

Unions Against Governments: Explaining the Incidence and Outcomes of General Strikes in Western Europe, 1980-2006

John Kelly

Department of Management
Birkbeck College
Malet Street
London, UK
WC1E 7HX

e-mail: j.kelly@bbk.ac.uk

Kerstin Hamann

Department of Political Science
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL 32816, USA

e-mail: Kerstin.Hamann@ucf.edu

Alison Johnston

Political Science/School of Public Policy
Oregon State University
307 Gilkey Hall
Corvallis, OR 97331, USA

e-mail: Alison.Johnston@oregonstate.edu

July 2102

© 2012 John Kelly, Kerstin Hamann and Alison Johnston

No written or electronic reproduction without permission

Unions Against Governments: Explaining the Incidence and Outcomes of General Strikes in
Western Europe, 1980-2006

John Kelly, Kerstin Hamann and Alison Johnston

Introduction

Between 1980 and 2006, trade unions staged, or threatened to stage, an increasing number of general strikes against governmental policies or policy reforms in 11 Western European countries.¹ Furthermore, unions have remained successful in gaining concessions from governments in response to general strikes, from 31% in the 1980s, to 40% in the 1990s, and 46% between 2000 and 2006. Union success at organizing general strikes and securing outcomes is even more remarkable as it has occurred simultaneously with decreasing union density, the dominance of pro-market policies, and the move of leftist parties towards the center, leaving many unions without strong party allies in politics.

The success rate of unions in obtaining concessions from governments through general strikes is not uniformly distributed across country cases, as Table 1 illustrates. The variation of the outcomes of general strikes across cases thus demands an explanation. We seek the explanation in government properties to analyze whether they affect the likelihood of governments to grant or deny concessions to unions in the wake of general strikes. As general strikes mobilize not just union members, but voters more generally, and voters might link the government to general strikes and their responses to them at the next election, we posit that the characteristics of governments, such as single-party or coalition, or the position of the main governing party on the left-right spectrum, can provide some insights into why, and under what conditions, governments might be willing to grant concessions in the face of union general strikes as they face different electoral pressures in their quest to gain reelection. Surprisingly, we find that centrist/Christian Democratic governments in coalition are most likely to offer concessions to unions, rather than leftist/social democratic governments. While we are unable to offer an empirical proof of causality, we propose a theoretical explanation, based upon the center's response to the political modernization of the left. In multi-party systems, rightward shifts of leftist parties increases electoral competition between them and Christian Democrat/centrist parties, making political differentiation imperative for the latter. General strike concessions to unions, while counter-productive for the left seeking to credibly align itself with more moderate policies, provides a golden opportunity to centrist parties eager to signal their reputation for conflict-resolution and to avoid losing votes from center-left constituents that have been abandoned by the left.

[Table 1 about here]

The next section defines general strikes and provides an overview of empirical patterns of general strikes across Western Europe. We then briefly review the extent literature on strike outcomes and present our own framework of analysis. The next section presents our data and empirical analysis. We follow up with a discussion of our results and theoretical refinement before concluding.

General Strikes and Government Policies

In the absence of a commonly accepted definition of a general strikes (also sometimes labeled “political” or “protest” strike; see, e.g., Walsh 1983), we adapt Hyman’s (1989: 17) definition and define a general strike as “a temporary, national stoppage of work by workers from many industries, directed against the executive or legislative arms of government, to enforce a demand or give voice to a grievance.” General strikes typically are called by one or more national union confederations to mobilize its members as well non-members. General strikes commonly target governmental policies or policy reform plans. Given our definition and our focus on general strikes at the national level, we exclude strikes organized by just one group of workers, public sector strikes that oppose actions by the government in its role as an employer, or a general strike in just one region of a country.

Industrial or economic strikes have overall declined in Western Europe since about 1980 (van der Velden, Dribbusch, Lyddon, and Vandaele 2007). During the same time period, however, the number of general strikes in the EU-15 and Norway increased, totaling 72 general strikes and an additional 12 threats to stage a general strike.² General strikes were more frequent between 2000 and 2006 compared to the decade before, which was, in turn, higher than the number of general strikes during the 1980s. General strikes were staged in 10 of the EU-15 countries, with an additional strike in Norway; no strikes took place in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, and the UK. Although Greece was responsible for 34 of these strike and strike threats, the upward trend still holds when the Greek case is excluded, with general strike frequency particularly prominent in Southern Europe (Greece, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal), Belgium, and France. General strikes were also present in countries that have for many years recorded some of the lowest levels of industrial conflict in Western Europe, particularly Austria, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

The issues that have motivated unions to organize or threaten to call general strikes against governments are varied and comprise national wage policy, including basic (minimum) rates, overtime, and holiday pay (24 strikes); labor market reform, including bargaining structures, legal regulation of dismissals and redundancies and non-wage issues such as work time (23 strikes); welfare issues, including sickness and unemployment benefits (22 strikes); economic policy including privatization efforts (20 strikes); and pensions (16 strikes).³

At the same time as unions have increasingly resorted to general strikes to protest government policies, they have also maintained continued success in influencing policy reforms, indicated by concessions made by governments. This is surprising given two trends in the political economy of many West European countries: a decline in union membership and density, and a reduction in union bargaining power as evidenced in the falling share of wages in national income (Glyn 2006). Together, these simultaneous trends suggest that the ability of unions to influence government policies through general strikes would, over time, become more difficult when, in reality, unions appear to have enjoyed continuing success in affecting government policies through general strikes. Our data display considerable variation in the immediate results unions achieve with general strikes. In 40 percent of the cases (27 strikes out of the 68 strikes for which we have outcome data) unions had some success in gaining concessions from governments as a direct result of a general strike. Unions secured major concessions from governments in only

12% of cases (8 strikes), while they obtained minor concessions in 28% (19 strikes) of all cases. Interestingly, as Table 1 displays, union success or failure to influence government policies or policy proposals has occurred in a variety of countries. Unions have done particularly well, i.e. scored more than the overall mean rate of concessions, in Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal. In contrast, they have fared rather poorly in Greece, Spain, Belgium and France. Thus, at first glance, strike outcomes are not determined by the institutional characteristics of the national economy, such as corporatism: general strikes have resulted in government concessions in countries traditionally scoring high on the corporatism scale, such as Austria and the Netherlands, as well as in countries where corporatism has traditionally been weaker, such as Italy and Portugal. The next section refers to the existing literature for possible explanations and then develops our own framework for analysis, grounded in variables related to the characteristics of governments.

