

Issue attacks.

Media salience, party competence and negative campaigning

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Abstract

Despite increasing relevance of and attention to issue competition, we know little about how parties react in response to an unfavorable issue agenda and whether they attempt to challenge their opponents issue advantages during an election. This research note contributes to fill this gap by studying issue attacks. We theorize that parties ‘go negative’ on salient topics and expect them to attack their opponents best issues. We further hypothesize that attacks on issue owners are contingent on high salience. We test these expectations with data on party press releases, media reports, voter and candidate surveys from the 2013 Austrian national election campaign. Results confirm that parties attack on salient topics and target their rivals’ best issues. Yet, there is no evidence that the latter is contingent on high salience suggesting different logics for issue-based negative campaigning: parties attack on salient issues to increase the visibility of their campaign messages and use issue attacks to undermine their opponents’ competence advantages. These findings enhance our understanding of issue competition and indicate opportunities and limits of negative campaigning on issues.

Keywords: Negative campaigning, Issue ownership, Issue salience, Election, Crowdsourcing

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1. Introduction

A key decision for parties is to choose on which issues to focus on during an election campaign. This choice is important as it may determine electoral outcomes and shape the public issue agenda (Green-Pedersen 2007; Dalton 2002). Despite growing attention to the factors determining issue competition, the extent literature has almost exclusively focused on the question, which issues political actors emphasize (Baumann et al. 2020; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Wagner and Meyer 2014; but see: Damore 2002; Elmelund-Præstekær 2011).

The contribution of this research note is to deepen our understanding of party competition on policy issues by linking it to research on negative campaigning (e.g. Haselmayer 2019; Nai and Walter 2015; Lan and Brown Rovner 2009). It does so by developing and testing arguments that link strategic attack behavior with party issue strategies. This is particularly relevant as recent studies show that parties may successfully alter competence perceptions of their rivals through negative campaigning (Lefevre et al. forthcoming; Seeberg and Nai forthcoming; Seeberg 2020).

Theories on selective issue emphasis argue that political actors should emphasize their ‘best issues’ to increase their salience and thereby profit in the polls (Budge and Fairlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). However, pressing demands from voters or the media may force parties to depart from this ideal campaign strategy (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994, Sigelman and Buell 2004; Sides 2006; Spoon and Klüver 2014). Facing a ‘hostile’ issue agenda, parties will hardly benefit from stressing their own policy proposals or by claiming a record on unfavorable issues. Instead, we expect them to ‘go negative’ to make their opponents look bad on the most salient topics and to undermine potential electoral advantages of rival parties with high issue competence. Combining the reasoning of these arguments, we further expect that attacks should

be particularly likely when parties face an opponent with a strong competence advantage on a highly salient issue.

To test these expectations, we study party communication in all press releases issued in the 2013 Austrian national election. These are combined with media salience data from eight national newspapers and a representative voter survey to establish party issue competence. Results show that parties ‘go negative’ on issues they cannot avoid due to their high media salience. They further attack on their opponent’s best issues. Yet, contrasting our expectations, there is no evidence that parties are more likely to do so if their opponents’ best issues are particularly salient in a campaign.

These findings indicate opportunities and limits of issue-based negative campaigning: parties respond to the media’s issue agenda in order to get coverage of their campaign messages, which limits their ability to push their best issues or to promote new policy problems. It may also confine democratic accountability as parties will find it hard to hold the government accountable on issues that are not prominently covered in the news. Moreover, parties are deliberately more negative on their rivals’ best issues, suggesting that they contest issue-specific advantages during election campaigns.

2. Issue salience and issue ownership

A central concept in current electoral research is issue ownership, which posits non-random patterns of association between parties and issues in the voters’ minds. Some parties develop a reputation of being more competent or more attentive to specific policy areas than others (e.g. Stubager 2018; Walgrave et al. 2012) and will profit if these topics are important during the campaign (e.g. Bélanger and Meguid 2008). Accordingly, parties should emphasize their best issues to raise their importance and avoid issues where others have an advantage (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). Political actors can successfully challenge an

opponent's competence evaluation (Walgrave et al. 2009), yet such attempts can fail, backfire and reinforce existing issue ownership perceptions (Tresch et al. 2015). More recent studies suggest a particularly rewarding strategy to undermine a rival's issue reputation: negative campaigning (Lefevre et al. forthcoming; Seeberg and Nai forthcoming; Seeberg 2020).

