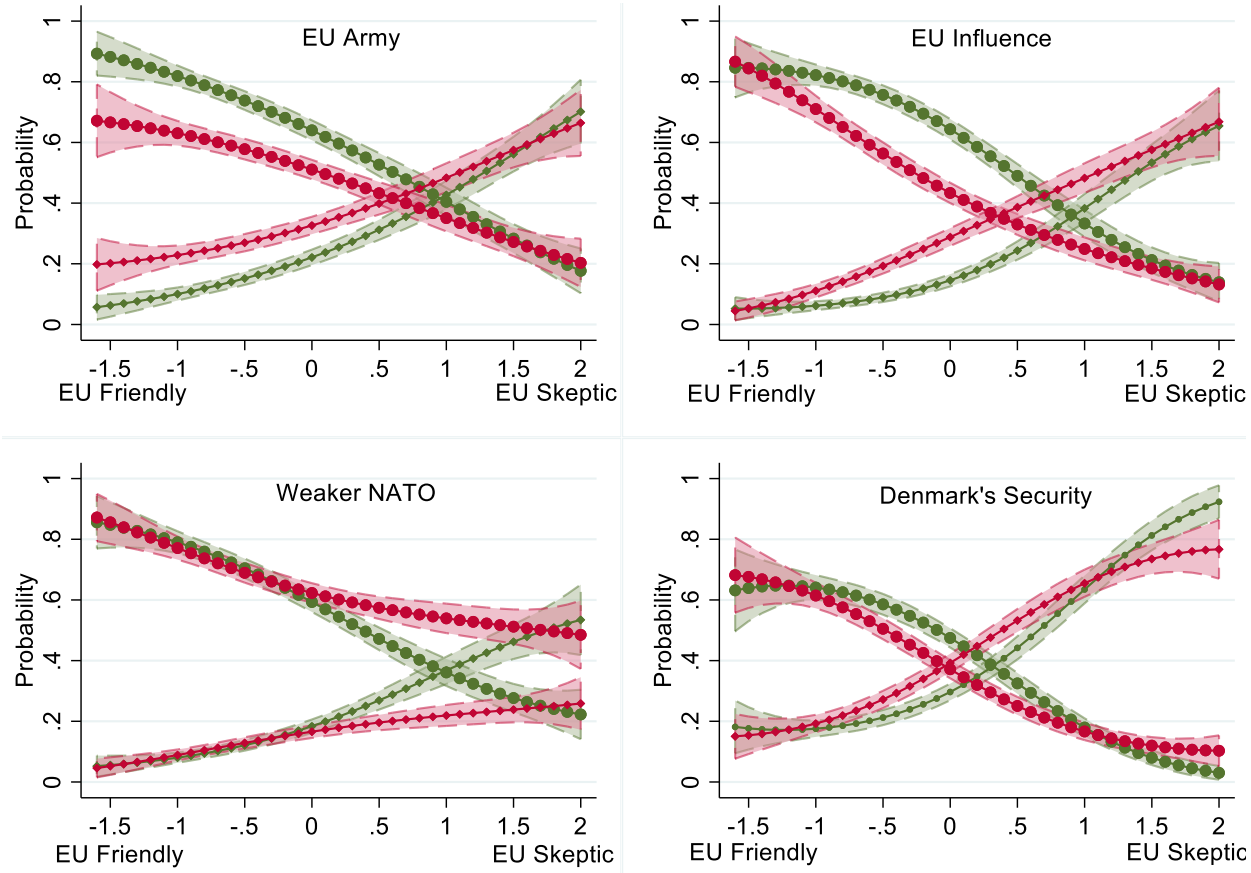
Third, we asked voters whether they believed that a Yes-vote would weaken security cooperation among NATO member states. Here, the campaign had no effect on EU friendly voters, who remained overwhelmingly certain the argument is not plausible. By contrast, the campaign had a strong effect on Eurosceptic voters. We estimate that the probability for the most Euroskeptic voters to belief the argument increased from 20% before the campaign to 50% on election day. However, this change of belief is only significant for the 25% most Eurosceptic voters.

Finally, we asked respondents whether a "yes"-vote would improve Denmark's security. Regarding this argument the campaign had limited effects. However, the observed changes are attitude consistent and significant for a small interval of moderate voters.

The analysis leads to the following preliminary conclusion. First, the observed changes in beliefs are attitude consistent in both referendums, suggesting issue-voting is at play. Second, major changes were less likely than in 2015, confirming H2. Third, in the 2022 referendum the main campaign arguments were selectively relevant for different groups of voters. Fourth, importantly around 80% of the voters had attitudes between [-1] and [+1]. Hence, the observed campaign effects about the participation in an EU army and Denmark's influence in the EU affected most moderate voters, who increasingly believed the "yes"-side of the campaign.

Importantly, in 2022 Danish voters held more friendly attitudes towards the EU than in 2015; thus, the distribution is skewed towards the EU-friendly attitude. Finally, at the start of the campaign these moderate voters felt uninformed and often uncertain about what to vote. By consequence, any change of belief may have had a significant effect on their voting behavior.