Explaining General Strike Outcomes: A Framework for Analysis

When, and under what conditions, are governments likely to grant concessions to unions in response to general strikes, and when, in turn, are they more likely to stick with their proposed reform program? Existing research on general strikes against West European governments provides little theoretical guidance in answering these questions because it has mainly focused on explaining the incidence rather than the outcomes of such actions (e.g. Lindvall 2011; Nam 2006). Industrial relations literature, likewise, fails to provide useful guidance on understanding the outcomes of general strikes as it centers on economic strikes rather than general strikes and on strike occurrence far more than on strike outcomes (e.g. Cohn, 1993; Cronin, 1979; Franzosi 1995; Metcalf, Wadsworth and Ingram, 1992). These studies are unlikely to assist in understanding the effects of general strikes given the differences between the two types of strike actions: the participants in general strikes are not confined to union members but extend to the larger population; the target audience is the government rather than employers; and general strike demands tend to focus on government policies or policy reform proposals rather than wages and other issues more directly related to the workplace and to working conditions. Instead, we turn to characteristics of parties and governments to frame our analysis.

Changes in the advanced industrialized economies have by and large led to a decline in union power. With the end of the “Golden Age,” changes in the mode of production and increased global competition, unions have commonly been put on the defensive since the early 1980s. This has led to declining union density and decreasing economic strike rates while union influence in policy making has been hollowed out as corporatism has weakened in some national cases (Freeman 2008; Hamann and Kelly 2008). Related, governments of the right and the left alike have progressively experienced fiscal pressures that have led them to endorse policies aimed at balancing budgets and stimulating growth through market-oriented policies rather than through redistributive, demand-oriented policies.

We conceptualize general strikes as political events because they are directed against governments and their (proposed) policies. By and large, these reforms or reform proposals are widely unpopular as they tend to include cuts to entitlement benefits that apply to significant parts of the electorate, such as pensions, and strikes called by unions against these proposals may elicit broad popular support. General strikes, though called by labor unions, may also be

supported by non-union voters wanting to voice their disapproval with the government reforms. Governments may therefore anticipate negative reactions from voters at the next election. Since governments are the primary actors in granting or denying concessions to unions in response to general strikes, we expect that the type of party or parties in government influences governmental responses to general strikes. Our framework for explaining their outcomes focuses on two variables related to characteristics of government: the party composition of the government, and the type of government, whether single-party or coalition. General strikes are more frequently directed against conservative governments (35 strikes 1980-2006) compared to leftist or center governments (25 and 22 strikes respectively). By “centrist” we refer to parties that belong to the Christian Democrat or Center party families and whose manifesto scores on the left-right scale are usually, though not always, close to zero with the end points as -100 (far left) and +100 (far right) (manifesto data from Budge et al. 2001 and Klingemann et al. 2006). But does that mean that the government’s party position influences the likelihood that unions can gain concessions through general strikes? We expect party position to matter given the differences in proximity between different types of parties and unions, but also given the differences in overall preferences on policy issues. Conservative parties have been by and large fairly distant from unions, tend to favor smaller welfare states, and are more inclined to support market-driven policies. In contrast, leftist or labor parties tend to be closer aligned to union interests and are more committed to the welfare state. This may be true even though since the 1980s, social democratic parties in several West European countries have reevaluated their policies on issues such as welfare spending and labor market flexibility and have become more centrist, approximating the policies of their Christian Democrat and conservative competitors (see, for example, Bonoli and Powell 2004; Callaghan 2000; Kitschelt 1994; Piazza 2001). While centrist or Christian-Democratic parties tend to occupy a political stance between conservative and leftist parties, they may mimic their leftist counterparts and pursue consensus with unions on contentious reforms, in order to attract political favor from the electorate, especially where their main electoral threat comes from the left, as in Austria or Luxembourg, for example (see van Hecke and Gerard 2004). Furthermore, the ideological and organizational ties between leftist (and sometimes Christian Democratic) and trade unions might suggest they will be more likely to make concessions compared to conservative governments (see Allern 2010 on Norway). Thus, the relationship between type of party in government and the government’s reaction to general strikes is likely to play an influential role in concessions to unions given different parties’ ties to unions and policy preferences based on ideological underpinnings. We expect leftist and centrist parties to be more likely to offer concessions to unions than rightist ones.

Second, the type of government, whether single-party or coalition, could affect the willingness of government to offer concessions to unions, although the impact of this variable on strike outcome is ambiguous given what has been said in the political science literature. The “clarity of responsibility” hypothesis states that the voter’s difficulty in assigning responsibility increases for coalition governments compared to single-party administrations (e.g. Anderson 2000; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Fisher and Hobolt 2010; Powell and Whitten 1993). According to this line of reasoning, single-party governments would be under more pressure than coalition governments to respond to general strikes with concessions, in order to avoid being blamed for social unrest, widespread voter discontent, and unpopular reforms in the next election. On the other hand, from a game theoretical perspective, coalition governments may be less able to implement (budget balancing) policy reform than single party governments, due to the number of

parties (and possible veto players), in the political process (Roubini and Sachs, 1989). Harrinvirta and Mattila (2001) attest that while deficit reduction success does not significantly differ between single party and multi-party governments, the manner in which they do so does vary, with multi-party governments more likely to resort to tax rises rather than expenditure cuts, especially in labor market systems with centralized bargaining. This line of reasoning suggests that when confronted with a general strike on a politically contentious policy reform, coalition governments may be more prone to offer (expenditure) concessions than their single party counter-parts.

Data and Methods

Our dataset documents the availability of strike outcomes for 68 general strikes and strike threats between 1980 and 2006.⁴ Strike outcomes were coded independently by two of the authors using EIRR and EIRO sources. The outcome for each strike/strike threat was coded as 0 if the government made no concessions in response to the strike, 1 for minor concessions made by governments to unions, and 2 for major concessions. Our analysis only includes those cases where both authors were able to score an outcome. If either or both of the authors were unable to determine the outcome the case was dropped. The value of Scott's pi as a measure of inter-coder reliability was 75.4%, which is acceptably high (Pennings, Keman, and Kleinnijenhuis 2006: 68-69). Discussion was then used to resolve the small proportion of cases where there was initial disagreement. Our final scoring showed that 8 of the 68 strikes yielded substantial concessions to unions and 19 involved minor concessions, rendering a total of 40% of cases in which governments granted concessions, while in the remaining 41 cases the government made no changes. We coded general strikes according to the main issue in contention under the five headings described above, namely pension reform, economic policy, welfare reform, labor market reform, and wages. These categories are not always mutually exclusive as general strikes can address more than one issue. Pension reform was utilized as the baseline category in our regression models.