3. Negative campaigning

A common definition of negative campaigning distinguishes negative, directed communication between two political actors from positive messages (Geer 2006). The former contains substantive criticism, uncivil attacks or mudslinging, the latter subsumes selective issue emphasis with no reference to another political actor and rare cases of neutral and positive mentions of an opponent. Dichotomous measures are problematic as they are unable to match public perceptions of negative campaigning and thereby lead to inaccurate conclusions regarding its consequences (Lipsitz and Geer 2017). As voters only dismiss negative messages that go beyond their individual level of acceptance (Fridkin and Kenney 2019), it is important to account for variation in negative communication (Haselmayer 2019). This is particularly relevant in multiparty systems with frequent coalition governments, where parties and candidates have to balance vote-maximizing strategies with the post-electoral bargaining of government membership (Haselmayer and Jenny 2018; Walter and van der Brug 2013; Elmelund-Præstekær 2008; Hansen and Pedersen 2008). Therefore, this study uses a graded conceptualization of campaign sentiment that accounts for variation in the strength of negative messages.

3.1 Negative campaigning on issues

Theories of selective issue emphasis expect parties to focus their campaign on owned issues and to avoid talking about those owned by their opponents (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). However, sometimes parties are unable to ignore more unfavorable issues, because they are important to voters or spotlighted by the media. Parties have to signal their awareness to the most pressing issues of a campaign and propose solutions for voter concerns (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994). Empirical evidence found substantial overlap in party issue agendas during election campaigns (e.g. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Wagner and Meyer 2014; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004).

Yet, despite solid evidence for issue dialogue, we know little about how parties engage on the same issues. In particular, we lack an understanding of how parties react to an unfavorable issue agenda. In response to external issue constraints, a party can respond by highlighting their own policy proposals on a salient issue. Yet, voters may lend low credibility to such messages from parties that have no strong reputation for handling the issue (Elmelund-Præstekær 2011). Alternatively, they can opt for direct confrontation and ‘go negative’, for example to alert voters to an opponent’s failures to deliver desired outcomes or to stress negative consequences of their policy proposals.

Accordingly, parties should ‘go negative’ on issues they cannot avoid due to their high salience. Damore (2002: 674) argues that such attacks could be particularly effective in terms of electoral gains. Due to their importance in the voters’ calculus, political actors could reap benefits from successfully linking their opponents negatively to the most salient issues. Empirical evidence from US-presidential elections indeed suggests that attacks are more likely on the most important issues of a campaign (Damore 2002; Geer 2006).

Moreover, ‘going negative’ on salient issues should be particularly relevant in communication channels, such as party press releases, which rely on the mediation of journalists and editors in order to reach a broader public. One way to achieve this goal is by

drafting campaign messages that incorporate journalistic selection criteria, such as news factors (Galtung and Holmboe Ruge 1965) into their campaign communication. Negative press releases on salient issues contain news factors of conflict and negativity and allow journalists to add to an ongoing story, which should increase their chances of pushing their messages to the news (Meyer et al. 2020; Haselmayer et al. 2019).

Accordingly, we expect parties to ‘go negative’ on issues that are salient in the campaign.

Hypothesis 1: Parties attack on salient issues.

Beyond responding to an (unfavorable) issue agenda, parties may deliberately choose to challenge competence advantages of their opponents. Parties with low competence evaluations on an issue will find it hard to increase voters’ confidence in their ability to handle an issue by simply emphasizing their own proposals or by trying to claim a record on it. Beyond that, issue reputation is typically gained through continued and enduring attention and commitment to a particular policy field (Budge and Fairlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Stubager 2018; Walgrave et al. 2015), which makes it hard to challenge an established issue advantage during an election campaign.

Instead of outbidding the most competent rivals’ with own policy proposals, other parties could therefore attempt to weaken their opponents’ issue advantages through negative campaigning. An issue-owning party is expected to benefit in the polls if their best issues are salient during the campaign. Attacking on these topics could mitigate such gains, challenge an opponent’s issue reputation, blame a bad policy record or cast doubt about its ability to deliver desired policy outcomes (Lefevre et al. forthcoming; Seeberg and Nai forthcoming; Seeberg 2020). Beyond these immediate effects, parties could even try to conquer issue ownership in the longer run (Elmelund-Præstekær 2011: 212). In line with these expectations, Danish parties’ have been found to attack on their rival’s best issues (Elmelund-Præstekær 2011). This strategy

seems rewarding as recent experimental evidence suggests that issue-based negative campaigning can indeed undermine competence evaluations of an attacked party (Seeberg 2020; Seeberg and Nai forthcoming).

As above, such attacks should further increase a party's chances of reaching the news. Journalists and editors prefer unexpected and surprising news (Galtung und Holmboe Ruge 1965). Therefore, (negative) campaign messages, which differ from the odd repetition of a party's own issue profile, are more likely to make the news (Haselmayer et al. 2019; Helfer and van Aelst 2016).

To the contrary, parties that are competent on an issue have low incentives to initiate attacks against their opponents on these topics. These parties should rely on 'positive' communication to exploit their competence advantage unless they suffer attacks on these topics. In those circumstances, counterattacks should be more effective to defend their issue reputation than positive responses, which may not compensate a potential loss in voter credibility (Craig et al. 2014) or support (Dolezal et al. 2016).

