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## *After Enlargement: Voting Patterns in the Sixth European Parliament*

We examined how voting behavior in the European Parliament changed after the European Union added ten new member-states in 2004. Using roll-call votes, we compared voting behavior in the first half of the Sixth European Parliament (July 2004–December 2006) with voting behavior in the previous Parliament (1999–2004). We looked at party cohesion, coalition formation, and the spatial map of voting by members of the European Parliament. We found stable levels of party cohesion and interparty coalitions that formed mainly around the left-right dimension. Ideological distance between parties was the strongest predictor of coalition preferences. Overall, the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 did not change the way politics works inside the European Parliament. We also looked at the specific case of the controversial Services Directive and found that ideology remained the main predictor of voting behavior, although nationality also played a role.

Scholars have extensively analyzed how members of the European Parliament (MEPs) vote (see, for example, Attina 1990; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006, 2007; Kreppel 2002; and Raunio 1997). In particular, we have, with Gérard Roland, studied the behavior of MEPs in more than 12,000 roll-call votes between 1979 and 2004 (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007). Research indicates that MEPs vote increasingly along party lines and decreasingly along national lines. Also, the cohesion of the European political groups has increased, and the political groups have become increasingly competitive, with left-right splits becoming more common than the grand coalition between the two largest groups (the European People's Party and the Socialists). The main dimension of politics in the European Parliament has been shown to be the classic left-right dimension. In short, the European Parliament is much like other democratic parliaments—dominated by parties and left-right politics, and increasingly so.

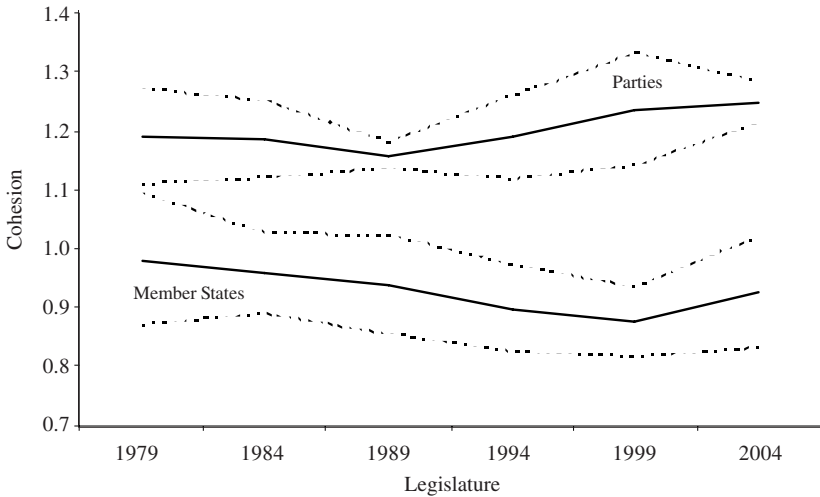
Did the European Union's incorporation of 10 new member-states in 2004 change these patterns? At least two theoretical effects might have resulted from the 2004 enlargement. First, there may have been a "size effect" as the European Parliament grew larger. The number of member-states increased from 15 to 25, the number of MEPs increased from 626 to 732, and the number of national parties in Parliament increased from 122 to 175. In our previous research, we found that as the political groups grew in size, their voting cohesion actually increased rather than decreased, because of greater incentives to specialize and divide tasks between leaders and followers in larger parties.

Second, a "composition effect" may have changed coalition formation between MEPs and national parties. With the 2004 enlargement, the European Parliament became more politically, economically, and culturally heterogeneous than before. The 10 new member-states have lower income per capita than most of the original fifteen member-states, and the level of inequality between the E.U. states is now comparable to the level of inequality between the states in the United States (Morrisson and Murin 2004). Increased economic inequality may go hand in hand with political polarization in the European Parliament, as it has in the U.S. Congress (see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2003). And, given the cultural, economic, and historical differences between the new and old member-states, a new east-west cleavage may have emerged in the new Parliament (cf. Schmitt and Thomassen 2005).