We employ an ordered logistic model, with country-clustered standard errors, on all recorded general strikes between 1980 and 2006 for which we had outcome data to empirically test how, if at all, party position influences the propensity of governments to grant concessions in response to general strikes. In particular, we check whether strikes have produced more favorable concessions under centrist/leftist versus rightist governments. Our estimates were not sensitive to other estimation methods that relax ordinal logit's restrictive parallel regression assumption, such as a stereotype ordered regressions (Anderson 1984), which produced identical results for our partisan and coalition variables below. As a further empirical robustness check, we also re-estimated the ordinal logit baseline models as logit models (coding general strikes which yielded major or minor concessions as 1, and 0 for no concessions), in order to demonstrate that the relative lack of major strike concessions does not bias results. The baseline model used to test the political determinants of strike outcomes is:

$$\Pr(y_i = 0, 1, \text{ or } 2 \mid x_i) = \Lambda [\beta_1(\text{Partisan}_i) + \beta_2(C_i) + \sum_k \beta_k X_{k,i} + \sum_m \beta_m Y_{m,i} + \sum_n \beta_n Z_{n,i} + \varepsilon_i]$$

where Λ is the ordinal logit estimator, $e^\beta/(1+e^\beta)$, of a strike with minor, major or no outcomes occurring. Partisan_i is the political affiliation of the ruling party in government during strike i .

We assess partisanship via two separate measures, Swank's (2006) proportional measure of left and right cabinet seats (baseline category is proportion of cabinet seats held by centrist parties), and Budge et al. (2001) and Klingemann et al.'s (2006) (normalized) scalar ruling-party manifesto position (ranging from 0, highly leftist, to 100, highly rightist). C_i captures whether the ruling government is a single-party or coalition government. To denote partisanship in coalition governments, we used the party that provided the chief executive as this party is the one that is most likely to be held accountable by voters (Fisher and Hobolt 2010). We do not include the single party/coalition variable within our first series of regressions, given its high collinearity with the partisan measure, particularly with leftist and Christian Democratic governments. While the correlation between the coalition variable and right-party cabinet seat share was insignificantly minor ($r=0.057$, $p\text{-value}=0.646$), coalition was significantly correlated with leftist (and hence the baseline centrist) government cabinet share ($r = 0.535$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) and, less strongly, with party manifesto position ($r=0.274$, $p\text{-value}=0.022$). We address these issues of multi-collinearity below.

$\Sigma_k \beta_k X_{k,i}$ is a vector of $n-1$ categorical dummies relating to the issue of general strike i in country k . We coded general strikes according to five general issues as described earlier. $\Sigma_k \beta_m Y_{m,i}$ is a vector of economic controls and includes the unemployment rate, real GDP growth rate, and public debt to GDP ratio in country m at strike i . Surprisingly, pair-wise correlations between real GDP growth and unemployment/debt-to-GDP were minor and insignificant within our sample. Correlations between unemployment and debt were significant (correlation coefficient of 0.231, $p\text{-value}=0.054$), although markedly less so than correlations between lagged unemployment and debt (0.306, $p\text{-value}=0.000$). We therefore opted for unemployment, rather than its lag, as a control variable. Data on unemployment and GDP growth came from the OECD, while data on national debt were taken from the EU's Annual Macroeconomic (AMECO) Database. $\Sigma_n \beta_n Z_{n,i}$ is a vector of collective bargaining and political institutions that includes union density, union unity (a dummy variable assuming the value of 1 if all national trade union confederations supported the general strike in country m at strike i , 0 if otherwise), bargaining centralization and wage coordination in country n during strike i . Also included in this vector is the proximity of a general election, a factor that might influence the willingness of governments to offer concessions to unions. Governments in fixed-term electoral systems will know how much time will elapse before the next general election but this is not the case in systems where government has the power to call an election at any date within its maximum period in office. Therefore we measured the time elapsed since the previous election. Centralization and wage coordination data were taken from Visser (2009), trade union density data were taken from the OECD (2011), and union unity data were collected from EIRO and EIRR sources. Finally, a time trend, a linear value beginning at one for strikes that occurred in 1980 up to 26 for strikes that occurred in 2006, was included to account for possible changes in the generosity of concessions over time. We excluded from the analysis several variables due to their lack of significance or endogeneity with the dependent variable: previous general strike concessions (which is not only insignificant, but whose inclusion further reduces our already small sample by a further 11 observations), the presence of social pacts, and unilateral legislation by governments (the latter two are directly operationalized within our dependent variable).

Results: The Impact of Partisanship on Strike Outcomes

Table 2 provides the output from our baseline regressions, which includes our partisanship variables, strike issue category, and economic controls only. Models I and II present results using the Swank partisanship indicator (we exclude Greece from the sample in Model II, whose left-leaning ruling parties tend to offer less generous concessions despite frequent strike activity). Model III uses the manifesto-indicator instead of the Swank measure and models IV and V add a quadratic partisanship term to test whether fitted probabilities of strike outcomes are more generous for centrist parties compared to left and right parties. Model IV includes Greece, while Model V excludes it. Models VI and VII use logit models, with the Swank partisanship measure in Model VI and the manifesto measure in Model VII, both the linear and quadratic forms. While interaction (and hence quadratic) terms cannot be interpreted similarly for logit and ordinal logit models, which are by construction interactive given their non-linear structure, as for linear models (Kam and Franzese, 2007), we include a quadratic term with particular care to its interpretation, relying heavily on fitted probabilities in order to determine whether centrist governments produce more generous concessions. Beta coefficients, rather than odds ratios, are presented in Table 2, while fitted probabilities are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1. Positive (negative) beta coefficients indicate that greater values of the independent variable should increase (decrease) the likelihood of more generous outcomes despite the existence of significant variations in the correlates of minor and major concessions, as discussed below.

[Table 2 about here]
[Figure 1 about here]

Results from Models I and II indicate that a greater proportion of leftist cabinet seats is associated with a lower likelihood of minor concessions to unions but makes no difference to the likelihood of major concessions since there is no significant difference between parties. Fitted probabilities for different proportional values of left/right cabinet seats from model I are presented in Table 3; all other variables are presented at their mean. The probability of no concessions, surprisingly, is greatest for leftist cabinets, although the confidence intervals of leftist and rightist cabinets partially overlap (columns 1 and 3). The probability of no concessions for centrist cabinets (middle column, Table 3), on the other hand, is significantly lower than it is for both left and right-dominated governments. Likewise, centrist cabinets have a significantly greater likelihood of offering minor concessions to unions vis-à-vis purely leftist cabinets, although not significantly greater compared to rightist cabinets. For major outcomes, fitted probability intervals overlap for centrist, rightist, and leftist governments; hence we cannot conclude that these governments differ significantly in these outcomes.