We therefore expect parties to 'go negative' to challenge their opponents' issue advantages through negative campaigning:

Hypothesis 2: Parties attack on their rivals' best issues.

Theories on issue competition argue that parties will *only* address unfavorable issues if avoiding them would be even more costly (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994). This would suggest that issue overlap is conditional on high salience. As electoral gains for the most competent parties are expected to increase when their best issues are salient in a campaign (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996), it could be more plausible and rewarding to attack the most competent parties on the most pressing issues of the campaign. Similarly, Elmelund-

Præstekær (2011) assumes that parties would only attack issue owners when their best issues are salient and therefore unavoidable for their opponents during a campaign.

Thus far, such a logical precondition for negative campaigning on unfavorable issues has not been put to an empirical test. In order to do so, this manuscript examines whether issue salience and party competence interact.

Hypothesis 3: Parties attack on their rivals' best issues when these topics are salient in the news.

4. Case selection and data

We test these expectations with press releases issued during the 2013 Austrian national election. We include all parties represented in the lower chamber of parliament during this period: the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the Christian democratic People's Party (ÖVP), the populist radical right Freedom Party (FPÖ) and its 2005 split-off, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), the Greens, and the populist Team Stronach (TS).

Austria is a rather typical West European parliamentary democracy, yet it also has some peculiar features such as frequent coalition governments between the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party since 1945. Austrian parties engage in a lot of “direct confrontation” by stressing the same issues during a campaign instead of selectively emphasizing relative strengths (Dolezal et al. 2014), which makes it a good test case for studying issue-based negative campaigning.

The data cover all 1,409 press releases issued by the relevant parties during the last six weeks ahead of the 2013 national election (Müller et al. 2017). Press releases enable parties to address their core issues and to respond to the dynamics of the campaign, such as media salience or the topics discussed by other parties (e.g. Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). They are further

attractive communication tools as journalists use them as sources for their electoral news coverage (Meyer et al. 2020; Helfer and van Aelst 2016). While social media were only of limited relevance during the 2013 election, press releases were a central communication tool with more than thirty party messages on an average campaign day, which makes them an ideal source for studying electoral competition.

Trained coders manually identified the author of each press release, the topic of the title and subtitle as well as up to three targets and their binary relation (positive or negative) (Müller et al. 2017). To obtain a graded measure of campaign tone, we use crowdcoding, that is large-scale online coding of untrained contributors (Haselmayer and Jenny 2017; Benoit et al. 2016). These lay coders rated the sentiment of headlines and subtitles of each press release on a five-point scale (0 ‘not negative’ to 4 ‘very strongly negative’). To obtain valid sentiment scores¹, we collected ratings from ten coders for each sentence and aggregate them using the mean following similar applications (Haselmayer and Jenny 2017).

For the measurement of issue ownership and issue salience we use two different sources of data: a representative voter survey for measuring party issue competence (Kritzinger et al. 2014) and media content analysis of eight national newspapers to determine the media salience of issues (Eberl et al. 2015). We also rely on a candidate survey to derive party policy positions (Müller, Eder and Jenny 2015).

4.1 Dependent variable

This study aims to explain how parties choose the target (party) and issue of negative campaigning. Therefore, the focus is on statements between parties with a focus on a political

¹ A comparison between the aggregated crowd-based sentiment scores and a reference coding from experienced coders shows a strong correlation ($r=0.78$, $p=0.0001$; $n=200$).

topic ($n=732$)². Moreover, data have to be restructured in order to account for the choice of i) a target, ii) an issue and iii) campaign sentiment. This requires data on the campaign sentiment for each party-party-issue dyad, for example the tone of the Social Democrats addressing the People's Party on economic issues. The data structure also accounts for cases when a party deliberately chose to ignore some of its rivals on a specific topic. To obtain these data, press releases are aggregated across sender parties ($n=6$), target parties ($n=5$) and issue areas ($n=18$). This results in a dataset with ($6 \times 5 \times 18 =$) 540 observations. The dependent variable is the mean campaign sentiment of all statements issued by party A about party B on an issue.

From the entire set of possible party-issue dyads, roughly two thirds (374) did not occur once during the election, which skews our dependent variable (mean: 0.65, standard deviation: 1.07). To control for the over dispersion of zeros, the multivariate analyses include the number of negative statements per directed dyad and policy area as a covariate. Additional robustness checks use censored (Tobit) regression models (Appendix B1) and include all actor-issue statements without a target (Appendix B2). These tests corroborate the results presented below.