In short, one might expect the MEPs from the new member-states to behave somewhat differently from the MEPs from the older member-states, which would, among other things, reduce transnational party cohesion. To determine if the new MEPs indeed behaved differently, we analyzed all roll-call votes in the first half of the Sixth Parliament (July 2004–December 2006). We compared aggregate- and individual-level MEP behavior in these votes with MEP behavior in all the roll-call votes in the Fifth European Parliament (July 1999–May 2004).

In Section 1 of this article, we look at the levels of cohesion of the political groups and the member-state groups of MEPs. In Section 2, we turn to the patterns of competition and coalition behavior between the political parties. In Section 3, we present a spatial analysis of individual MEP voting. In Section 4, we focus on the highly controversial legislation known as the Services Directive, which proposed opening up the services sector to cross-border competition. A final section concludes.

FIGURE 1  
Changes in Political Group and Member-State Cohesion



*Note:* The figure shows the average relative cohesion of the parties in each parliament plus the first half (two and half years) of the Sixth Parliament relative to the average relative cohesion of each national group of MEPs in the same period. The dotted lines represent the standard deviations around these averages.

### 1. Party and Member-State Cohesion

To measure the voting cohesion of political party and national groups in the European Parliament, we used the agreement index we developed in previous work (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005). Any group of MEPs will appear more cohesive in lopsided votes (purely as a function of the fact that almost all legislators voted the same way) than they will in more evenly split votes. So, to compare how cohesion changed over time, irrespective of the majority size in votes, we calculated the relative cohesion score for each group of MEPs, which is the basic cohesion score of the group of MEPs in a vote divided by the majority size in the vote.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates the average relative cohesion of the transnational European parties and each member-states' group of MEPs in each of the five directly elected European Parliaments since 1979 and in the first half of the Sixth European Parliament (2004–06). The dotted lines represent the standard deviations around these averages.

Three patterns are worth noting. First, voting in the European Parliament occurs more along transnational party lines than along national lines; the transnational parties are more cohesive than the member-state-based groups. Second, the gap between voting along party lines and national lines has increased since the early 1990s, with party cohesion growing while member-state-based cohesion has remained constant. Third, this gap has remained constant in the first half of the Sixth Parliament relative to the whole of the Fifth Parliament (1999–2004).

Tables 1 and 2 address voting along national and party lines, as measured by the relative cohesion of each member-state's group of MEPs and each political group in all votes in the Sixth and Fifth Parliaments as well as in legislative, nonlegislative, and budgetary votes in the Sixth Parliament. Voting along national lines grew slightly, by .053 ( $p$ -value = .000), among all 25 member-states in the current Parliament compared to the 15 member-states in the previous Parliament. Comparison of the 15 member-states represented in both Parliaments reveals a .019 ( $p$ -value = .000) increase in relative cohesion. Yet cohesion along national lines remained considerably lower than cohesion along party lines.

Among individual member-states, there have generally been only minor changes in the levels of member-state-based cohesion between the Fifth and the Sixth Parliaments. Nation-based voting increased slightly for MEPs from Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Denmark, France, and Italy, but it decreased slightly for MEPs from Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Also, the MEPs from several of the new member-states have been more cohesive along national lines than the MEPs from the older member-states. This trend may simply reflect the fact that member-states with fewer MEPs appear more cohesive than do member-states with more MEPs.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1 shows that these nation-based voting patterns generally hold across legislative votes, nonlegislative votes, and budgetary votes. Note also the slightly higher levels of member-state-based cohesion on budgetary votes compared to legislative votes. Even on budgetary issues, however, MEPs vote with their transnational parties more often than they do with their national colleagues in other political groups.