Figure 2 Probabilities that respondents either disagree (circle) or agree (diamonds) with a campaign argument. Red lines indicate the probable beliefs prior to the campaign (t-1), whereas green lines indicate the probable beliefs at voting day (t).



Individual-level and change in voting behavior due to arguments

In this final step, we investigate whether the changing beliefs in four important campaign arguments had implications for vote choice (H4). Although the yes-side has led the polls from

the beginning, we observe significant differences between the original vote intention (t-1) and voting behavior (t) (Table 3). Most importantly, the group of undecided voters in our sample has been reduced from n=357 to n=76, with most of them voting "yes" on election day. Please note that the percentage of undecided voters at the start of the campaign has been lower in 2022 (ca. 30%) than in 2015 (ca. 37%). By consequence, the potential effect of campaigning has been smaller to begin with.

More specifically, we are interested in explaining the recalled vote (t) by using the stated vote intention and the beliefs over core arguments at the start of the campaign (t-1) as well as the change in beliefs over the set of most relevant issues. We control for the usual set of socio-demographic variables. In addition, we control for whether respondents voted for one of the yes parties in the last national election ("party endorsement"). The results are displayed in table 5.

Unsurprisingly, vote intention at the start of the campaign is the strongest predictor of recalled voting behavior. However, as argued above the strength of this effect depends on voters' prior conviction or, relatedly, their prior level of subjective knowledge. The negative and highly significant interaction effect between information and vote intention, indicates that voters who felt uncertain prior to the campaign were more likely to vote differently than intended at the start of the campaign.

We find that changing beliefs regarding core campaign arguments can explain this vote switching. We found the strongest effect for the argument that a yes-vote will strengthen Denmark's security. However, the overall importance of changing beliefs does not only dependent on the effect size (table 5), but also on the extent of observed changes (figure 2). For our analysis, two arguments are most relevant for understanding the importance of motivated reasoning based on the strength of EU attitudes. In figure 4, we clearly find that EU attitudes were most relevant for voters' beliefs regarding the argument on Danish participation in an EU army as well as the argument on Denmark's influence in the EU. Therefore, we have estimated the probability to vote No depending on (i) vote intention at t-1 and (ii) changes in the beliefs of those two campaign arguments.

The predictions (table 4) clearly illustrate the importance of changing beliefs for our understanding the final voting decisions of voters. To convince a respondent who intended to vote yes to switch to voting no requires drastic changes in beliefs, i.e. changes of at least

two answer categories on our five-category scale. By contrast, previously undecided voters can be more easily convinced, i.e. minor (single category) changes make them switch to either the yes or no side. For understanding the outcome of the 2022 referendum, it is key to emphasize that belief changes in favor of the Yes campaign were almost three times as frequent as belief changes in favor of the No campaign. That is consistent with our above finding that belief changes over campaign arguments were (i) attitude consistent and (ii) mostly restricted to moderate, predominantly pro-EU voters.

Table 3 Vote intention at t-1 as compared to the recalled vote (t).

	Vote intention: Ja	Vote Intention: Undecided	Vote Intention: No	*total*
Vote: Ja	422	168	34	*624*
Did not Vote	43	76	32	*151*
Vote: No	76	113	221	*410*
Total	*541*	*357*	*287*	*1,185*

Table 4. Predicted Probability to Vote No conditional upon (i) Vote Intention at t-1 and (ii) Change in Beliefs about the Consequences of a Yes Vote for participation in an EU Army and Denmark's Security (Note: Prediction based on a model that excludes all other campaign arguments).

<<<<<<Belief Change in Favor of Yes Campaign<<<<<<					**Stable Beliefs**	**>>>>> Belief Change in Favor of No Campaign>>>>>**			
V_{t-1}	**-2,-2**	**-1,-1**	**-1,0**	**0,-1**		**0,1**	**1,0**	**1,1**	**2,2**
N	27	52	90	76	177	34	36	14	7
yes	0.09 (0.06;0.12) n=8	0.18 (0.15;0.21) n=28	0.25 (0.21;0.28) n=55	0.23 (0.19;0.27) n=21	0.31 (0.27;0.35) n=108	0.40 (0.35;0.45) n=18	0.38 (0.33;0.43) n=22	0.48 (0.42;0.53) n=10	0.65 (0.58;0.73) n=3
dk	0.16 (013;0.19) n=9	0.28 (0.25;0.31) n=8	0.35 (0.32;0.37) n=15	0.36 (0.33;0.39) n=11	0.44 (0.41;0.47) n=18	0.54 (0.49;0.59) n=3	0.52 (0.48;0.57) n=4	0.63 (0.57;0.68) n=2	0.79 (0.72;0.86) n=1
no	0.25 (0.20;0.30) n=10	0.40 (0.35;0.46) n=16	0.50 (0.45;0.56) n=20	0.49 (0.43;0.55) n=14	0.60 (0.53;0.66) n=54	0.70 (0.53;0.76) n=13	0.68 (0.61;0.75) n=10	0.77 (0.71;0.84) n=2	0.90 (0.85;0.95) n=3

Note: V_{t-1} =Vote Intention at t-1; 95% Confidence Intervals Respondents who change one category on EU Army (1, 0), one category on DK Security (0,1), one category on both questions (1,1) and two categories on both questions (2,2).