4.2 Independent variables

The measurement of issue competence and issue salience has been extensively discussed in the literature (e.g. Stubager 2018; Tresch et al. 2018; Walgrave et al. 2015). We established issue competence using a representative pre-election voter survey (Kritzinger et al. 2014; $n=3,266$) and use the responses to the questions on the 'most important issue' and issue competence ("the best qualified party to deal with these issues"). The identification of issue competence in a

² This excludes press releases focusing on the campaign, such as a party's standing in the polls, campaign events or candidate attributes. It also drops any press release that does not address another party as the core interest of this study is to show which issues parties address when they engage with one another. However, robustness checks based on all press releases corroborate the results presented below (Appendix B2).

multiparty system is less straightforward than in a two party system. It is debatable when parties ‘own’ an issue and whether a dichotomous attribution of ownership reflects variation among voter opinions (e.g. Tresch et al. 2018; Geys 2012). Therefore, we use a relative operationalization of competence as the share of respondents’ identifying a party as best qualified to deal with a topic. We pool the answers to the ‘most important issues’ questions which were recoded to match 18 broader policy areas used in the manual content analyses of party press releases³. With the exception of two issues, competence perceptions were predominantly split or “incomplete” in the 2013 election.⁴

In order to avoid endogeneity issues, we rely on a different source for issue salience: manual content analysis of eight national newspapers (n=8,536) during the election using the same 18 issue categories indicated above (Eberl et al. 2015). We aggregate the share of issue attention across all media outlets as an indicator of the general media agenda during the campaign.⁵ As the primary purpose of party press releases is to make it into the news in order to get their messages across to the public, the media agenda strongly influences that of parties, in particular for this communication channel (Meyer et al. 2020).

For the multivariate analyses we also include the left-right distance between parties as a control variable based on the AUTNES Candidate Survey 2013 (Müller et al. 2015). We use the mean values of each party candidates’ left-right self-placements. We also adjust for the competence score of the attacking party to check whether parties use negative campaigning to ‘defend’ their issue advantages (Damore 2002). Moreover, we control whether a party was a

³ These issues are agriculture, environment, pensions, employment, healthcare, social welfare and poverty, immigration, education, budget and taxes, foreign affairs and defense, economy, family affairs, political misconduct and corruption, individual rights and societal values, law and order, European integration, government reforms and direct democracy, infrastructure.

⁴ Table A1 provides a complete list of perceived issue competence from the voter survey.

⁵ Figure A1 gives an overview of issue salience during the campaign.

member of government (0/1) and include a count variable of the number of attacks for each party dyad⁶.

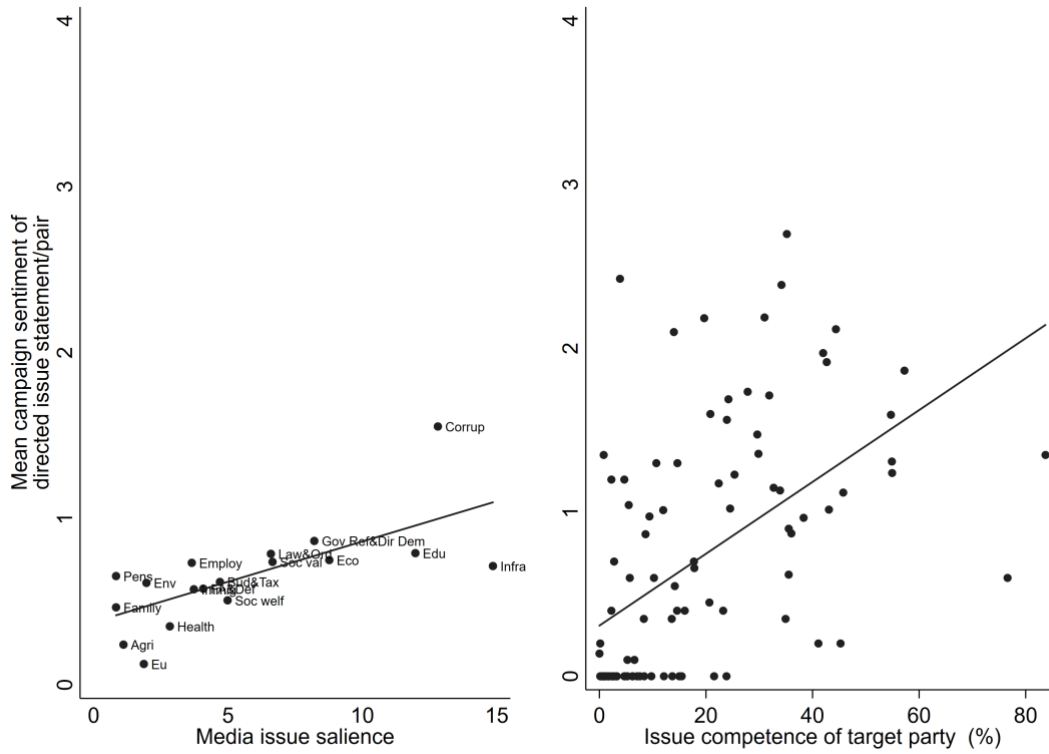
5. Analysis

Our first hypothesis suggests that parties are more likely to attack on salient issues. The left panel of figure 1 exhibits a strong positive relationship between a party's campaign sentiment and media issue salience (Pearson's $r=0.69$, $p < 0.001$). Whereas a moderately negative campaign sentiment prevails for most topics, the topic of corruption stands out: It had the most negative campaign sentiment and figured very prominently in the news. Parties were least negative on European Integration and agriculture, both of which got the lowest amount of news coverage.