Party cohesion remained stable despite the 2004 enlargement. Relative party cohesion declined slightly, but not significantly (by  $-.014$ ,  $p$ -value = .113).<sup>3</sup> The Socialists (SOC) and the Greens (G/EFA) remained the most cohesive parties, whereas the Nationalists (UEN) and the Anti-Europeans (IND/DEM) remained the least cohesive. Although the Greens were less cohesive in the first half of the Sixth

TABLE 1  
Member-State Relative Cohesion in Fifth and Sixth European Parliaments

Member-State	All Votes			Legislative Votes	Nonlegislative Votes	Budgetary Votes
	Fifth (1999–2004)	Sixth (2004–05)	Change			
					Sixth (2004–05)	
Slovenia	—	1.103	—	1.093	1.106	1.125
Estonia	—	1.088	—	1.090	1.084	1.104
Hungary	—	1.073	—	1.097	1.046	1.144
Lithuania	—	1.065	—	1.049	1.074	1.066
Latvia	—	1.017	—	1.035	1.000	1.047
Ireland	.921	1.011	.090**	1.004	1.016	1.005
Luxembourg	.920	.995	.075**	.986	.992	1.049
Portugal	.894	.980	.086**	.979	.975	1.013
Spain	.905	.955	.050**	.932	.959	1.018
Finland	.897	.946	.049**	.935	.952	.956
Slovakia	—	.942	—	.944	.915	1.095
Greece	.897	.914	.017	.936	.885	1.006
Poland	—	.914	—	.988	.871	.907
Denmark	.860	.905	.045**	.919	.906	.846
Malta	—	.903	—	.926	.894	.874
Germany	.949	.899	–.050**	.907	.884	.958
Cyprus	—	.874	—	.839	.894	.881
Austria	.919	.879	–.040**	.914	.864	.847
France	.694	.861	.167**	.889	.836	.913
Belgium	.860	.859	–.001	.856	.858	.877
Italy	.823	.836	.013**	.847	.824	.866
Sweden	.863	.812	–.051**	.796	.822	.816
Netherlands	.885	.810	–.075**	.799	.812	.836
Czech Republic	—	.781	—	.800	.776	.736
United Kingdom	.832	.745	–.087**	.753	.757	.643
Average EU15	.874	.894	.019	—	—	—
Average EU25	—	.927	—	.932	.920	.945
N	5,760	2,452		841	1,381	225

*Note:* The table is sorted from the most cohesive member-state's group of legislators in the European Parliament (with respect to legislative votes) to the least cohesive member-state's group of legislators, as measured by the relative cohesion scores.

\*significant at .05; \*\*significant at .01.

Parliament than in the whole of the Fifth, the biggest decline in relative cohesion was among the Liberals (ALDE). This is not surprising, since the Liberals are more ideologically heterogeneous after integrating the Italian Margherita Party and the Union for French Democracy Party (UDF), erstwhile Conservatives. The two largest groups (Conservatives and Socialists) became slightly less cohesive, while the Radical Left, Nationalists, and the Anti-Europeans became slightly more cohesive.

TABLE 2  
Party Cohesion in Fifth and Sixth European Parliaments

Political Group	All Votes			Legislative	Nonlegislative	Budgetary
	Fifth (1999–2004)	Sixth (2004–05)	Change	Votes	Votes	Votes
Greens (G/EFA)	1.341	1.292	–.048**	1.300	1.289	1.290
Socialists (SOC)	1.297	1.258	–.039**	1.269	1.200	1.107
Radical Left (EUL/NGL)	1.253	1.223	–.030**	1.237	1.275	1.236
Conservatives (EPP–ED)	1.166	1.215	.049**	1.214	1.239	1.162
Liberals (ALDE)	1.267	1.207	–.060**	1.178	1.228	1.186
Nationalists (UEN)	1.084	1.097	.013	1.107	1.092	1.099
Anti-Europeans (IND/DEM)	.713	.739	.026**	.688	.761	.794
Independents (NA)	.638	.613	–.025**	.604	.622	.590
Average	1.095	1.081	–.014	1.074	1.088	1.058
N	5,760	2,452		841	1,381	225

*Note:* The table is sorted from the most cohesive party on legislative votes to the least cohesive party, as measured by the relative cohesion scores. The average excludes the nonattached members of Parliament, who are not an official political group.

