

## Critical Issues and Political Alienation in Denmark

Ole Borre\*

Indicators of political alienation – distrust in politicians and dissatisfaction with democracy – in the Danish electorate are associated with specific issue positions, economic grievances, and voting for parties with little influence on government policies. Of critical importance are issues in which cosmopolitan values in the political elite confront various kinds of nationalist or isolationist values in the mass public. Thus, during the 1970s and 1980s, distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy were concentrated among NATO and EU opponents on the left. From 1990 on, the emergent issues of refugees and immigration have generated a new basis of alienation on the right, especially after the change from Conservative to Social Democratic government leadership in 1993. Policy distance from the government on EU and on immigration policies constitutes the two major components of political alienation in the 1990s.

### Introduction

The relationship between a society and its political system is often summarised in the concept of political support, or its reverse, political alienation. Indicators of political support are supposed to reflect the degree of respect for laws and authorities, the legitimacy of political institutions, and the absence of serious social conflict. And even in a society as culturally homogeneous and as traditionally democratic as Denmark, politically alienated groups have been a concern in public debate throughout the history of the party system. In the decades around 1900, one major problem was the integration of the workers into the political system. After the ascension to political power of the Social Democrats during the 1920s and the subsequent crisis of the 1930s, authoritarian currents on both left and right challenged the democratic parties. The continued Social Democratic dominance after World War II may have alienated part of the middle classes who resented the welfare state. At the same time, the left displayed many signs of alienation from Denmark's involvement in the NATO alliance. This opposition merged with other currents, directed against the

\*Ole Borre, Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, DK-8000 Aarhus, Denmark.

## Critical Issues and Political Alienation in Denmark

Ole Borre\*

Indicators of political alienation – distrust in politicians and dissatisfaction with democracy – in the Danish electorate are associated with specific issue positions, economic grievances, and voting for parties with little influence on government policies. Of critical importance are issues in which cosmopolitan values in the political elite confront various kinds of nationalist or isolationist values in the mass public. Thus, during the 1970s and 1980s, distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy were concentrated among NATO and EU opponents on the left. From 1990 on, the emergent issues of refugees and immigration have generated a new basis of alienation on the right, especially after the change from Conservative to Social Democratic government leadership in 1993. Policy distance from the government on EU and on immigration policies constitutes the two major components of political alienation in the 1990s.

### Introduction

The relationship between a society and its political system is often summarised in the concept of political support, or its reverse, political alienation. Indicators of political support are supposed to reflect the degree of respect for laws and authorities, the legitimacy of political institutions, and the absence of serious social conflict. And even in a society as culturally homogeneous and as traditionally democratic as Denmark, politically alienated groups have been a concern in public debate throughout the history of the party system. In the decades around 1900, one major problem was the integration of the workers into the political system. After the ascension to political power of the Social Democrats during the 1920s and the subsequent crisis of the 1930s, authoritarian currents on both left and right challenged the democratic parties. The continued Social Democratic dominance after World War II may have alienated part of the middle classes who resented the welfare state. At the same time, the left displayed many signs of alienation from Denmark's involvement in the NATO alliance. This opposition merged with other currents, directed against the

\*Ole Borre, Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, DK-8000 Aarhus, Denmark.

consumer society and the exploitation of Third World countries, in the youth rebellion during the 1970s, which provoked attitudes of alienation both among its sympathisers and among opponents.

The bases of alienation may have changed during the last two decades, since post-industrial development is affecting both external and internal relations of Danish society. Changes in the class system have merged with changes in the functions of the nation state to generate an array of new issues. In a study of the young population, Svensson and Togeby (1992) distinguish a public and a private salariat of professionals and a marginalised class, in addition to the older classes of self-employed and workers. The different opportunities of these classes in a more open society are likely to create a new pattern of political alienation. In particular, the changing European map and the rapid expansion of international relations raise a new array of issues, to which Danish governments must respond – if for no other reason, then at least under the threat of losing voters. The challenge is not so much a general loss of confidence as keeping a precarious balance in the fluid Danish multiparty system. General political trust and satisfaction with democracy are attitudes that are fairly well ingrained in the typical Danish voter. Distrust is associated with holding specific issue positions, nursing specific grievances, and voting for specific parties. Nielsen (1995, 1999) expresses this as a combination of trust at the general level but distrust in concrete matters.

Consequently we shall focus on issues that have demonstrated a potential for generating electoral instability and political alienation: EU membership, NATO membership, problems of immigration and refugees, concerns about law and order, environmental issues, the state of the economy, and welfare state issues. While some of these issues follow a traditional left–right dimension in ideology and party preference, others go together in a ‘new politics’ dimension on which some of the smaller parties represent a left and right wing (Borre 1995b; Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 57).

Which issues have been particularly critical in stimulating political alienation in the Danish electorate over the past two or three decades? How is alienation related to government policies and the party system? And which social groups are becoming alienated by the present course of societal development? To answer the first question we look back over the series of Danish election surveys 1971–98 in order to pinpoint the critical issues. The second question entails that we look at the positions of different parties, notably those in government, on these critical issues; strictly speaking these data are available only for the 1994 and 1998 elections. Finally, to deal with the third question we attempt to trace the alienated voter bases and issue publics backwards to groups that are estranged from post-industrial society because they represent lingering agricultural and early industrial social formations.

The concept of political support, handed over from Easton's original flow model of the political system (Easton 1957, 1965), has been differentiated into higher or lower categories in the anthologies by Klingemann and Fuchs (1995) and Norris (1999a). Our main focus will be on regime performance at the level of personnel (political trust) as well as the level of institutions or procedures (satisfaction with the way democracy is working). Indicators for political trust are available in all Danish election surveys since 1971, whereas the item on satisfaction with democracy appears only in 1987, 1994, and 1998.

## Sources of Alienation

Our working hypothesis is that political alienation is caused by the emergence of critical issues, the policies of the government on these issues, and the result of these policies. There seems to be room for researching such an hypothesis at the level of individual countries and their voters. Indicators of political alienation have been studied extensively both comparatively and longitudinally. The recent anthology titled *Critical Citizens* (Norris 1999a) testifies to the richness of both the data sources and analysis of them. Still, it is fair to say that few of these studies deal with individual variations in political support. Most deal with overall trends and national differences that can be ascribed to different duration of democracy, different economic level, or different institutional settings. The overarching problem is concern about a secular rise in political alienation in most countries – a trend to which Denmark is an exception, although the mid 1970s showed a surge in political distrust (Goul Andersen 1992; Svensson 1996). The studies rarely go inside the single society to study how support or alienation is distributed among citizens with different social or political characteristics.