The figure's right panel shows a moderate positive correlation of campaign sentiment and a target's issue competence ($r=0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The relationship is not linear, but there is solid evidence for parties to 'go negative' when their opponents' have a competence advantage.

⁶ Table A3 shows the distribution of these variables.

Figure 1: Media salience, party competence and campaign sentiment of press releases



Source: Own calculations using AUTNES Press Releases dataset, AUTNES Media dataset, and AUTNES Pre-election voter survey.

Note: Data in the left panel use mean campaign sentiment per issue from all parties. Media salience is based on the average salience per issue across eight newspapers. In the right panel, each data point represents the mean sentiment of all statements from party A directed at party B in a policy area (n=96). Lines indicate fitted OLS-regression.

Next, we turn to OLS regression modelling, which also allows us to test the interaction of issue salience and issue competence. The dependent variable is the mean campaign sentiment over all statements from party A towards party B in one of the 18 policy areas. Standard errors are clustered at the level of issues to account for variation at the level of policy areas.

Model 1 of Table 1 includes media issue salience and target party issue competence to test the direct effects of hypotheses 1 and 2. The second model adds an interaction term for media salience and the competence of target parties. Both models control for issue competence of the sender party, government status of sender and target parties, the left-right distance

between them and the number of negative statements for each party dyad on an issue. Figure 2 plots the marginal effects for issue salience and target issue competence.

Table 1: Multivariate OLS regression models of campaign sentiment

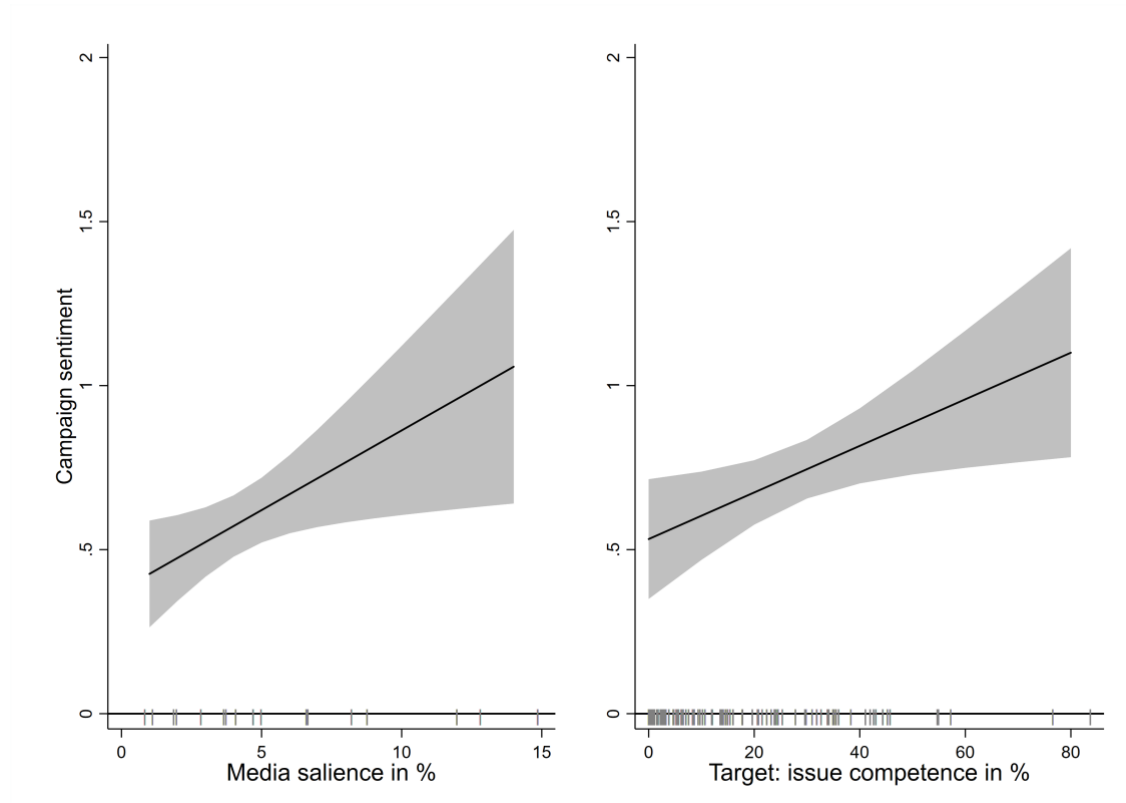
	Model 1	Model 2
Media issue salience	0.05* (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)
Target party issue competence	0.01* (0.0)	0.01 (0.00)
Media issue salience x Target issue competence		0.004 (0.00)
Sender party in government	-0.07 (-0.16)	-0.07 (-0.17)
Target party in government	0.43** (0.13)	0.41** (0.14)
Sender party issue competence	0.001 (0.00)	0.002 (0.00)
Left-Right distance of party dyad	0.04 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Number of statements per party dyad and issue	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Constant	-0.18 (0.10)	-0.15 (0.13)
Observations	540	540
Adjusted R ²	0.36	0.36