\*significant at .05; \*\*significant at .01.

Party abbreviations:

G/EFA	Greens/European Free Alliance
SOC	Socialist Group
EUL/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
EPP–ED	European People's Party–European Democrats
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (European Liberal, Democratic, and Reform Party in Fifth Parliament)
UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group
IND/DEM	Independence/Democracy Group (Group for a Europe of Democracies and Diversities in Fifth Parliament)
NA	Nonattached members (mostly on the radical right)

Party cohesion was very stable across different types of votes. The lower relative cohesion of parties on budgetary votes stems from the European Parliament as a whole being more cohesive on budgetary issues than on legislative or nonlegislative issues. Indeed, the majority size on budgetary issues is about 77%. On legislative and nonlegislative issues, the majority sizes are 73% and 71%, respectively.

## 2. Party Competition and Coalitions

To discuss patterns of party competition and coalitions, we refer to Table 3, which shows the proportion of times the majorities in any two parties voted the same way in the first half of the Sixth Parliament compared to the proportions of agreement for the whole of the Fifth Parliament.

The first regularity is the stability of the left-right structure of competition. In both Parliaments, any political party was more likely to vote the same way as a party closer to it on the left-right dimension than with a party farther away on this dimension. For example, in the Sixth Parliament, the Nationalists, the farthest-right party, voted 84% of the time with the Conservatives, 72% with the Liberals, 63% with the Socialists, 45% with the Greens, and 42% with the Radical Left. Only the Anti-Europeans and the Nonattached members (NA) do not fit this left-right pattern, because the primary objective of these two groups is to protest the main political groups. Hence these two groups voted least often with the two biggest parties and more often with the parties on the left and right extremes. The protest behavior of these two groups is consistent across both Parliaments.

TABLE 3  
Party Competition and Coalition Patterns  
in Fifth and Sixth European Parliaments

Political Group (Left to Right)	Radical Left	Greens	Socialists	Liberals	Conservatives	Nationalists	Anti- Europeans	Independents
Radical Left	—	79.3	69.1	55.4	42.4	45.9	59.2	52.4
Greens	75.4	—	72.0	62.3	47.1	45.2	55.5	51.0
Socialists	62.0	70.3	—	72.9	64.5	52.6	52.6	56.8
Liberals	48.0	59.2	75.3	—	67.9	55.0	52.3	60.0
Conservatives	39.6	47.4	68.4	78.0	—	71.2	52.0	68.2
Nationalists	42.2	45.1	62.8	72.4	84.3	—	62.6	73.8
Anti-Europeans	45.5	40.3	42.9	48.0	54.0	56.8	—	63.8
Independents	48.6	43.0	52.3	53.7	64.1	64.7	68.1	—

*Note:* Above-the-diagonal entries indicate coefficients for the Fifth Parliament (1999–2004). Below-the-diagonal entries indicate coefficients for the Sixth Parliament (2004–06). Each cell shows the percentage of times the majority of parliament members in the two political groups voted the same way in all the roll-call votes in the given period.

As for the two biggest parties, the Conservatives and Socialists voted together slightly more often in the first half of the Sixth Parliament (68% of the time) than they did in the Fifth Parliament (65%). It is worth noting, however, that this voting agreement is still lower than was shown at the peak of cooperation between the two parties, in the Third Parliament (1989–94), when the Conservatives and Socialists voted together 71% of the time (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005, 221).

Underneath the generally stable structure of party alignments, however, we can see several subtle changes in competition and coalition behavior between the Fifth and the Sixth Parliaments. First, the behavior of the Liberals changed. In the Fifth Parliament, the Liberals voted more often with the Socialists than with the Conservatives (73% compared to 68%), but in the Sixth Parliament, the Liberals voted more often with the Conservatives than with the Socialists (78% compared to 75%). Second, the pattern of behavior within the right and within the left changed between the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments. On the right, the Conservatives and Nationalists voted together more often, as did the Liberals and Nationalists. On the left, the Socialists voted slightly less often with the Greens and Radical Left.