One reason for this may be that it is difficult to find constant factors in individual variations in alienation. Alienation may be seen as the result of inadequate transmission of democratic norms through family, school, and voluntary associations; this was the assumption of many older studies, such as Almond and Verba's five-nation study (1963), or the studies of working-class authoritarianism discussed by Lipset (1959). But it does not seem to follow that there are subcultural norms against supporting a given regime. Abramson (1983) shows, for example, that black Americans under some circumstances show more support than whites.

What is missing from the studies of cultural and subcultural origins of alienation is chiefly the effect of issues and ideology, the left or right orientation of the government, and similar political reasons why some voters are alienated. As shown by especially Miller (1974), issues play an important role in generating distrust in the American public. The reasoning

is that those holding issue positions at odds with the actual policy become frustrated and react by showing negative attitudes towards the system as a whole, especially if successive changes of government bring them no nearer to fulfilling their political goals.

Miller's policy distance model sees the individual voter's distance from the policy of the government as critical for the voter's support for the political system. The further away from the government on important issues, the less support is given not just to the government parties but to the political system more generally. The logic of the model may be phrased as in Downs' (1957) proximity model of issue voting: the utility of the political system for the individual voter increases when the government pursues a policy that is near to the goals of the individual.

Empirically the model has proved rather strong. Miller (1974) identified two groups which he termed 'cynics of the left' and 'cynics of the right' in US data on attitudes to policies concerning the Vietnam War, urban unrest, and other issues. Across eight issues, he found that a 'cynicism percentage difference index' invariably assumed negative values at both polar positions but positive values somewhere in the middle of the political spectrum (*ibid.*, 961). In so far as the policy of the government can be shown or assumed to be near to the central position on these policy scales, distrust can be interpreted as stemming from distance from actual policy. Indeed, Miller and Listhaug (1990) have shown distance from government policy to cause political distrust also in Norway and Sweden.

The policy distance model also seems to work on data that measure demands for either a higher or a lower level of public spending on controversial budget items. For example, German, British, Italian, and Austrian respondents who wanted drastic reallocations of government expenditures have been found to be less trusting than those who tended to accept the budget (Borre 1995a). For example, in British data from 1985 there were 64 percent distrustful among those who thought the government should spend much more or much less on ten or more items out of 16, but only 40 percent among those who thought so for five items or less (*ibid.*, 351). In a Danish study, the effect of budget disagreement was found to be almost as strong as that of policy distance, with beta weights of 0.19 and 0.24, respectively (Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 320).

However, the policy distance model does not predict which issues in particular will cause political alienation. As will be shown, a few issues have a disproportionate impact on political alienation; we shall call them 'critical issues'. Which issues become critical, and why? The policy distance model needs to be supplemented by a theory of critical issues. According to Easton's flow model, specific support is generated when the policy output is in accordance with demand input. Although this is a very general statement, it is obvious that both demands and policies can be matched issue by issue.

Miller and Listhaug (1994, quoted in Huseby 2000, 15–16) have suggested that in order to be critical an issue must, among other things, be salient and endure through changing governments. Here we shall hypothesise that those issues on which the policy of the government differs markedly from the average public opinion are particularly likely to generate alienation. This is because on these issues the majority of voters are alienated in a double sense: first by being individually at great distance from the government, and second, by being collectively at odds with government policy. On top of their specific issue distance these voters can raise an 'issue of representation' blaming the government for neglecting the demands of the people. Below, we test the hypothesis that the discrepancy between government policy and the average public opinion on a highly salient issue is likely to turn that issue into a critical issue.

## Critical Issues 1971–98

Looking back over the series of Danish election surveys, which began in 1971, we may tentatively identify the issues of Danish politics which are related to political alienation. First, during the Cold War, Denmark's membership of the NATO alliance was a permanent source of criticism by the left-wing parties. Then, since 1972, membership of the EU (then EEC) has been recognised as a leading issue of the same type. Third, from the middle 1980s, the immigration and refugee issue can be suspected of playing a role comparable to the other two. These three issues, of course, have to do with Denmark's standing as an autonomous and homogeneous nation state. Fourth, among domestic issues attention centres on the tax issue and the issue of welfare expenses. The landslide election in 1973 came after a long period of expansion of the public sector and was successful for the anti-tax party of Mogens Glistrup; the ensuing debate during the 1970s and 1980s centred on the need for, and possible abuse of, the welfare system.

Two items for gauging political alienation which have figured rather permanently in the Danish surveys over the years are distrust items from the Michigan surveys: (1) 'In general we may trust our political leaders to make the right decisions for the country', and (2) 'In general the politicians care too little about the voters' opinions'. By coding responses from 1 = agree completely to 5 = disagree completely, and by subtracting the second from the first for each respondent, an index of distrust ranging from +4 to -4 was constructed. However, in 1987/88 the second item was not asked. Instead, responses to the item 'Most politicians are competent people who know what they are doing' were reversed and subtracted from those on the first item.

Table 1. Effects of Various Issue Orientations on Political Distrust, 1971–98. Beta Weights

Election year	Opposed to EEC	Immigration	Out of NATO	Welfare abuse	Multiple correlation
1998	0.19	0.26	0.07	0.12	0.38
1994	0.25	0.19	0.13	0.14	0.40
1990	0.25	0.20	0.04 ns	0.02 ns	0.34
1988	0.21	0.07 ns	0.13	–	0.29
1987	0.15	0.07 ns	0.09	–	0.25
1984	0.18	–	0.18	–	0.31
1981	0.09	0.13	0.11	0.16	0.25
1979	0.14	–0.04 ns	0.16	0.15	0.27
1977	0.15	–	0.15	0.12	0.27
1975	0.11	–	0.15	0.14	0.26
1973	0.24	–	0.06 ns	0.16	0.30
1971	0.09	0.07 ns	0.14	–	0.21

*Note:* Entries are standardised regression effects of issue orientations on an index of political distrust. See the text re the wording and coding of the items.

– Item not asked.

ns Not significant at the 5 percent level.

For Table 1 the distrust index was regressed on survey items that express opposition to the politics of the government and parliamentary majority on these four issues over the years 1971–98. The table shows the beta effects on this index of four policy items. The first column shows the effect of opposition to the EEC/EU. This item was scored 3 = voted against membership, 2 = did not vote, 1 = voted for membership in the latest referendum; in some years, however, when several years had elapsed since the last referendum, it was replaced by the respondent's vote intention 'if a new referendum were held'. As the figures show, opposition to the EEC as a source of political distrust rose suddenly in 1973, the first election after the 1972 referendum. Its effect has varied over the years, but generally it has been among the most distrust-generating issues in modern Danish politics.