Notes: Issue-clustered standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The multivariate analyses confirm the bivariate findings: increasing media salience of issues runs together with more strongly negative campaign statements. A marginal effect of +0.68 for a maximum increase of media issue salience (from roughly one to about fourteen percent of news coverage) is substantial and attests that parties use a more negative campaign tone on issues that are widely discussed in the national news. Moreover, parties raise their tone when they attack opponents with a higher issue competence score. The marginal effect is of 0.59 for a maximum increase in issue competence (criticizing an opponent with virtually no issue competence, such as the BZÖ on environmental issues compared to one with a strong competence advantage, such as the ÖVP on agriculture). To the contrary, there is virtually no

effect for the interaction of issue competence and media salience (also see Appendix, Figure A2).

Figure 2: Marginal effects of media salience and issue competence on campaign sentiment



Notes: Estimates are based on Model 1 (Table 1). All other variables are at their observed values. The x-axes show the distribution of media salience (H1, left panel) and issue competence (H2, right panel). Pipes indicate the distribution of both variables.

Turning to the control variables, we find that rhetorical attacks directed towards a government party were, overall, more negative than attacks directed at one of the opposition parties. The left-right policy-distance between parties has no effect on campaign sentiment. There is a strong effect of the number of party interactions, which indicates that the dynamics of attacks and counter-attacks lead to increasingly negative statements. Finally, there is no effect for parties attacking on their best issues as suggested by research into US-presidential elections (Damore 2002).

6. Conclusions

In this manuscript, we looked at the relationship between issue salience, issue ownership and negative campaigning. Previous studies show that issue competence and issue salience should influence on which issues parties attack each other (Elmelund-Præstekær 2011; Damore 2002). Combining data on campaign communication in party press releases during Austria's 2013 national election with data on party issue competence and media salience, we find that both of these factors – issue salience and party competence – affect negative campaigning: parties' attack on salient topics and 'go negative' on their rivals' best issues. Yet, while theories of issue competition would expect parties to focus on their own issue agenda unless unfavorable issues get too important to avoid them, we find no evidence that attacking more competent opponents is contingent on high issue salience. Thus, parties deliberately choose to attack their opponents' competence.

These findings point to the potential and limits of issue-based negative campaigning and evoke broader consequences for political competition and accountability. First, we find that parties' chose to attack on issues that were salient in the media. This enables parties to get their messages into the news in order to reach out to a broader audience (Meyer et al. 2020). Yet, it could constrain their ability to push their own issues to the news or to hold the government accountable if journalists ignore messages on issues that are not prominently covered in the news.

Second, our findings suggest that political actors deliberately contest issue ownership in an election. Parties appear to use negative campaigning to undermine their rivals' competence advantages during a campaign to curtail short-term electoral benefits for their opponents. This could be a rewarding strategy as issue ownership may constitute a crucial advantage in an election. It seems particularly relevant as recent evidence shows that negative campaigning can

undermine a rival's competence evaluations (Seeberg and Nai forthcoming, Lefevre et al. forthcoming; Seeberg 2020;).

Of course, this study is limited as it examines a single country and election campaign. Cross-national research will be needed to investigate how party characteristics (e.g. mainstream vs. niche parties), country-level factors (e.g. party system polarization) or issue types (position vs. valence) affect variation in negative campaigning on issues. Moreover, this study has exclusively focused on differences in selective emphasis and issue attacks. Yet, parties may also opt to adjust their policy position towards the median voter if the salience of an unfavorable issues increases (Abou-Chadi et al. 2020). Future research could explore if such a move is combined with issue attacks aiming to alter the position of an opponent that is in a more favorable position on that issue. Despite these limitations, this study represents an important step towards a better understanding of party issue attacks in the context of multi-party competition on policy issues.