Overall, these patterns suggest that whereas in the Fifth European Parliament the Liberals were pivotal in deciding whether a majority coalition formed from the right or from the left, in the first half of the Sixth Parliament there was a clearer center-right majority bloc (between the Liberals, Conservatives, and Nationalists). The three groups on the center-left and left (Socialists, Greens, and Radical Left) were in the minority position and were less united.

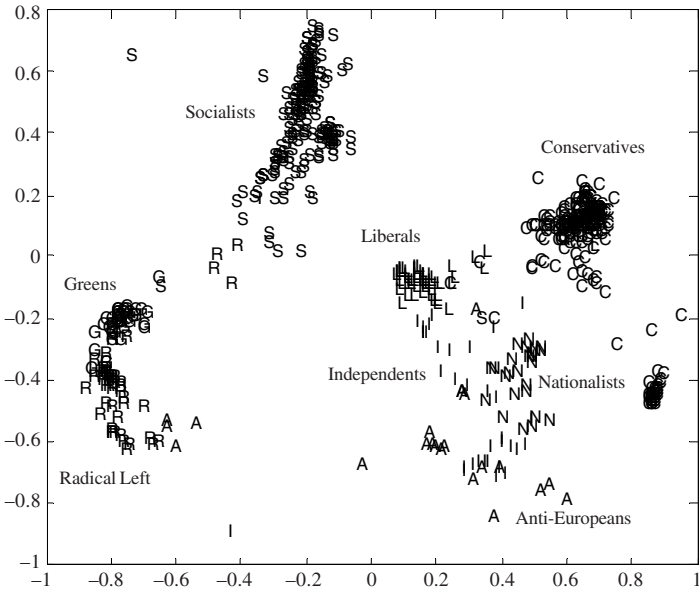
### **3. Spatial Maps of Individual MEPs' Voting Behavior**

To analyze individual voting patterns, we applied Poole and Rosenthal's (1997) NOMINATE geometric scaling method to the European Parliament roll-call votes. This method allowed us to measure how much variance each recovered dimension explained and to determine ideal-point estimates for every MEP (cf. Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006, 2007).

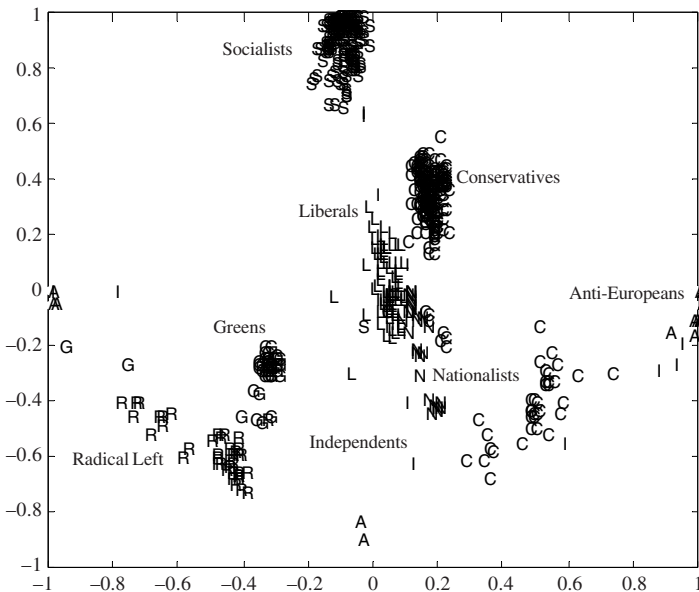
Figure 2 shows the two-dimensional map of MEP voting in the Fifth and Sixth European Parliaments. Every letter represents an MEP, and the distance between any two MEPs reflects the proportion of times the MEPs voted the same way. The figure shows the relatively high level of party-based voting, with the members of each political group clustered together.