[Table 3 about here]

Results from Model III, using Manifesto party position data rather than left/right share of cabinet seats and converted to fitted probabilities, indicate a strong linear trend that the probability of no concessions decreases (and that of minor concessions increases) as government partisanship shifts rightwards. As with the results in Models I and II, fitted probabilities for major concessions display no significance party positions of the government. Minor concessions, however, are significantly more likely with rightist, rather than leftist, governments. We suspect, however, that these outcomes are strongly driven by centrist parties. Including a quadratic term for manifesto partisanship, and calculating fitted probabilities for different

partisanship values in both the linear and quadratic terms, we find a similar result emerges for Models IV and V as for Models I and II. In other words, the likelihood of no concessions is significantly lower for centrist parties than leftist parties, while the likelihood of minor concessions is significantly higher for centrist parties (see Figure 1). Major concessions were not significantly different between the three types of governments. Similar probability results also emerged when Greece was excluded.

Thus far, we have not controlled for the influence of government composition (i.e. whether the ruling government is a single-party majority or a coalition government) on strike outcomes. As mentioned above, our sample contains severe collinearity issues between government composition and partisanship. Coalition governments (present in 36 of our observed strikes) were significantly more likely to be centrist (mean partisanship value=53.6) compared to single-party governments, which were more leftist (partisanship value=37.9). Hence, one factor that could possibly be driving our partisanship results may not be partisanship itself, but rather government composition; coalition governments, rather than centrist ones, may be more likely to offer minor concessions to unions (we exclude major concessions, given their infrequency). In trying to disentangle the impact of both variables, we include the coalition dummy *only* with the linear and quadratic Manifesto partisanship variable, because this poses less of a multi-collinearity problem with the coalition dummy than our other measure of partisanship, the cabinet seat share variable. The Manifesto quadratic term holds a minor, insignificant correlation with the coalition dummy ($r=0.126$, $p\text{-value}=0.299$) and in light of the collinearity between the linear Manifesto partisanship term and the coalition dummy, we interpret our results cautiously. This model (I) is presented in Table 4, along with other model specifications that include collective bargaining institutions, trade union unity, and election pressures (time since the previous election).

[Insert Table 4: Results for strike outcomes (Robustness Checks)]

Fitted probabilities for left/centrist/rightist ruling parties for two different types of governments (single-party versus coalitions) are presented in Tables 5 and 6; the partisanship values selected roughly represent the 10th, 50th and 90th of our sample. Examining fitted probabilities of single-party governments (Table 5), we find no significant difference in the likelihood of different strike outcomes between leftist, centrist, and rightist ruling governments; the confidence intervals for fitted probabilities perfectly overlap for all strike outcome possibilities. However, as all of the single-party governments in our sample are led either by Social Democratic or Conservative parties – there are no single-party Christian Democratic or center administrations – this result actually tells us rather little about centrist parties per se. Rather, the partisan split in strike concessions emerges *only* under coalition governments. Coalition governments led by centrist (and rightist) parties are significantly more likely to offer minor concessions than coalitions led by leftist parties, while they are significantly *less* likely to refuse concessions. Within our sample, governments that comprise the “centrist” category (based on Manifesto data) are predominantly those led by two kinds of party family: Christian Democratic parties in Austria, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway and the Center party in Finland. To sum up, the likelihood of centrist governments offering minor strike concessions to unions increases significantly under a coalition government compared to a single-party administration whereas no such difference is evident for leftist governments.

[insert Table 5]

[insert Table 6]

We examined the impact of economic controls on strike outcomes and found the effects to be surprisingly minimal.⁵ The only significant economic control was national debt in Model I, which showed that the probability of minor and major concessions relative to no concessions increased as the debt to GDP ratio fell. Regarding strike issues, unions appear to have been more successful in securing concessions in regards to pension reform. In contrast, both minor and major concessions were significantly less likely (compared to pension reform) if the general strike was called against a contentious reform to economic policy, labor law reform, or wage policy. Regarding industrial relations institutions, union density and trade union unity were both significant and performed as expected. High, compared to low, union density significantly increased the probability of achieving minor concessions although it had little significant impact on the probability of securing major strike concessions. Confederal trade union unity also significantly increased the probability of concessions. When a partisanship dynamic is added, unions, when united, are more likely to secure minor *and* major concessions from centrist governments than from leftist governments. We checked fitted probability values for no, minor, and major concessions, in the presence of united union confederations, for three types of governments: a left (partisan value at the bottom decile of our sample), centrist (partisan value at the median) and right (partisan value in the top decile) governments. Though united unions are not significantly more likely to secure major concessions from leftist or rightist ruling parties, they manage to do so with centrist ruling parties. Moreover, united unions, within our sample, have secured significantly more minor concessions from *both* centrist and rightist ruling parties, compared to leftist parties.

Our results suggest the presence of an important interaction effect between government partisanship and government type. Single-party governments across the political spectrum act similarly in terms of their responses to unions after general strikes. Coalition governments, on the other hand, behave very differently across the political spectrum, in the types of outcomes they award unions. Our empirical analysis provides strong evidence that since the 1980s, minor concessions to unions after general strikes have been more likely under centrist coalition governments than leftist governments. These results are counter-intuitive and question the prevalent idea that the historically strong relationships between trade unions and social democratic parties would lead such parties to offer more concessions to unions mobilizing voters in general strikes than their centrist or conservative rivals. Why this should be the case is an issue we consider below.

Shifting Alliances: The Left and Center's responses to general strikes

The most striking finding from our data is the greater propensity of Christian Democratic and center governments (compared to Social Democrats and conservatives) to try and resolve the conflicts associated with general strikes by offering concessions to the striking unions. Our evidence does not permit us to advance a definitive explanation for these contrasts based on party position. We therefore propose a theoretical explanation, rooted in the shift in (left and center) party policies since the 1980s, and electoral competition. We take it as given that conservative administrations have little incentive to offer concessions to union general strikes because of the potential repercussions of such action among their electoral base. Furthermore,

conservative governments are probably expected to pass tough policies in the area of welfare and wages, given their ideological underpinning, and therefore giving in to general strike demands might seem inconsistent with their policy preferences. The true anomaly, rather, lies with why the center has been more conducive towards compromise with unions rather than the left, the unions' traditional political allies.

One explanation for our results could be that the left's shift towards the center has encroached on the center's ability to politically distinguish itself, especially in multi-party systems where the need to frame a unique platform is all the more difficult. While the left's political transformation may enhance its ability to cater towards more moderate voters, it provides Christian Democrats/Center parties with the opportunity to enhance their electoral appeal with the left's traditional constituents via conflict resolution with unions on contentious welfare issues. Certainly Christian Democracy has also been challenged from the right, for instance by resurgent liberal parties in Belgium and the Netherlands, and from the far right in Austria. Although some Christian Democratic parties have become more amenable to neoliberal policies, these tendencies have remained relatively weak in many Christian Democratic parties compared to the influence of traditional, centrist policy orientations (Gerard and van Hecke 2004).