The items used for the other three columns are Likert-type statements with five response categories, from 'agree completely' to 'disagree completely'. The second column shows the effect of attitudes to refugees or immigrants. In the early election surveys this was measured only sporadically – in 1971 by the item, 'Foreign workers should not be permitted to force out Danes from the workplace', and in 1981 by a proposal that 'Foreign workers should be sent back'. Such a demand appears to have germinated distrust after the rise in unemployment around 1980. From 1987 onwards the attitude towards immigrants has been measured by responses to the item, 'Immigration constitutes a serious threat to our national culture', except that in 1994 the word 'serious' was left out. Supplementary to the findings of other studies (Gaasholt & Tøgeby 1995; Nannestad 1999), which have shown the development of this issue since around 1986, we find that in

regard to effects on political distrust, the immigration issue did not rise to first rank until the 1990 election. But in the three elections of the 1990s it is paralleled in importance only by the EU issue.

Column 3 shows the effect of the NATO issue as measured by the item, 'We should get out of NATO as quickly as possible'. During the period 1975–84 this issue ranked on a par with the EEC issue, but in later years its effect has been smaller and more erratic.

Among the many items about welfare services which have appeared in the Danish surveys through the years, the one that is most consistently related to distrust is phrased, 'Too many get social support without really needing it'. Column 4 indicates that this belief or attitude has had a rather steady impact on political trust, except in 1990. During the period 1984–88, when the government was bourgeois, it was removed from the questionnaire.

The effect coefficients in Table 1 raise two questions: (1) What is common to the issues that have the largest coefficients? and (2) What determines the sign of the coefficients? Regarding the first question, it is striking that Denmark's relations to the outer world are the subject of three of the prominent issues: EU, NATO, and immigration. All three issues involve Denmark's standing as a homogeneous and autonomous nation state. On such issues the political elite is likely to have a more cosmopolitan outlook than the average voter. If the governments, whatever their composition, follow elite opinions and overrule popular opinion, we hypothesise that such an issue becomes critical in the sense defined above. However, if popular opinion becomes official policy, mass distrust is likely to subside again. A plausible example of this is the EU issue in Norway. According to recent Norwegian surveys, opponents of immigration show political distrust but EU opponents do not (Aardal 1999, 182). This is consistent with the fact that, on the EU issue, mass opinion has overruled elite opinion in Norway but not in Denmark. On the issue of immigration and refugee policy, by contrast, the governments in both countries have tended to follow elite opinions and to be more liberal than the average voter.

The coefficients in Table 1 are those of a regression model which only discloses linear relationships. Such a model fails to take into account the possibility that alienation may occur on both polar positions of the same issue: it is biased against the policy distance model. That model presupposes a measure of the actual government policy which is, however, available only in the 1994 and 1998 election surveys. Consequently, we turn to these elections for a test of the policy distance hypothesis.

## Policy Distance and Political Alienation

In testing the model we make use of a series of items that asked the

respondents to place themselves as well as each party on a five-point scale indicating policy alternatives on different issues. We assume that the government's position on each issue can be defined as the mean assessment of the Social Democratic Party's position, since that party was the leading force in the governments of 1994 and 1998. In 1994, the government coalition also included three small centre parties: Radical Liberals, Centre Democrats, and the Christian People's Party. By 1998, only the Radical Liberals remained in the coalition.

Next, we define policy distance as the respondent's absolute distance from the government's position on each issue. Finally, we use these distances to predict the respondent's degree of political alienation as measured by two variables. One is the distrust index, defined as running from +4 to -4 as described above. The other is the response to the item, 'Looking at the way democracy is functioning in Denmark, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or dissatisfied?' The Pearson correlation between distrust and dissatisfaction as measured in this way was 0.41 in 1998, indicating that these two factors fall in the same dimension, which we shall call 'political alienation'.

The resulting regression effects (Table 2) indicate that, as in the simple linear model, the EU issue and the refugee issue stand out as the two most powerful issues at both elections. For the 1998 elections a net negative effect on trust is also noted for distance on two more issues, namely, crime policy and environmental policy.

Table 2 shows in the first columns the position of the Social Democratic Party as judged by the sample, and the mean position of the voters in the sample, on each issue scale. As seen from the first columns of the upper section of the table, in 1998 the issues of EU, refugees, and crime are all characterised by a situation in which the government is at variance with mass opinion. The government is clearly more positive towards integration in the EU and more liberal on refugees and crime policy than is the average voter. The distance between the Social Democratic Party's position and the position of the average voter was 0.8-1.0 on these three issues; on the other four issues in the table the corresponding distance was 0.2-0.7. In accordance with our hypothesis, policy distance on these three issues was critical in displaying significant effects on distrust and dissatisfaction.

In the 1994 data the refugee issue shows a particularly large distance (1.1) between the Social Democratic position and the average voter, quite in accordance with the hypothesis. However, the issue of whether the economic policy should be expansive and the related issue of whether public expenditures should be increased display large policy distances (0.8-1.0). The Social Democratic leadership appears to have been suspected of increasing the public budgets too much. Why didn't this perceived lavishness of the government alienate the bourgeois voters?

Table 2. Government Position, Mean Voter Position, and Standardised Regression Effects upon Political Alienation of Distance to Government Policy on Seven Issues, 1998 and 1994

	Government position	Mean voter position	Effect on distrust of politicians	Effect on dissatisfaction with democracy
1998 election				
EU policy	4.1	3.1	0.24**	0.19**
Refugee policy	3.1	2.3	0.16**	0.15**
Crime policy	3.5	2.6	0.08**	0.06**
Environmental policy	3.7	3.5	0.07**	0.04
Public-sector size	3.5	2.9	0.01	0.02
Large-family support	3.7	3.0	0.06*	0.03
Economic policy	3.2	2.8	0.00	0.00
Multiple correlation			0.41**	0.31**
1994 election				
EU policy	3.7	3.1	0.26**	0.18**
Refugee policy	3.5	2.4	0.18**	0.13**
Crime policy	3.5	2.7	0.05	0.03
Environmental policy	3.7	3.6	0.05	0.01
Public-sector size	3.6	2.8	-0.01	0.02
State/market	3.5	2.5	0.11**	0.02
Economic policy	3.8	2.8	-0.02	0.02
Multiple correlation			0.39**	0.25**