FIGURE 2  
Spatial Maps of the European Parliament

a. Fifth European Parliament



b. Sixth European Parliament



Although NOMINATE cannot reveal anything about the substantive meaning of each of the dimensions (no scaling method can), the spread of the party clusters in Figure 2 suggests that the first dimension in both Parliaments is clearly the left-right dimension. On the farthest left are the Radical Left and Greens, the Socialists are on the center-left, the Liberals are in the center, the Conservatives are on the center-right, and farthest right are a group of MEPs from the Conservatives who vote differently from the main Conservatives approximately 30% of the time.

The second dimension is more difficult to interpret. At face value, this dimension appears to represent anti-/pro-Europe policy preferences: toward the top of the figure are the more pro-European parties (Socialists, Conservatives, and Liberals), and near the bottom are the more anti-European parties (Radical Left, Greens, Nationalists, and Anti-Europeans). A more-detailed analysis of MEP locations reveals that this second dimension also captures government-opposition interests in the European Union: MEPs from national parties that are in government appear near the top on this second dimension; MEPs from national parties in opposition appear near the bottom (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006).

If we compare the figures for the two Parliaments, we find a stable pattern of MEP voting behavior. There is one important difference, however: the Liberal MEPs are closer to the Conservative MEPs in the Sixth Parliament than they were in the Fifth Parliament. Admittedly, it is difficult to compare NOMINATE scores across legislatures without a dynamic model. Nonetheless, similar maps across legislatures indicate voting patterns that are, at least to some extent, similar.

For the Sixth Parliament, the average correct classification score is .871 for the first dimension and .873 for the second dimension. The average proportional reduction in errors is .555 for the first dimension and .560 for the second dimension. The increases in these goodness-of-fit statistics when we add a second dimension are thus small, indicating that the second dimension does not capture a large proportion of the variance of voting. The statistics are similar for the Fifth Parliament: .875 and .512 for the first dimension, and .899 and .605 for the second dimension.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the results for individual MEP voting reinforce our findings from the aggregate-level data on party cohesion and coalition behavior. In both the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments, the transnational parties were highly cohesive and the main dimension of competition was the left-right dimension. The only clearly identifiable difference between the two Parliaments, in both the aggregate and

individual data, was in the relationship between the Liberal MEPs and the Conservatives. In the Fifth Parliament, the Liberals represented a more or less midway position between the Socialists and Conservatives. In the Sixth Parliament, the Liberals were closer to the Conservatives than the Socialists.

#### **4. A Case Study: The Directive on Services in the Internal Market**

The results we have discussed thus far are based on the aggregation of a large number of votes. One could argue that a conclusion based on a large number of votes, many of which are not very salient, will not necessarily apply when MEPs are faced with an important issue that might divide them more clearly along national lines. To address this argument, we looked at the highly important and controversial Directive on services in the internal market.<sup>5</sup> The Services Directive aimed to open the services sector to cross-border competition, mainly by removing the service-industry regulations of individual E.U. member-states (unless those regulations ensured nondiscriminatory practices or could be justified on the grounds of public interest). The Services Directive was considered by its supporters to be essential for the development of a genuine European Union single market in services. For opponents, however, the directive threatened to push down wages, lower social and environmental protections, and create an influx of foreign workers.

The European Parliament voted on the Services Directive on February 16, 2006. We collected the 81 roll-call votes on the directive. The cohesion scores of the political groups and the member-states on these votes indicate that the political groups were, on average, more cohesive than the member-states. That said, the MEPs from the new member-states seemed more likely to vote along national lines than the MEPs from the original member-states.