Since the oil shocks and the crisis in Keynesianism, social democratic parties in several West European countries have reevaluated their policies on issues such as welfare spending and labor market flexibility and have become more centrist, approximating the policies of their Christian Democrat and conservative competitors (see, for example, Bonoli and Powell 2004; Callaghan 2000; Kitschelt 1994; Piazza 2001). The ideological shift to pro-market policies are certainly present in the European left's political manifestos. Social democratic parties within all but one of our eleven countries with general strikes moved significantly to the right between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s/early 2000s (see Table 7, which presents the Manifesto Research Group's original partisan scores). Spain was an exception as the Manifesto Research Group data showed a pronounced and sustained move leftwards from 1989, shortly after the December 1988 general strike (Budge et al 2001). For the majority of other countries, however, the shift towards the center was significant. Column 4 of Table 7 indicates the absolute change in partisan position for the main left/social democratic party in our 11 country sample moved by 29 points to the right on average between the early 1970s and the late 1990s/early 2000s. Center parties, in contrast, witnessed mostly minor changes in partisan position, and in two cases (Belgium and Finland), shifted further left over this time period. In Belgium (Wallonia), Finland, Italy, and the Netherlands, the left's and the center's political position, as outlined in their manifestos, were barely distinguishable from each other by the late 1990s/early 2000s.

[Insert Table 7 here]

While manifestos provide some degree of signaling to voters of an ideological shift, they do not offer the signaling of credibility that actions do. In other words, the left's signaling of credible commitment to pro-market policies towards moderate voters not only requires political rhetoric but political action, which would require a difficult break from their traditional union allies. Conceptualizing political shifts as commitment problems, general strikes provide social democratic governments with a convenient signaling device to moderate voters. Social

democratic governments could use such forms of protest as an opportunity to demonstrate their hold-out capacity towards unions, in order to credibly signal their political modernization.

Unlike the left, for which general strikes provide a commitment device towards policies that are against the interests of their traditional union constituents, centrist parties in multi-party systems may find electoral appeal in using strikes for different signalling means, namely a commitment towards conflict-resolution on contentious welfare issues. At the same time, leftist parties could reasonably claim that their (proposed) policy reforms already present the best option possible given their commitment to the welfare state and redistributive politics; thus, they can credibly claim that they can make no further concessions in response to general strikes. Centrist parties, on the other hand, might need to demonstrate their commitment to welfare policies by being willing to make concessions as they have overall less credibility to upholding the welfare state than leftist parties. While (ruling) parties in coalition may find blame avoidance easier, they must also distinguish themselves from their politically similar allies for electoral purposes. General strikes provide a golden opportunity to do so. Unlike the right, which could incur high political costs from negotiating with unions, the center would not step completely out of its traditional political bounds in building bridges with unions. The broad policy of the Christian Democratic parties of Austria, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and Netherlands (as well as the Finnish Centre Party) has been characterized as strongly oriented towards “an accommodation of social and political conflicts,” a position that demarcates them from both social democracy and neoliberalism and locates them “in the center of the political system” (van Kersbergen 1999: 365; see also Alberti and Leonardi 2004). Furthermore, the orientation of these parties towards conflict resolution is arguably reinforced by strong links to the Christian Democratic trade union confederations. In Belgium the CSC (Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens) is the largest confederation, well ahead of the socialist FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique); the Italian CISL (Confederazione Italiana dei Sindacati Lavoratori) is the second largest confederation in that country, behind the ‘communist’ confederation but much larger than the socialist confederation; and in Luxembourg and the Netherlands the Christian Democratic confederations are both significantly larger than the main confederations which are linked to the social democratic parties (Andeweg and Irwin 2005: 151-2; Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000; Tunsch 1998: 349-50).⁶ Such political ties with union confederations may even prompt centrist favoritism in general strike concessions. Belgium provides a convenient case in point. Only two of the six general strikes in that country were supported by the Christian Democratic unions, the largest confederation in the country. Given the close ties between party and union it is not surprising that four general strikes called by the minority socialist union confederation against a Christian Democratic coalition government elicited no concessions. In contrast one of the two general strikes supported by both union confederations was the only such action to elicit any concessions from a Belgian (Christian Democratic) government.

In summary, we suggest that the propensity of centrist governments to try and settle general strikes through concessions can be explained by the need to electorally differentiate themselves from the left, reinforced by the general policy orientation of the Christian Democratic parties towards consensus and by close ties to like-minded trade union confederations. As the left has politically transformed itself towards a more centrist voting base, using general strikes to signal their ideological transformation via the failure to grant concessions, in multiparty systems where coalition politics require party differentiation during elections the center, in turn may

revert to responding with concessions to large-scale manifestations of voter dissatisfaction with policy reforms, resulting in union-friendly policies that may elicit voter support. General strike concessions provide an effective political instrument to elicit support from these constituencies.

Conclusion

The decline of trade union membership, density, strike action and bargaining power are well established features of industrial relations in advanced industrial economies. It would therefore be reasonable to expect that the rising number of general strikes against governments since the early 1980s would have extracted very few concessions. Our data show, however, that almost 40% of the 68 general strikes on which we have evidence succeeded in eliciting some concessions from governments. Some of the correlates of concessions are unsurprising, for instance that general strikes supported by all union confederations (and not just some of them) and in countries with high union density are more likely to yield concessions. Yet the most interesting finding is that concessions to general strikes are most likely to emerge from centrist (Christian Democratic or center governments) compared to conservative or social democratic governments. Our results do not simply reflect a partisan effect however because they are conditional on interaction with government type. Partisan effects are weak when comparing single party governments and only emerge when we compare coalition governments. Theoretically, conservative administrations might perceive few electoral benefits, but considerable electoral risks in conceding in the face of union pressure. The behavior of social democratic governments, both inside and outside coalitions, is more puzzling given their historical ties to trade unions.

We posit that one reason for such puzzling results is due to electoral competition between the left and center, which has resulted from the former's political modernization towards more pro-market policies. Several social democratic governments have implemented far-reaching programs of economic modernization since the 1970s to cater to more moderate voters or because they perceived these programs to be more economically viable. These programs have often been met with union opposition. Rather than concede to pressure from general strikes, these governments have used these mobilizations to signal their credible commitment to modernization. We have suggested that when confronted with such policies from the left, centrist parties in coalition governments may also use general strike outcomes, via the granting of concessions, to cater to the left's abandoned constituents, in order to maintain vote share.

Overall our findings suggest that whilst trade union power may have declined in relation to employers, the same may not be true of union-government relations. In a substantial minority of general strikes (or strike threats), unions have been able to elicit significant concessions from governments, especially those led by Christian Democratic or center parties. We have suggested a number of political factors that may account for this behavior but more research is required on the evolution of Christian Democracy in recent years and its response to electoral threats from social democrats and Green parties to its left and liberal conservative parties to its right. While much work has focused on the left's political modernization, relatively little light has been shed on the center's reaction to this shift. General strike concessions provide only one means for centrist parties to politically distinguish themselves from a modernized left. Research into other policy domains, such as Christian Democracy's responses to the rise of the far right via its stance

on immigration policy, would provide further empirical evidence to test the extent of the center's political transformation amidst ideological flux to its left and right.