*Note:* The issue items were worded as follows. (1) On refugee policy: 'The parties disagree about how many refugees we can receive. Some say we receive far too many. Others say we easily could take more refugees. Here is a card (show and explain). About where would you place the Social Democratic position? . . . And where would you place yourself?' (2) On environmental policy: 'One often talks about a green dimension on which some parties strongly emphasise environmental protection, while others say environmental protection has gone too far. Here is a card . . .'. (3) On crime policy: 'Some parties are in favour of maintaining law and order with severe punishment. Other parties talk instead of preventing crime and treating criminals in a human way. Here is a card . . .'. In 1994 the scoring was 1 = prevention, 5 = law and order; in 1998 it was 1 = law and order, 5 = prevention. The 1994 scoring has been reversed for the present purpose. (4) On state/market policy: 'Some parties are in favour of a free market without state regulation, while others demand that the state intervene forcefully to control market forces. Here is a card . . .'. (5) On economic policy: 'Some parties favour a tight economic policy that will limit the deficit on the state budget, even though it may generate unemployment. Other parties argue that we should pursue an economic policy that increases consumption and employment even though it may lead to a larger debt. Here is a card . . .'. (6) On public-sector policy: 'Some parties say we should cut public expenditures and revenues. Others say we must face increasing public expenditures and revenues. Here is a card . . .'. (7) On large-family support: 'Some parties say we should use more money to support large families with better job leave arrangements, better day-care service, and so on. Other parties say that having children is people's own responsibility and that public expenditures are already too large in this area. Here is a card . . .'. (8) On EU policy: 'Here, the numbers stand for our relations to the EU. 1 stands for those parties who want to get us out of the EU, while 5 stands for the fastest possible build-up of the EU'.

Responses to all items were scored 1-5. The independent variables were then defined as the numerical distance between the respondent's position and that of the government. Concerning the dependent variables, see comments to Table 1 and the present table.

\* Significant at 5 percent level.

\*\* Significant at 1 percent level.

The reason may be that the three small centre parties in the government tended to pull the government towards a more cautious course in economic policy. Moreover, 1994 was a year with economic growth after seven meagre years. Under these circumstances it was hard to campaign against the Keynesian measures employed by the government.

We shall deal with the economy as a critical issue further on. For the moment we note that except for the ideologically charged issue of state versus market, the economic issues are by and large eclipsed by the comparatively non-economic issues of the 'new politics' variety. Of course, the EU and refugee issues have economic implications too, but concerns over their impact on the public budget are probably of minor importance compared with nationalistic feelings, though by no means unimportant (cf. Nannestad 1999 concerning the refugee issue).

However, what seems to be the common denominator for critical issues during the 1990s is that they are associated with the growing internationalisation of Danish politics and society. This is most directly the case with the issues of EU integration and refugees. Less directly it is also the case with the environmental issues and even with the crime issue, since attitudes to that issue are correlated with attitudes to refugees (Pearson  $r$  of 0.53 in 1998 and 0.39 in 1994). Crime has become associated with the influx of foreigners.

The policy distance model, on the whole, provides a fair explanation of political alienation, as witnessed by the multiple correlation coefficients at the bottom of the table. However, its effect is concentrated on a few issues, namely, those that disturb the peace and homogeneity of Danish society. The politically alienated think that the government pushes too fast on the EU issue, or else that it allows too many refugees to settle and treats criminal offenders too leniently. In addition there are small minorities who have the opposite opinions and develop alienation for these reasons. Table 3 shows how political alienation and issue position are related to each other on the three issues separately. The figures show the proportion who have a negative attitude to the way democracy is functioning in Denmark. A similar pattern was found for the index of political distrust.

We find that the relationship is indeed U or V shaped for each of the three issues. The issue position with minimum alienation is usually the one nearest to the government policy. On the refugee issue the level of alienation in 1998 is just as high among the liberals in position 5 as among the restrictionists in position 1; but in both years, and particularly in 1998, the balance of opinion is strongly biased toward the restrictionists. On the EU issue the government's position is near to 4, and accordingly it is here we find the strongest political support; the strong effect of this issue on alienation is produced by the large number who are less positive than the government toward EU (62 percent in 1994, and 59 percent in 1998) compared with the number of EU hotspurs in position 5 (11 and 15 percent,

Table 3. Percent Dissatisfied with Democracy, by Position on Refugee Policy, EU Policy, and Crime Policy, and Distribution of Positions on These Issues, 1994 and 1998

	Percent dissatisfied with democracy		Percent distribution	
	1994	1998	1994	1998
<b>Refugee policy</b>				
1. Far fewer	22	21	23	24
2. Fewer	11	8	29	33
3. Same as now	6	5	33	31
4. More	9	8	13	9
5. Far more	12	20	2	3
All	12	11	100	100
<b>EU policy</b>				
1. Out of EU	25	19	15	14
2.	15	8	12	13
3.	9	7	35	32
4.	5	5	27	26
5. Strengthen EU	15	12	11	15
All	12	11	100	100
<b>Crime policy</b>				
1. Law and order	23	25	18	24
2.	9	16	27	25
3.	7	8	33	26
4.	10	6	16	14
5. Prevention	26	20	6	11
All	12	11	100	100

*Note:* See note of Table 2 for wording of the policy items. Entries are percent not very satisfied or dissatisfied with the way democracy is working, excluding 'don't know' responses.

respectively). Finally, on the crime issue the situation is almost the same as on the refugee issue, although the hardliners outnumber the softliners only by roughly two to one in both years. The distribution of responses explains why the effects of EU opposition and anti-refugee feelings in the linear model in Table 1 are of the same magnitude or sometimes higher than those in the distance model in Table 2.

## Alienation and Political Values

The question of whether particular values are conducive to political alienation has been the objective of much political and psychological research since the 1950s and 1960s. Most of that research, including the classics associated with Adorno (1950), Eysenck (1954), and Stouffer (1955), has focused on authoritarian values as a problem in democratic systems. But

the indicators that we use to measure alienation are not intended to measure anti-democratic attitudes. Even those who are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working may say so because they have particularly high democratic standards. Likewise, the politics of a country can be evaluated by other value standards, giving rise to supportive attitudes in some people, alienation in others. Contemporary research accordingly presents a mixed relationship between values and political support. In a comparative West European study Gabriel (1995) finds that the relationship is generally weak and varies from one country to the next, often depending on who is in government.

Now, one consequence that follows from our hypothesis is that on one issue the policy decision of governments can alienate the classical left, on the next the classical right; or on one issue, the authoritarian side, on the next, the libertarian side. Furthermore, a change in government may shift the locus of alienation. Therefore we should not expect to find a constant relationship between values and alienation.

In recent Danish politics the issues of refugees and law-and-order can be expected to lead to alienation on the right, since popular impatience over the government's liberal policies has surged. On the issues of EU and NATO membership, on the other hand, successive Danish governments have built on solid bourgeois values, alienating in particular those with traditional left-wing attitudes.