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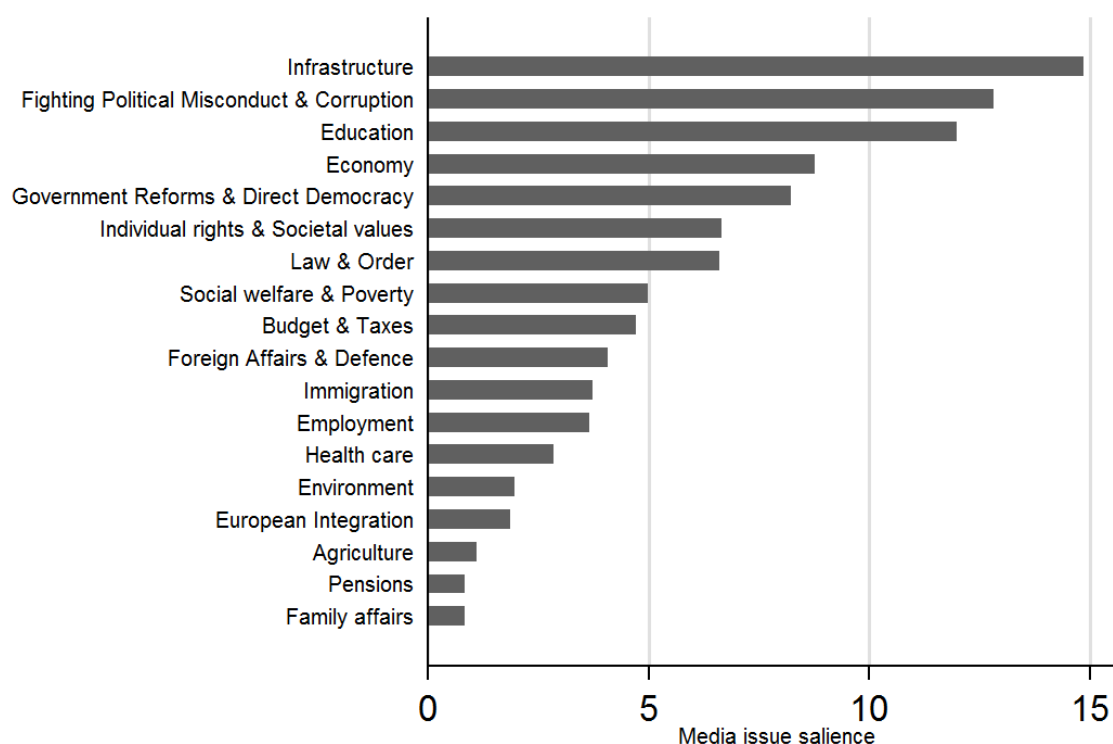
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Appendix A:

Figure A1: Media issue salience of policy areas in 2013 campaign



Source: own calculations using AUTNES content analysis of media reports (n=8,536)

We use media salience based on newspaper reports from eight national Austrian newspapers during the six weeks preceding the election (Eberl et al. 2015). Figure 1 illustrates that the most salient policy issues during the 2013 campaign were infrastructure (15%), corruption (13%) and education (12%). The prominence of infrastructure stems from the controversy over the transformation of the most important shopping street into a pedestrian area in the capital Vienna, where most of the newspapers of national relevance have their headquarters. A large number of policy areas, including family affairs, pensions, agriculture and, notably, also European integration, were of negligible relevance in media reporting.

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the 2013 Austrian National Election Coverage.

Table A2: Pre-campaign issue competence of parties and most important issues

Policy area	Issue competence		Most important issue	
	Most often cited party	Party's share of cites	Total number of cites	Rank
Agriculture	ÖVP	87	38	16.
Environment	Greens	83	214	9.
Pensions	SPÖ	58	340	5.
Employment	SPÖ	57	685	1.
Healthcare	SPÖ	54	210	10
Social welfare & Poverty	SPÖ	52	283	6.
Immigration	FPÖ	48	375	4.
Education	SPÖ	46	418	3.
Budget & Taxes	ÖVP	43	227	7.
Foreign Affairs & Defence	SPÖ	41	32	17.
Economy	ÖVP	39	469	2.
Family affairs	SPÖ	39	122	11.
Fighting Political Misconduct & Corruption	Greens	38	81	13.
Individual rights & Societal values	Greens	37	41	15.
Law & Order	SPÖ	36	44	14.
European Integration	ÖVP	34	218	8.
Government Reforms & Direct Democracy	Greens	33	115	12.
Infrastructure	ÖVP	30	30	18.

Source: own calculations based on AUTNES-Pre-Election Survey, N=3,266 with 4,020 most
and second important issue answers coded.