Table 1: General Strike Outcomes by Country

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total strikes with known outcomes</i>	<i>Major concessions</i>	<i>Minor concessions</i>	<i>No concessions</i>	<i>Percentage of strikes with concessions</i>
Austria	1	0	1	0	100
Belgium	6	0	1	5	17
Finland	3	1	2	0	100
France	5	0	2	3	40
Greece	25	1	1	23	8
Italy	14	3	7	4	71
Luxembourg	3	2	0	1	67
Netherlands	2	0	2	0	100
Portugal	2	0	1	1	50
Norway	1	0	1	0	100
Spain	6	1	0	5	17
Totals	68	8	19	41	40

Sources: EIRR, EIRO (various issues).

Table 2: Baseline Results for Strike Outcomes

	Ordinal Logit Model					Logit Model	
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Left Cabinet Seats	-0.055*** (0.002)	-0.07*** (0.001)				-0.08*** (0.007)	
Right Cabinet Seats	-0.0295 (0.136)	-0.0366 (0.149)				-0.061* (0.091)	
Ruling Party Position			0.033*** (0.004)	0.208*** (0.000)	0.246*** (0.000)		0.292*** (0.009)
Ruling Party Position Squared				-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)		-0.002*** (0.008)
Unemployment	0.026 (0.578)	0.080 (0.241)	-0.029 (0.759)	-0.005 (0.956)	-0.011 (0.920)	-0.069 (0.475)	-0.072 (0.588)
GDP Growth	0.091 (0.755)	0.066 (0.864)	0.008 (0.973)	0.051 (0.808)	-0.041 (0.881)	-0.152 (0.770)	-0.090 (0.702)
Debt to GDP	-0.003 (0.808)	-0.001 (0.966)	-0.017 (0.269)	-0.014 (0.359)	-0.022 (0.242)	-0.032* (0.063)	-0.015 (0.358)
Welfare	0.102 (0.913)	0.130 (0.910)	-0.113 (0.854)	-0.366 (0.668)	0.029 (0.978)	-0.355 (0.504)	-1.374** (0.031)
Wages	-2.243 (0.183)	-3.067 (0.111)	-1.963** (0.024)	-3.112** (0.012)	-3.615*** (0.008)	-2.86 (0.131)	-4.95** (0.020)
Labor Law	-1.294* (0.084)	-1.377 (0.164)	-1.668** (0.026)	-2.499*** (0.005)	-3.063*** (0.010)	-2.93*** (0.000)	-4.262** (0.012)
Economic Policy	-3.424*** (0.000)	-2.904** (0.010)	-4.467*** (0.000)	-4.78*** (0.000)	-4.168*** (0.000)	-4.55*** (0.000)	-6.40*** (0.000)
Trend	-0.015 (0.859)	-0.020 (0.838)	0.038 (0.627)	-0.021 (0.818)	-0.027 (0.794)	0.07 (0.535)	-0.022 (0.814)
Cut 1 (Ologit) / Constant (Logit)	-3.996 (0.131)	-4.263 (0.153)	-0.742 (0.580)	1.775 (0.274)	1.982 (0.270)	9.952** (0.033)	-0.825 (0.694)
Cut 2	-1.146 (0.608)	-0.867 (0.718)	1.586 (0.119)	4.383*** (0.006)	5.178*** (0.007)		
Sample	All	Excl. GR	All	All	Excl. GR	All	All
Observations	65	40	68	68	43	65	68
Pseudo R sq	0.3459	0.274	0.2706	0.3489	0.2929	0.5334	0.4875
Chi-sq Left cab vs right cab	3.58* (0.058)	3.00* (0.083)	NA	NA	NA	4.33** (0.037)	NA

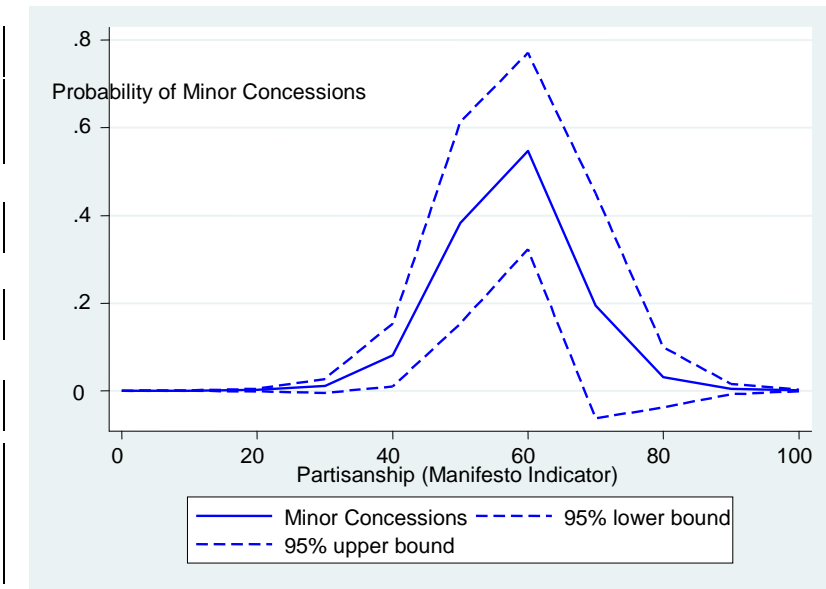
Estimation Method is (ordinal) logistic regression with country clustered standard errors. Robust p-values listed in parentheses. *, **, and *** indicate significance on a 90%, 95% and 99% confidence interval

Table 3: Fitted Probabilities of Strike Outcomes (Model I, Table 2)

	All left cabinet (L=100% & R=0%)	All centrist cabinet (L=0% & R=0%)	All right cabinet (L=0% & R=100%)
No Concessions	0.966 [0.914, 1.017]	0.102 [-0.184, 0.389]	0.685 [0.407, 0.963]
Minor Concessions	0.032 [-0.017, 0.081]	0.561 [0.202, 0.921]	0.289 [0.054, 0.525]
Major Concessions	0.002 [-0.0016, 0.006]	0.336 [-0.256, 0.928]	0.026 [-0.030, 0.082]

All other independent variables presented at their means. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Figure 1: Fitted Probabilities of Minor Strike Concessions by Ruling Party Position



Fitted probabilities for minor concessions based on Model IV, Table 1. All other independent variables besides the linear and quadratic partisanship term are presented at their means. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Table 4: Results for Strike Outcomes (Robustness Checks)