It may here be important to distinguish the economic or 'old politics' from the non-economic or 'new politics' dimension. In an account of Danish political attitudes during the 1990s (Borre 1995b; Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 58), such a distinction has been shown to be important so far as policy positions and party choices are concerned. Of the issues that we found in Table 1 to be critical, the welfare issue and the NATO issue fall on the old left-right dimension whereas the immigration and crime issues fall on the new dimension; the EEC/EU issue falls primarily on the old left-right dimension, but may be assumed to load increasingly on the new dimension too, as voters of the new right wing increasingly join the old left wing in opposition to EU membership. Still, there are two independent brands of nationalists among Danish voters. The Pearson correlation between position on the refugee issue and that on the EU issue was 0.02 in 1994 and -0.06 in 1998, and only the latter is significant at the 5 percent level. In effect the regime is evaluated from two different perspectives, and opposition on both issues contributes independently to distrust.

This leads to the hypothesis that under the political circumstances of the 1990s, political alienation should characterise both the old left and the new right. Table 4 classifies the respondents into four ideological types based on these dimensions. The classification into these types was made on the basis of respondents' attitudes to eight policy items, four on each dimension

Table 4. Political Alienation, 1998, by New and Old Politics Position

Percent with distrust of politicians:		
New right	49	46
New left	27	26
	Old left	Old right
Percent dissatisfied with democracy:		
New right	14	13
New left	8	4
	Old left	Old right

*Note:* Definition of old left and right and new left and right according to Borre and Goul Andersen (1997, chapter 2). Entries in the upper part of the table are percent who agree that 'in general the politicians care too little about the voters' opinions' and at the same time disagree that 'in general we may trust our political leaders to make the right decisions for the country', excluding 'don't know' responses. Entries in the lower part are percent 'not very satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with the way democracy is working.

(cf. Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 42). For each type Table 4 shows the percent politically alienated according to our two criteria.

As shown in both sub-tables, political alienation is affected above all by the respondent's position on the new left–right dimension, and only slightly by the old politics position. Roughly twice as many show alienation on the new right than on the new left.

In the data of 1998, the classical notion of an alienated authoritarian right wing is therefore confirmed. But according to our argument this is a result of the emergence of the immigration issue and the law-and-order issue during the 1990s, and the change from bourgeois to Social Democratic government in 1993. If we go back to the 1980s we find alienation to characterise the left rather than the right, as we shall see in the next section.

Turning to the materialist–postmaterialist value dimension in the sense defined by Inglehart (1977, 1990), there has been a tendency to view post-materialists as particularly opposed to their political system. The reason would be that postmaterialists find themselves in opposition to a hierarchical system concerned chiefly with the distribution of material goods. The leaders of such a system are unlikely to give high priority to postmaterialist demands.

However, the new politics issue dimension is associated with the materialist–postmaterialist value dimension in such a way that post-materialist values are characteristic of the new left whereas materialist values dominate on the new right. Accordingly we should expect political alienation in Denmark to be particularly strong among those with materialist values. Because the government's policies on refugee policy and crime policy are in rough accordance with postmaterialist values, whereas the

Table 5. Value Orientation and Political Alienation, 1998

Value orientation	Distrust of politicians	Dissatisfied with democracy
Materialist	51	17
Mixed-materialist	42	10
Mixed-postmaterialist	36	10
Postmaterialist	33	12

*Note:* Materialist/postmaterialist position defined by Inglehart's four-item battery (Inglehart 1990, 74–75). Entries are percent alienated, as in Table 4.

majority of voters are mixed, these issues are likely to be critical in the sense defined above.

Table 5 uses Inglehart's reduced four-item battery of value priorities to confirm that materialists are more alienated than postmaterialists under the political situation of the 1990s. The proportion with low trust in politicians varies from 51 percent among the materialists to 33 percent among the postmaterialists. The proportion dissatisfied with democracy is 17 percent among the materialists as against 10–12 percent in the other three groups. Such relationships are uncommon, to judge from comparative studies. Thus Gabriel (1995, 375) writes that 'there is no instance of a statistically significant positive relationship between postmaterialist value orientation and trust in government'. The fact that Denmark in 1994–98 presents such an exceptional instance is quite consistent with the discrepancy between government and voters which we saw in Table 2.

## Government and Opposition

Essential to democratic theory is the belief that party competition will reduce political alienation. Voters who feel alienated by the policies of the government are induced to vote for the opposition, and if their number is large enough and the election rules not too unfair, the opposition will assume governmental power. Thus opposition voters may be expected to display a sort of short-run discontent relative to government voters, but in a medium- or long-term perspective, political alienation should be limited to those voters who find themselves at home neither in the government nor in the opposition parties.

Nonetheless, many have commented on the fact that being part of a government team is itself a factor that increases trust in politicians. Listhaug (1995) speaks about the factor of incumbency; Holmberg (1999) speaks about the feeling of being on home ground; and Norris (1999b) speaks

about winners and losers. Fuchs and colleagues (1995), in a study of 13 West European countries, find an incumbency factor in every country for the survey item on satisfaction with democracy. On the same item Huseby (1999) shows a fairly constant gap of 15–20 percentage points in a time series from 1975 to 1995 combining eight West European countries.

In the case of Denmark we should not expect to find the incumbency effect to be large. The Danish tradition for forming governments is one in which an election often gives a muddled picture of who has won and who has lost. According to Anderson and Guillory (1997) such systems generate less satisfaction among the winners, and more among the losers, than do straight majoritarian systems. Voters of different parties may be expected to manifest different levels of satisfaction depending on the degree to which the election result and government coalition has moved them closer to or further away from the centre of power. The incumbency–opposition distinction becomes graduated into a dimension of more or less incumbency, more or less opposition. When the government is a centre-right coalition the lowest degree of influence, and therefore the lowest level of satisfaction, should be found among voters on the left. When the government is a centre-left coalition, the low point should be found on the right.

A problem often associated with the incumbency factor is that if the election changes the government, some respondents in a post-election survey will react prospectively to the trust or satisfaction items – i.e. optimistically if they have voted for the new government – whereas other will respond retrospectively, i.e. optimistically if they voted for the government that has ruled during the preceding years. Fortunately, this problem is not a serious one in the Danish case. The significant changes in government coalition, from centre-left to centre-right in 1982, and back to centre-left in 1993, took place between elections. A Conservative leader replaced a Social Democrat as prime minister in 1982, and was replaced by another Social Democrat in 1993. Actually, since 1975 no Danish election has caused a prime minister to resign.

We will investigate, for both political distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy, whether the independent variable should be differentiated into various degrees of opposition. This is a plausible way of testing whether it really is influence on government decisions which is the significant variable. After that we will control for policy distance, since voters of opposition parties on average have greater policy distance than government voters.