To analyze how MEPs voted on this legislation, we created an index from MEP voting behavior on these 81 votes. We first looked at the exact subject of each vote, to determine the direction, or policy implication, of the outcome of the vote. Some proposals aimed to liberalize services (a proliberalization issue); others aimed to reduce the scope of this legislation (an antiliberalization issue). Proliberalization MEPs should have voted “yes” on proliberalization issues and “no” on antiliberalization issues. We granted 1 point if an MEP voted in a proliberalization way (voting “yes” if the issue was proliberalization or “no” if the issue was antiliberalization) and 0 if

the MEP did not vote in a proliberalization way (“no” on a proliberalization proposal, “yes” on an antiliberalization vote). We then calculated the final score for an MEP as the sum of the points each MEP was assigned, divided by the number of roll-call votes (81). Thus, if a legislator voted in a proliberalization way on all 81 votes, then that legislator scored 1. If the MEP voted in an antiliberalization way on all 81 votes, then that MEP scored 0.<sup>6</sup>

To determine the factors influencing MEP voting on the Services Directive, we estimated a simple regression model of the form:

$$Y_m = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{left right}_m + \beta_2 \text{pro/anti EU} + \beta_3 \text{GDP per capita}_m \\ + \beta_4 \text{new member state}_m + \varepsilon_m \\ m = 1, \dots, 748,$$

where  $Y$  is the dependent variable,  $\alpha$  is a constant, each  $\beta$  is a regression coefficient,  $\varepsilon$  is an error term, and each MEP is indexed by  $m$ .

Our dependent variable is the score of each MEP on the liberalization index. For explanatory variables, we used individual-level data as well as member-state-level data. Our individual-level data include the left-right ideology of each MEP and the MEP’s attitude toward the European Union. These left-right ideology and pro-/anti-European Union variables are coordinates of the first and second dimensions, respectively, of the voting space estimated with NOMINATE using the 2004–06 data. Because the roll-call data used to compute these variables come from the previous year, this variable can be considered exogenous. To distinguish between ideology and party effects, or to differentiate between *within party* ideology and *between party* ideology, we included party dummy variables in one specification. We also used member-state-level data, such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and a dummy variable indicating if the MEP was from a new member-state. We intended this last variable to capture the effect of Central and Eastern European countries, since eight out of ten new member-states are from Central and Eastern Europe.

The results of our ordinary least squares estimations appear in Table 4. The left-right ideology of an MEP is highly significant across all specifications, except when political-group dummy variables are included. This result suggests that MEPs in right-wing groups generally voted in favor of the Services Directive, while MEPs in left-wing groups generally voted against it. The pro-/anti-European Union position of an MEP is also significant, with the expected positive sign. New member-state status is positive and significant, suggesting that MEPs from new member-states voted for the Services Directive. The effect

TABLE 4  
Determinants of Parliament Members' Voting  
on the Services Directive

(robust *t*-statistics in parentheses)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Left-Right Ideology	0.301 (12.35)**	0.306 (12.66)**	0.299 (12.21)**	-0.011 (0.31)
Pro-/Anti-EU Position	0.018 (2.48)*	0.014 (1.97)*	0.021 (2.86)**	0.028 (3.49)**
New Member-State	0.065 (3.68)**	— —	0.099 (11.64)**	0.06 (5.03)**
GDP per Capita	-0.049 (2.17)*	-0.122 (10.90)**	— —	-0.042 (2.66)**
Constant	0.800 (7.32)**	1.146 (20.65)**	0.570 (24.56)**	0.741 (9.61)**
Party Fixed Effects	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	649	649	649	649
R <sup>2</sup>	.50	.49	.50	.78

*Note:* Dependent variable: Proliberalization score of Parliament members. Parameters of the models are estimated by a linear regression model.

\*significant at .05; \*\*significant at .01.

of GDP per capita is significant and negative, meaning that members from rich countries generally opposed liberalization of the services sector.

We also computed standardized beta coefficients, which reveal that the two most important predictors are the left-right ideology of the MEP and whether or not the MEP represents a new member-state. A one-standard-deviation change in the left-right ideology variable yields a 0.60-standard-deviation change in the dependent variable. A one-standard-deviation change in the variable for new member-state status yields a 0.17-standard-deviation change in the dependent variable.