Independent Variable	I	II	III	IV	V	VII
Ruling Party Position	0.1279** (0.044)	0.1913*** (0.000)	0.2382*** (0.001)	0.1981*** (0.000)	0.248*** (0.000)	0.219*** (0.000)
Ruling Party Position Sq.	-0.0008* (0.074)	-0.0015*** (0.000)	-0.0018*** (0.001)	-0.0015*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Unemployment	0.0501 (0.466)	-0.0328 (0.598)	0.0218 (0.858)	-0.0078 (0.925)	-0.065 (0.176)	-0.018 (0.866)
GDP Growth	0.1853 (0.296)	0.0837 (0.720)	0.2359 (0.400)	0.0119 (0.951)	-0.063 (0.794)	0.089 (0.659)
Debt to GDP	-0.0265* (0.065)	-0.0125 (0.412)	-0.0148 (0.473)	-0.0115 (0.515)	-0.026 (0.166)	-0.014 (0.386)
Welfare	0.1956 (0.829)	-0.3355 (0.720)	-0.6747 (0.522)	-0.1289 (0.878)	-0.46 (0.499)	-0.305 (0.709)
Wages	-2.4335* (0.056)	-3.4302*** (0.008)	-3.6166*** (0.007)	-2.9543** (0.026)	-3.431*** (0.007)	-3.149*** (0.005)
Labor Law	-2.1495** (0.016)	-2.4607*** (0.005)	-1.9726 (0.128)	-2.4986*** (0.005)	-2.682** (0.015)	-2.531*** (0.005)
Economic Policy	-3.65*** (0.000)	-4.7348*** (0.000)	-4.3484*** (0.000)	-4.7124*** (0.000)	-5.389*** (0.000)	-5.038*** (0.000)
Trend	0.0035 (0.969)	-0.0265 (0.776)	-0.0776 (0.432)	-0.0077 (0.932)	-0.023 (0.870)	-0.01 (0.916)
Coalition	2.6012*** (0.009)					
Union Density		0.0232*** (0.005)				
Centralization			2.9249 (0.300)			
Wage Coordination				-0.3504 (0.421)		
Union Unity					2.050*** (0.000)	
Months from Previous Election						-0.022 (0.390)
Cut 1	3.0129 (0.141)	1.9682 (0.261)	3.3802 (0.177)	0.8744 (0.729)	2.136 (0.400)	1.591 (0.311)
Cut 2	5.8409*** (0.008)	4.6201*** (0.004)	6.6391** (0.010)	3.5317 (0.158)	4.740* (0.071)	4.217** (0.010)
Observations	68	68	46	68	65	68
Pseudo R sq	0.3953	0.3617	0.3061	0.3566	0.4058	0.3526

Estimation Method is ordinal logistic regression with country clustered standard errors. Robust p-values listed in parentheses. *, **, and *** indicate significance on a 90%, 95% and 99% confidence interval.

Table 5: Fitted Probabilities of Strike Outcomes for Single-Party Governments (Model I, Table 4)

	Left Party (LR = 10)	Center Party (LR = 50)	Right Party (LR = 90)
No Concessions	0.9932 [0.972, 1.014]	0.8635 [0.716, 1.011]	0.7920 [0.584, 1.001]
Minor Concessions	0.0064 [-0.0133, 0.0260]	0.1273 [-0.001, 0.255]	0.1927 [0.014, 0.371]
Major Concessions	0.0004 [-0.0013, 0.0021]	0.0093 [-0.013, 0.032]	0.0153 [-0.021, 0.052]

All other independent variables besides the linear and quadratic partisanship term and coalition dummy are presented at their means. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Table 6: Fitted Probabilities of Strike Outcomes for Coalition Governments (Model I, Table 4)

	Left Party (LR = 10)	Center Party (LR = 50)	Right Party (LR = 90)
No Concessions	0.9156 [0.704, 1.127]	0.3193 [0.055, 0.584]	0.2203 [0.029, 0.412]
Minor Concessions	0.0789 [-0.117, 0.275]	0.5687 [0.310, 0.828]	0.6067 [0.368, 0.845]
Major Concessions	0.0054 [-0.012, 0.023]	0.1119 [-0.017, 0.240]	0.1731 [0.017, 0.328]

All other independent variables besides the linear and quadratic partisanship term and coalition dummy are presented at their means. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Table 7: Partisan Shifts for Left and Centrist Parties (1970s-1990/2000s)

	<i>Left Parties</i>			<i>Centrist/CD Parties</i>		
	<i>Early 1970s</i>	<i>Late 1990s/ Early 2000s</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>	<i>Early 1970s</i>	<i>Late 1990s/ Early 2000s</i>	<i>Absolute Change</i>
<i>Austria*</i>	-54.3	-17.6	-36.7	-6.8	-0.6	-6.2
<i>Belgium (Fl)**</i>	-39.1	-14.8	-24.3	-12	-4.2	-7.8
<i>Belgium (Wl)**</i>	-39.1	-14.8	-24.3	-5.3	-11.9	6.6
<i>Luxembourg†</i>	-43.8	-20.9	-22.9	-19.7	-10.8	-8.9
<i>Netherlands‡</i>	-45.6	-2.8	-42.8	-11.6	2.5	-14.1
<i>Finland´</i>	-58	-1.4	-56.6	4.3	-1.1	5.4
<i>Italy††</i>	-40.2	8	-48.2	3.6	8.8	-5.2
<i>Norway‡‡</i>	-36.6	-19.7	-16.9	-5.03	2.04	-7.07
<i>France+</i>	-41.5	-16.1	-25.4	NA	NA	NA
<i>Spain++</i>	-9.3	-20.5	11.2	NA	NA	NA
<i>Greece^</i>	-37.6	-17.2	-20.4	NA	NA	NA
<i>Portugal^^</i>	-58.1	-17.7	-40.4	NA	NA	NA

*OVP and SDP partisan positions in 1970 and 2002; **PS/SP and CVP/PS partisan positions in 1971 and 2003; † CSV and LSAP partisan positions in 1974 and 1999; ‡ CDA and PvdA partisan positions in 1977 and 2003; • SDP and Centre partisan positions in 1972 and 1999; †† DC and PS partisan positions in 1972 and 1992 (DC collapsed in mid-1990s); ‡‡ DNA Labor and KrF partisan positions in 1977 and 1997; + PS partisan position in 1973 and 2002; ++ PSOE partisan position in 1977 and 2000; ^ PASOK partisan position in 1974 and 2000; ^^ PSP partisan position in 1975 and 2002

Sources: Budge et al. (2001)