In order to test the incumbency hypothesis properly it is necessary to compare elections in which the composition of the government has varied. In the case of Denmark we may compare the 1994 and 1998 elections with the 1987 election, in which the roles of government and opposition were switched. Table 6 divides the 1987 and 1998 voters into four groups:

Table 6. Political Alienation, 1987–98, by Party Choice

	Left wing	Centre-left	Centre-right	Right wing
Percent dissatisfied with democracy				
1987	<b>29</b>	17	6	13
1994	17	7	9	<b>30</b>
1998	17	5	9	<b>24</b>
Percent with distrust of politicians				
1990	<b>47</b>	35	23	35
1994	43	30	30	<b>62</b>
1998	30	17	22	<b>49</b>

*Note:* Entries are percent alienated, as in Table 4.

1. Voters for the Socialist People's Party and other left-wing parties.
2. Voters for centre-left parties, i.e. the Social Democratic and Radical Liberal Parties, who were in opposition in 1987 but in government in 1998.
3. Voters for centre-right parties, i.e. the Liberals, Conservatives, Centre Democrats, and Christian People's Party, who were in government in 1987 but in opposition in 1998.
4. Voters for the right-wing Progressive and Danish People's Parties.

This is a rough classification which is less easy to apply in 1990 because at that time the Centre Democrats and Christian People's Party had left the bourgeois government but not yet entered the Social Democratic one; or in 1994 because then these two parties were in the Social Democratic coalition. However, these parties represent small fractions of voters and do not disturb the general pattern we find.

Table 6 reports the share of voters with negative attitudes towards politicians or the way democracy is working. Because of the switch from bourgeois to (predominantly) Social Democratic government in 1993, the incumbency hypothesis predicts that the minimum point of political alienation has switched from voters on the centre-right to voters on the centre-left. This turns out to be true for both indicators.

The upper half of Table 6 is based on the item about satisfaction with democracy, which is available for 1987, 1994, and 1998. The lower half is based on the two trust items, which are available in identical form for 1990, 1994, and 1998. It is obvious by comparing the two short time series that something happened between 1990 and 1994 to move the centre of alienation (bold figures) from the left wing to the right wing. Our interpretation is that this was a response to the change in government from centre-right to centre-left in January 1993, which was caused by a scandal about the treatment of Tamilian refugees. The accession of the new Social Democratic

government with participation of three small centre parties was also a victory of the new left over the new right on the 'new politics' dimension that had emerged in the late 1980s.

This pattern suggests that influence on government merges with critical issues and the ideologies in which they are embedded in generating alienation. Sorting out these two sets of factors requires a regression analysis, the result of which is reported in Table 7. Here, both distrust in politicians and dissatisfaction with democracy are regressed on three issues plus three dummy variables distinguishing the four party groups. As for the issues, we have to fall back on the survey items we used in Table 1 because we want to compare 1994 and 1998 with 1987. In regard to the dummy variables, in 1987 the reference category will be the centre-right whereas the centre-left will be termed the 'established opposition'. In 1994 and 1998 these roles are reversed, the centre-left now forming the reference category and the centre-right the established opposition.

Our findings are clearly that incumbency and influence on government count, but that distance from government on critical issues maintains its standing as the most important factor. The first three rows show the impact on dissatisfaction of three anti-establishment issue positions. In 1987 the impact of the NATO issue was similar to that of the EEC/EU issue whereas the immigration issue showed no significant impact. In the course of the 1990s the impact of the NATO issue has decreased, whereas that of the

Table 7. Effects of Issue Positions and Party Choice on Dissatisfaction with Democracy, 1987-98

	1987	1994	1998
Anti-EEC/EU	0.18**	0.15**	0.21**
Anti-NATO	0.18**	0.10**	0.07**
Anti-immigration	0.05	0.11**	0.16**
Established opposition	0.09*	0.09**	0.09**
Left-wing party	0.08	0.05	0.11**
Right-wing party	0.07	0.13**	0.10**
Multiple correlation	0.38**	0.28**	0.34**

*Note:* Standardised regression effects. The dependent variable is coded from the item, 'Looking at the way democracy is functioning in Denmark, would you say you are 1 = very satisfied, 2 = somewhat satisfied, 3 = not very satisfied, or 4 = dissatisfied?' Independent variables are coded as indicated in the comments on Table 1 as regards anti-EU, anti-NATO, and anti-immigration. Dummy variables are coded as follows. Left-wing parties: in 1987, 1 = voted Socialist People, Communist, or Left Socialist; in 1994 and 1998, 1 = voted Socialist People or Left-wing List. Right-wing parties: 1 = voted Progressive or Danish People. Established opposition: in 1987, 1 = voted Social Democratic or Radical Liberal; in 1994 and 1998, 1 = voted Conservative or Liberal.

\* Significant at 5 percent level.

\*\* Significant at 1 percent level.

refugee issue has increased, and the EEC/EU issue has maintained a strong impact.

The next three rows show that voters in all three types of opposition party are less happy with democracy than are government voters. The coefficients for these diverse types of opposition voters are sufficiently similar that we can say generally that any type of opposition leads to a significant amount of dissatisfaction with democracy. All the same, the coefficients for non-incumbency do not match those of the leading critical issues in magnitude. We can conclude that opponents of the EU policy and immigration policy feel politically alienated irrespective of which party they voted for. Having voted for the government dampens the feeling of alienation but does not compensate for the effect of the policy distance. We can rank-order the voters into four general groups with decreasing level of satisfaction with democracy: (1) government voters who agree with the EU and immigration policy; (2) opposition voters who agree with that policy; (3) government voters who disagree; and (4) opposition voters who disagree.

Putting this together, the impression we get is that the alienated voter tends to feel at home neither in the government parties nor in the opposition parties. Such an impression is also conveyed by Swedish findings (Pettersson 1977; Holmberg 1999) that distrusting voters tend to feel greater distance from their own party than do trusting voters. This hypothesis holds true also for Danish voters: computing the correlation between political distrust and the voter's distance from their own party on the left-right scale, a correlation of  $r = -0.11$  was found for 1994 (for the parties' positions, see Borre & Goul Andersen 1997, 12).

Where we would amend such a 'theory of the homeless voter' is in suggesting that not all policy distances are equally relevant. Our discussion has paid particular attention to policy distance on critical issues. Accordingly we would expect distrustful voters to feel greater distance than trustful voters from their party on the refugee issue as well as on the EU issue. And this is indeed what we find. The 1998 Pearson correlation between trust scores and absolute distance from the position of the party that the respondent voted for was  $-0.09$  for the refugee issue and  $-0.14$  for the EU issue, both significant at the 0.1 percent level.