## 5. Conclusion

In general, despite the enlargement of the European Union with ten new member-states in May 2004, voting behavior in the European Parliament has changed very little. MEPs still vote primarily along

transnational party lines. The cohesion of the political groups in the European Parliament remains high and has neither increased nor declined significantly. Voting along national lines, in contrast, remains low. Furthermore, the dominant dimension of competition in the European Parliament is the left-right dimension. These results reinforce the findings of our previous research, that the European Parliament is dominated by political parties and by left-right politics.

Nevertheless, there were two main changes in voting behavior between the Fifth European Parliament (1999–2004) and the first half of the Sixth European Parliament (2004–06). First, in the Fifth Parliament, the Liberals voted approximately the same amount of time with the Socialists as they did with the Conservatives, but in the Sixth Parliament, the Liberals voted significantly more often with the Conservatives than with the Socialists. This shift is consistent with the general view of the dominance of left-right politics in the European Parliament, because the changed behavior of the Liberals is a product of the rightwards shift in the membership of this group after two center-right parties left the Conservatives and joined the Liberals at the start of the Sixth Parliament.

The overall left-right makeup of the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments is very similar: the Conservatives are the largest group in both Parliaments, and the median member of both Parliaments is a Liberal. Yet the change in the coalition behavior of the Liberals may have a significant effect on the balance of power in the European Parliament. The left and right blocs were evenly balanced in the Fifth Parliament, with the Liberals determining which side would become the majority on any particular vote. In the Sixth Parliament, however, with the Liberals voting more often with the Conservatives and Nationalists, a center-right coalition dominates.

The second change in MEPs' voting behavior is a tendency among MEPs from the new member-states from Central and Eastern Europe to vote slightly more along national lines than do the MEPs from the original 15 member-states. This nation-based voting was particularly evident on the Services Directive. The MEPs from the new member-states voted in a more-proliberalization way than did the MEPs from the older member-states, if one controls for the ideological preferences of the MEPs. Specifically, MEPs on the left from the new member-states were less likely to be opposed to the liberalization of the services market than were MEPs on the left from the old member-states. Nevertheless, even on the most important and controversial piece of legislation thus far in the Sixth Parliament, ideological preference was the dominant factor.

Finally we must note that party cohesion may be lower in the first few months of any European Parliament, while the MEPs gradually sort themselves into political groups and decide how to behave in relation to their political-group whips and leaders. By the end of the Sixth Parliament, the effect of the initial learning period on the average measures of cohesion should be smaller. Average party cohesion may well be higher in the 2004–09 Parliament as a whole than it was in the 1999–2004 Parliament.

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## NOTES

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1. The relative cohesion score ranges between 0 and 2. We divided the absolute agreement index by majority size, which varies between .5 and 1.

2. Interestingly, one of the most “Euroskeptic” member-states, the United Kingdom, has the lowest level of nation-based voting among its MEPs.

3. Note that absolute party cohesion rose slightly (by .010,  $p$ -value = .030). This increase suggests that votes in the European Parliament have been slightly more consensual in the first half of the Sixth Parliament than they were in the whole of the previous Parliament.

4. Bear in mind, of course, that both the number of roll-call votes and the number of MEPs are different between Parliaments. Still, these statistics give an indication of whether or not dimensionality has changed.

5. The Services Directive provoked intense debate and mass protests in various E.U. countries, including France, Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark. In March 2006, approximately 100,000 people marched in Brussels to protest the Directive.

6. This score is similar to the index computed by Kalt and Zupan (1984) and, more generally, to the method used by interest groups in the United States to rank legislators on issues of concern to these groups, such as the liberal-conservative index produced by the Americans for Democratic Action (<http://www.adaction.org/pages/publications/voting-records.php>) (Americans for Democratic Action 2008).

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