References

- Alberti, Paolo and Robert Leonardi (2004) 'The Consociational Construction of Christian Democracy', in Steven Van Hecke and Emmanuel Gerard (eds) *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe Since the End of the Cold War*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp. 21-41.
- Allern, Elin Haugsgjerd (2010) *Political Parties and Interest Groups in Norway*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Anderson, Christopher J. 2000. "Economic Voting and Political Context: A Comparative Perspective." *Electoral Studies* 19(2-3): 151-170.
- Anderson, J. A. (1984) "Regression and ordered categorical variables" *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. Vol 46, No. 1: 1-30.
- Andeweg, Rudy B. and Galen A. Irwin (2005) *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands 2nd edn*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bonoli, Giuliano and Martin Powell (eds) (2004) *Social Democratic Party Policies in Contemporary Europe*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Budge, Ian, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara and Eric Tanenbaum (2001) *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Callaghan, John (2000) *The Retreat of Social Democracy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cohn, Samuel (1993) *When Strikes Make Sense – and Why: Lessons from Third Republic French Coal Miners*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Cronin, James E. (1979) *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*. London: Croom Helm.
- Duch, Raymond and Randy Stevenson. 2008. *Voting in Context: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ebbinghaus, Bernd and Jelle Visser (eds) (2000) *Trade Unions in Western Europe Since 1945*. London: Macmillan.
- EIRO (2005) "Developments in Industrial Action 2000-04". <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2005/06/update/tn0506101u.htm>, accessed Oct. 2, 2009.
- European Commission's Annual Macro-economic Database (AMECO). (2010). Last updated: April 20, 2010. http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/db_indicators/ameco/index_en.htm, accessed July 20, 2010.
- Fisher, Stephen D. and Sara B. Hobolt. 2010. "Coalition Government and Electoral Accountability." *Electoral Studies* 29: 358-369.
- Franzosi, Roberto (1995) *The Puzzle of Strikes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, Richard B. (2008) 'Labor Market Institutions Around the World', in Paul Blyton, Nicolas Bacon, Jack Fiorito and Edmund Heery (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Industrial Relations*. London: Sage, pp. 640-58.
- Gerard, Emmanuel and Steven van Hecke (2004) 'European Christian Democracy in the 1990s: Towards a Comparative Approach', in Steven Van Hecke and Emmanuel Gerard (eds) *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe Since the End of the Cold War*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp. 297-318.

- Glyn, Andrew (2006) *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hamann, Kerstin and John Kelly. 2008. "Varieties of Capitalism and Industrial Relations." In Paul Blyton, Ed Heery, Nick Bacon and Jack Fiorito (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Industrial Relations*. London: Sage, pp. 129-149.
- Harrinvirta, M. and Mattila, M. (2001) "The Hard Business of Balancing Budgets: A Study of Public Finances in Seventeen OECD Countries", *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 31, No. 3: 497-521.
- Hyman, Richard (1989) *Strikes 4th edn*. London: Macmillan.
- Kam, Cindy and Franzese, Robert (2007). *Modeling and interpreting interactive hypotheses in regression analysis*, University of Michigan Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert (1994) *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara and Ian Budge (2006) *Mapping Policy Preferences 11: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, European Union and OECD 1990-2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindvall, Johannes (2011) "The Political Foundations of Trust and Distrust: Reforms and Protests in France", *West European Politics*, 34(2): 296-316.
- Metcalf, David, Jonathan Wadsworth and Peter Ingram (1993) "Do Strikes Pay?" In David Metcalf and Simon Milner (eds), *New Perspectives on Industrial Disputes*. London: Routledge.
- Nam, Taehyun (2007) "Rough Days in Democracies: Comparing Protests in Democracies", *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(1): 97-120.
- OECD. (2011) Online OECD Employment Database. Trade Union Density in OECD Countries, 1960-2008.
http://www.oecd.org/document/34/0,3343,en_2649_33927_40917154_1_1_1_1,00.html#union.
- OECD (n.d., b) *Annual Labour Force Statistics*, Paris: OECD. Accessed 20 July 2010.
- OECD *National Accounts*, Paris: OECD, <http://.....> Accessed 20 July 2010.
- Pennings, Paul, Hans Keman and Jan Kleinnijenhuis (2006) *Doing Research in Political Science 2nd edn*. London: Sage.
- Piazza, James (2001) "De-Linking Labour: Labour Unions and Social Democratic Parties Under Globalization", *Party Politics*, 7(4): 413-35.
- Powell, G. Bingham and Guy D. Whitten (1993) "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context," *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(2): 391-414.
- Roubini, N, Sachs, J., Honkapohja, S. and Cohen, D. (1989). "Government Spending and Budget Deficits in the Industrial Countries" *Economic Policy*, No. 4, Vol. 8: 99-132
- Swank, Duane (2006) *Comparative Parties Data Set*, available at http://www.marquette.edu/polisci/faculty_swank.shtml, accessed
- Tunsch, Gary (1998) 'Luxembourg: A Small Success Story', in Anthony Ferner and Richard Hyman (eds) *Changing Industrial Relations in Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 348-56.
- Van Der Velden, Sjaak, Heiner Dribbusch, Dave Lyddon and Kurt Vandaele (eds) (2007) *Strikes Around the World, 1968-2005: Case-Studies of 15 Countries*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Van Hecke, Steven and Emmanuel Gerard (eds) (2004) *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe Since the End of the Cold War*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

- Van Kersbergen, Kees (1999) 'Contemporary Christian Democracy and the Demise of the Politics of Mediation', in Herbert Kitschelt, Peter Lange, Gary Marks and John D. Stephens (eds) *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 346-70.
- Visser, Jelle (2009) *Database on Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts (ICTWSS)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies. Last updated: January, 2009, <http://www.uva-aias.net/207>. Accessed 20 July 2010.
- Walsh, Kenneth (1983) *Strikes in Europe and the United States*. London: Pinter.

Endnotes

- ¹ While our database of general strikes runs until December 2011, data on most of our independent variables are only available until December 2006. Therefore, we only report data until 2006.
- ² Sometimes the mere threat of strike action can induce a response from government. Therefore, we also look at general strike threats even where the strike did not actually take place. To count as a “threat” a trade union or union confederation leadership had to declare its intention to call a general strike on a particular issue(s) and on a given date. Unions issued a total of 12 credible general strike threats, but called off the action in response to revised government proposals. Three threats occurred in Finland, where no actual strike was held, and four in Luxembourg, where only one actual general strike was staged.
- ³ The total number of issues (105) exceeds the number of strikes and strike threats (84) because a number of strikes addressed multiple issues.
- ⁴ Two additional strikes took place in Italy (March 21, 2003) and Spain (April 10, 2003) to protest against the war in Iraq. Since these were the only two strikes that were not directly related to domestic economic, labor, and welfare reforms, we dropped them from the analysis.
- ⁵ We do not present fitted probability graphics for controls to preserve space.
- ⁶ Austria has a unitary trade union confederation, the OGB; Finland has three union confederations –SAK, STTK and Akava –, divided along occupational lines (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000).