## Economic Grievances

The link between economic crisis and political alienation, proposed in 1848 by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, has continued to engage modern researchers. It was taken up in the mid 1970s in the 'demand overload' theory (Crozier et al. 1975). That theory expressed fears that the liberal democracies would suffer from excessive demands that the state was

unable to finance during economic recession. Most of the anxiety has been dispelled by subsequent survey research (e.g. Brody & Sniderman 1977; Thomassen 1990) so far as the older Western democracies are concerned. The fears seem better founded when it comes to the newer democracies. Analysing East European data, Toka (1995, 366–67) suggests that 'The decisive influence of economic evaluations on regime support may also explain the robust East–West difference in satisfaction with democracy . . .'. However, in a comparative study McAllister (1999, 201) finds social or economic forces to be negligible compared with 'political culture or historical circumstance'.

But these large-scale findings do not exclude the possibility that within the individual country, the economy constitutes a critical issue in most elections. It does not fit into a policy distance model because it does not assume the form of a position issue; since almost everybody wants economic progress, it is the prototype of what Stokes called valence issues (Stokes 1963). The effect of the economic issue may be seen as an important element in a more general grievance or performance model of alienation (Huseby 2000), in which political distrust is generated when the government is held responsible for unfortunate developments in society. Apart from the economy there may be grievances over, for example, the crime rate, the state of the environment, or the state of the health-care system. In any case, the grievance is focused on an issue which becomes critical because the government output falls short of the expectations of major segments of the voters.

As for economic evaluations, most research has built on the hypothesis that those who experience economic progress will show stronger support than those experiencing stagnation or crisis. In the most recent study, Huseby (2000, 143) finds a positive effect of growing economy, with regard to both the personal and the national economy, on satisfaction with democracy in every West European country through the years 1982–94. In an earlier study Listhaug (1995) found an index of political trust in Norway to vary in 1989 from 39 percent among those who expected their personal economy to get better, down to 20 percent among those who expected it to get worse; in 1973 the index values were 46 percent in the 'better' group and only 9 percent in the 'worse' group. Broadly similar differences were found for Sweden (*ibid.*, 291).

The data from the Danish election surveys are quite in line with these findings. Table 8 indicates for three elections that evaluations of the trend in personal as well as national income affect the degree of satisfaction with the way democracy was working.

On average there are two or three times as many dissatisfied in the group who thought their own economy, or the national economy, had become worse over the past years than among those who thought it had become

Table 8. Percent Dissatisfied with Democracy, by Evaluation of Personal and National Economy, 1987, 1994, and 1998

	1987	1994	1998
<b>Personal economy</b>			
Better/more	10	8	8
Same	14	11	9
Worse/less	28	21	19
<b>National economy</b>			
Better	7	8	9
Same	11	12	11
Worse	25	15	14

*Note:* Personal economy is based on the 1987 item, 'Are you and your family better off now than two or three years ago, worse off than two or three years ago, or is it the same?', the 1994 item, 'How is the economic situation of your family today compared to a year ago?', and the 1998 item, 'How much do you think people like yourself have got out of the economic upswing, compared with the rest of the population?' National economy is based on the 1987 item, 'Do you think the country's economic situation has become better or worse during the last two or three years, or is it the same?', the 1994 item, 'How do you think Denmark's economic situation is today compared to a year ago?', and the 1998 item, 'Would you say the country's economic situation has become better, stayed the same, or become worse during the last 12 months?'

Entries are percent not very satisfied or dissatisfied with the way democracy is functioning in Denmark, excluding 'don't know' responses.

better. The contrast between these two groups was starkest under the bourgeois government in 1987. In the upper half of the table, we observe that under the Social Democratic government, satisfaction with democracy has increased visibly among the 'losers' but decreased slightly among the 'winners'. In the lower part of the table we notice that the evaluation of the national economy has a much smaller impact on alienation in 1998 than it had in 1987.

However, as we shall see presently, the distinction between winners and losers may be less relevant for political support or alienation than an even simpler distinction between optimists and pessimists. This was measured in the 1998 survey by the item, 'What do you think about the economic situation in Denmark today?' The effect of the three economic items will be compared by means of a regression analysis, but other controls should be inserted as well. First, the effect of economic evaluations may be spurious because such evaluations are much more positive among government supporters than among opposition voters; this is true even for the personal economy (Borre 1997). We therefore need to control for the incumbency-opposition factor. Second, it may be suspected that economic deprivation or grievances may underlie part of the effects of the EU issue and the immigration issue that we have already looked at. Shifting the blame for economic misfortune away from private and domestic factors and towards various kinds of foreign influence is not an uncommon psychological

reaction. Such an inclination would be consistent with a decrease in the effect of our critical issues on political alienation after control for economic evaluations.

In Table 9 we have regressed our index of trust and the democratic satisfaction item on three economic indicators at the 1998 election, controlling for policy distance as well as partisanship. According to the beta effects reported, economic pessimism exerts a marked influence on political alienation independently of policy distance and partisanship. Economic deprivation, i.e. the perception that one has got less than others out of the economic upswing, has a significant effect on dissatisfaction with democracy but not on political distrust. And the perception of economic development is unrelated to alienation after control for economic optimism or pessimism.

According to these figures the state of the economy should be ranked among the critical issues. Its importance does not match that of the EU issue, but is at the same level as the effect of the refugee issue. And the economic issue does make a significant contribution to the explanation of both political distrust and dissatisfaction with democracy, as witnessed by the magnitude of the multiple correlation in the bottom row.

Table 9. Effects of Policy Distance, Party, and Economic Discontent on Political Alienation, 1998

	Distrust of politicians	Dissatisfied with democracy
Policy distance on:		
EU policy	0.24**	0.20**
Refugee policy	0.14**	0.14**
Crime policy	0.10**	0.05*
Economic evaluation		
National economy good/bad	0.13**	0.14**
National economy better/worse	0.00	-0.02
Own economy more/less	0.04	0.09**
Voted for opposition party	0.11**	0.06*
Multiple correlation <i>R</i>	0.41**	0.35**

*Note:* Entries are standardised regression effects. Policy distance is the numerical distance from the government's position on the three items in Table 3. The government's positions are indicated in Table 2. 'Voted for opposition party' is coded 0 = Social Democratic and Radical Liberal vote, 1 = all other parties. Economic evaluation is based on the questions, 'What do you think about the economic situation in Denmark today?', coded from 1 = very good to 5 = very bad; 'Would you say the country's economic situation has become better, stayed the same, or has become worse during the last 12 months?' and if better or worse, 'Is that much or somewhat?', coded from 1 = much better to 5 = much worse; and 'How much do you think people like yourself have got out of the economic upswing compared with the rest of the population?', coded from 1 = a lot more to 5 = a lot less. Distrust of politicians is coded from +4 to -4 (see comments on Table 1). Dissatisfaction with democracy is coded from 1 to 4 (see note for Table 7).

\* Significant at 5 percent level.

\*\* Significant at 1 percent level.