Table5 : Logistic Regression on Recalled Voting Behavior

Y=Voting Behaviour	EU Army	Indflydelse	NATO weaker	DKSecurity	All Arguments
Vote intent t-1	1.962***	2.241***	2.111***	1.685***	1.237***
	(0.297)	(0.291)	(0.303)	(0.313)	(0.398)
Information	0.570***	0.924***	0.724***	0.777***	0.514*
	(0.215)	(0.204)	(0.214)	(0.221)	(0.286)
Vote intent t-1# Information	-0.317***	-0.492***	-0.437***	-0.361***	-0.203
	(0.106)	(0.1000)	(0.105)	(0.110)	(0.141)
EU Army	0.626***				0.449***
	(0.0877)				(0.118)
EU Army t-1	-0.672***				-0.526***
	(0.0949)				(0.124)
EU Influence Change		-0.789***			-0.396***
		(0.112)			(0.148)
EU Influence t-1		0.857***			0.282
		(0.125)			(0.173)
NATO Change			0.717***		0.406***
			(0.0951)		(0.131)
NATO t-1			-0.712***		-0.383***
			(0.110)		(0.145)
DK Security Change				-1.046***	-0.923***
				(0.102)	(0.123)
DK Security t-1				1.222***	1.229***
				(0.125)	(0.157)
EUatt	0.930***	0.845***	0.985***	0.852***	0.626***
	(0.149)	(0.142)	(0.147)	(0.155)	(0.194)
age	0.000712	-0.00511	-0.00523	0.000879	0.0102
	(0.00598)	(0.00563)	(0.00588)	(0.00594)	(0.00722)
education	-0.0283	-0.0400	-0.00725	-0.0660	-0.0253
	(0.0535)	(0.0496)	(0.0517)	(0.0540)	(0.0664)
gender	-0.148	-0.197	-0.132	-0.00860	0.0121
	(0.204)	(0.191)	(0.200)	(0.210)	(0.266)
Endorsement No Party	1.166***	1.435***	1.491***	1.461***	1.174***
	(0.281)	(0.268)	(0.277)	(0.289)	(0.372)
No Party Affiliation	0.0573	0.135	0.223	0.233	-0.211
	(0.244)	(0.227)	(0.243)	(0.248)	(0.325)
/cut1	1.312	6.073***	1.207	7.130***	4.306***
	(0.815)	(0.781)	(0.851)	(0.838)	(1.279)
/cut2	2.025**	6.841***	1.867**	7.956***	5.225***
	(0.817)	(0.790)	(0.852)	(0.851)	(1.287)
Observations	813	861	819	838	725

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

5. Conclusion

Beach and Finke (2021) applied motivated reasoning theory to explain varying degrees of campaign effects for different types of voters in the 2015 Danish JHA-opt-out referendum. In this article, we explored the extent to which more salient issues in referendums are less prone to campaign effects. We hypothesized that voters would be less prone to campaign effects in a higher salience referendum such as the 2022 Defense opt-out referendum that was held in the shadow of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Using almost identical surveys from both referendums, we found support for the hypothesis that campaign effects are weaker when issues are more salient. We also explored whether the individual-level dynamics relating to issue-voting and motivated reasoning hypothesized and tested by Beach and Finke (2021) for the lower salience 2015 JHA opt-out referendum also held in the higher salience 2022 Defense opt-out referendum.

Comparing the two referendums, we found support for the hypothesis that issue salience matters for campaign effects. First, given the war on Ukraine the 2022 referendum had a significantly higher salience than the 2015 JHA referendum, more voters had made up their mind early on and decided what to vote prior to the start of the campaign. This also meant that the potential for vote switching and, by implication, campaign effects was more limited from the start. Second, the Yes-side carried a lead from the beginning in 2022, and part of the explanation for this is that there was overall a lower potential for vote switching due to higher levels of conviction from the beginning of the campaign.

However, an equally important part of the explanation for the yes vote in 2022 is that the Yes-campaign was able to persuade many moderate, EU friendly voters that (i) EU defense cooperation had nothing to do with the specter of an "EU army" and that (ii) Denmark should have a voice (i.e. influence) when EU defense minister discussed collective safety arrangement. In other words, a significant number of Danish voters could be persuaded that by giving up their opt outs they had nothing to lose but to gain influence at the EU negotiation table.

While those two arguments pertain to EU defense cooperation in the narrow sense, the two other main arguments pertain to Denmark's international security in general. As expected by motivated reasoning theory, only few EU skeptic voters could be convinced that

EU cooperation results in weakening NATO, but these voters were already decided to vote NO from the start. Finally, the No campaign could not persuade Danish voters that the country's security would be threatened by joining EU cooperation. On the contrary, some voters with moderate EU attitudes were persuaded that the Danish security increases by giving up the opt-out. We find that voters' change of belief on this key issue (Denmark's security) was rare but had the strongest effect on voting behavior if it occurred.

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[TO BE COMPLETED]

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