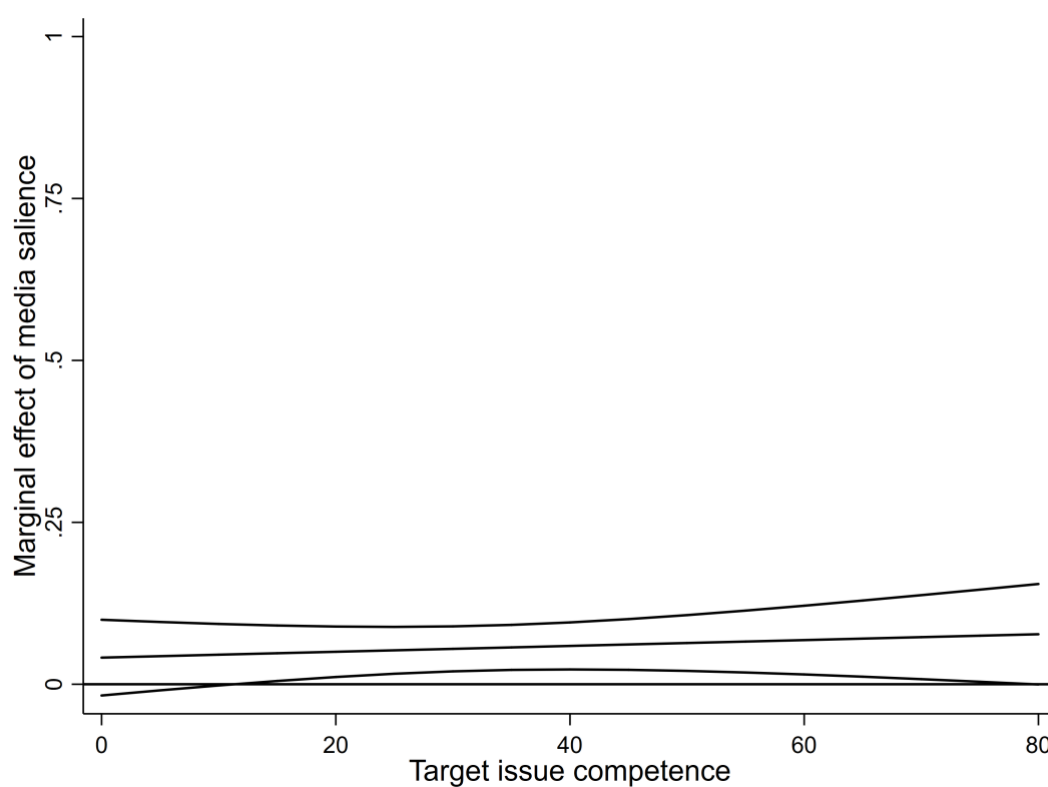
Note: Calculation of party's share of cites included survey weights.

Reference

Kritzing, Sylvia; Zeglovits, Eva; Aichholzer, Julian; Glantschnigg, Christian; Glinitzer, Konstantin; Johann, David; Thomas, Kathrin; Wagner, Markus. (2020). *AUTNES Pre- and Post Panel Study 2013* (SUF edition), <https://doi.org/10.11587/LBAHIZ>, AUSSDA, V1.

Table A3:

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Campaign sentiment	540	0,65	1,07	0	4
Media salience	540	5,58	4,14	0,83	14,86
Issue competence	540	16,38	17,95	0	83,71
Government status	540	0,33	0,47	0	1
Left-Right distance	540	2,30	1,60	0,06	4,57
Number of attacks/dyad	540	18,83	31,65	0	132

Figure A2: Marginal effects of media salience conditional on issue competence.

Notes: Marginal effects are based on Model 2 (Table 1) holding all other variables at their observed values. Lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Appendix B:

Table B1: Tobit regression of campaign sentiment

	Model 1	Model 2
Media issue salience	0.15** (0.05)	0.17 (0.09)
Target issue competence	0.02** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Media issue salience x Target issue competence	-	-0.00 (0.00)
Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Constant	-3.72*** (0.424)	-4.49*** (0.461)
Observations	540	540
Log Pseudolikelihood	-478.69	-478.48

Issue-clustered standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: All non-negative (neutral or positive statements) observations (n=376) are left censored.

Table B2: Tobit regression of campaign sentiment including all party statements

	Model 1	Model 2
Media issue salience	0.09* (0.04)	0.09 (0.05)
Target issue competence	0.02** (0.00)	0.02** (0.00)
Media issue salience x Target issue competence	-	-0.00 (0.00)
Controls	<i>Included</i>	<i>Included</i>
Constant	-2.42*** (0.27)	-2.43*** (0.34)
Observations	756	756
Log Pseudolikelihood	-435.68	-435.68

Issue-clustered standard errors in parentheses, + $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: All non-negative (neutral or positive statements) observations (n=592) are left censored. Pairwise policy distance is not included in these models, as these also uses party-issue statements without targets.