## Changing Social Bases of Alienation

Our findings that political alienation depends predominantly on political demands and opportunities go against the socialisation theory, according to which the basic norms of democratic politics have to be learned, and preferably learned early in life. Instead we find that support for the political system varies according to the magnitude of the gap between what one wants the government to do and what it is actually doing on a few critical issues.

Research into the variations in political support or alienation by social background factors has not uncovered any solid relationships (cf. Rose & Pettersen 1999, 101–2). On one hand, speculations based on the tradition of Almond and Verba (1963) lead in the direction that political alienation tends to be higher among low-educated, low-status voters than among well-educated, high-status people. However, the political currents of the 1970s turned expectations in the opposite direction; the study by Barnes and Kaase (1979) showed discontent growing especially among students and young middle-class people, who constituted the leading force in most of the grassroots movements.

According to our hypothesis the degree of alienation should vary between classes and other social groups according to the average policy distance of these groups on critical issues – which in turn will be contingent upon government policies. While it is granted that deep-seated feelings of powerlessness may be related to low economic or cultural status, the level of political trust and satisfaction with democracy in a social group can change after one election as a result of changes in government policy on critical issues.

Our expectation is therefore that the policy of the bourgeois government from 1982 to 1993 alienated in particular the social groups who traditionally support the Social Democrats and the left: the manual workers and the public salariat, respectively. The switch to Social Democratic government from 1993 on brought these two groups nearer to the centre of power, and consequently their trust in government should have risen. In the social groups forming the stronghold of the bourgeois parties, political trust would be expected to decline at the 1994 election.

In Table 10, a breakdown of the industrially active respondents into four classes is given. As shown in the first three rows, in 1987 dissatisfaction with democracy was highest among the publicly employed white-collar workers, and lowest among their colleagues in the private sector. Between 1987 and 1994 this pattern dramatically changed. While the number of dissatisfied halved in the public salariat, it doubled among the self-employed. The latter change has been redressed in the 1998 election; but even so, the self-employed are, along with the blue-collar workers, the most dissatisfied part of the population.

Table 10. Political Alienation by Social Class, 1987–98

	Manual workers	Private salaried	Public salaried	Self- employed	All
Percent dissatisfied with democracy					
1987	15	7	20	10	14
1994	11	7	8	19	10
1998	11	6	9	12	9
Percent with distrust of politicians					
1990	38	30	33	35	34
1994	38	31	26	43	34
1998	30	17	21	34	24

*Note:* Entries are percent alienated, as in Tables 3 and 4.

Almost the same development is demonstrated in the second set of rows. In 1990 the blue-collar workers were the most distrustful class, but by 1994 the self-employed had taken a clear lead, which they kept in 1998. The two classes of white-collar workers, the public and the private, increasingly outdistance the other two in expressing political trust.

But in regard to political trust and satisfaction with democracy, there is no constant structural relationship between occupational and cultural status on the one hand and political system support on the other. This is precisely what we might suspect from the foregoing analysis. Dependent on what these classes demand and what the government is doing on the critical issues, trust and satisfaction rise and fall. During the 1990s, the NATO issue practically ceased to exist; consequently, left-wing factions among workers and public employees have had less reason to feel alienated from mainstream politics. Instead, the immigration issue has emerged; Danish policy on this issue has had its most profound impact on political alienation among the small-scale self-employed, and has stimulated the formation of a new right.

## Conclusion

Defining political alienation as distrust in politicians and dissatisfaction with the working of democracy, we hypothesised that alienation would be concentrated in policy positions that are opposed to government policy on a limited set of issues, which we called critical. We also proposed that where the government policy deviates markedly from public opinion, the issue has a potential for becoming critical. Thus a theory of critical issues should combine individual and collective discrepancies between the issue positions of the government and the voters.

We have found positive evidence in favour of our hypothesis in recent

Danish election surveys, although it seems that in its economic policy the government may overrule public opinion without jeopardising support for the political system – as long as the results of the policy are good. Non-economic issues are more likely to become critical, and in particular those issues that are associated with national sovereignty.

Thus, during the 1990s distrust in Danish politicians culminated among two issue publics: opponents of EU membership and adherents of a more restrictive refugee and immigration policy. Whereas the EU issue originated in the early 1970s, the immigration issue began to exert its influence in the 1990 election, at the same time that the NATO issue faded. We can follow the change in these critical issues over the years between 1987 and 1998, when the Danish government shifted from centre-right to centre-left in a succession of steps involving shifting alliances with small centrist parties. The net result has been a change in the ideological base of political alienation, roughly from a location on the traditional left to the non-material new right. What is common to the three issues of EU, NATO, and immigration is that they open a value-charged conflict between 'cosmopolitans' and different types of 'isolationists' on the right or left; that the cosmopolitans dominate government policy; and, consequently, that alienation spreads among the isolationists. This is a matter of political choices rather than a natural order of things. With a different orientation of Danish politics, political alienation might well have surged on the opposite side, that is, among the cosmopolitans. In fact, signs of alienation are also found within small issue publics demanding an even more cosmopolitan line of policy than is taken by Danish governments.

#### REFERENCES

- Aardal, B. 1999. *Velgere i 90-årene*. Oslo: NKS-Forlaget.
- Abramson, P. 1983. *Political Attitudes in America*. San Francisco: Freeman.
- Adorno, Theodore et al. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper.
- Almond, G. & Verba, S. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, C. J. & Guillory, C. A. 1997. 'Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems', *American Political Science Review* 91(1), 66–81.
- Barnes, S. H. & Kaase, M., eds. 1979. *Political Action*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Borre, O. 1995a. 'Scope-of-Government Beliefs and Political Support', in Borre, O. & Scarbrough, E., eds. *The Scope of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Borre, O. 1995b. 'Old and New Politics in Denmark', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 18(3), 187–205.
- Borre, O. 1997. 'Economic Voting in Danish Electoral Surveys 1987–94', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 20, 347–65.
- Borre, O. & Goul Andersen, J. 1997. *Voting and Political Attitudes in Denmark. A Study of the 1994 Election*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Brody, R. A. & Sniderman, P. M. 1977. 'From Life Space to Polling Place: The Relevance of Personal Concerns for Voting Behavior', *British Journal of Political Science* 7, 337–60.
- Crozier, M., Huntington, S. & Watanuki, J. 1975. *The Crisis of Democracy*. New York: New York University Press.

Danish election surveys, although it seems that in its economic policy the government may overrule public opinion without jeopardising support for the political system – as long as the results of the policy are good. Non-economic issues are more likely to become critical, and in particular those issues that are associated with national sovereignty.

Thus, during the 1990s distrust in Danish politicians culminated among two issue publics: opponents of EU membership and adherents of a more restrictive refugee and immigration policy. Whereas the EU issue originated in the early 1970s, the immigration issue began to exert its influence in the 1990 election, at the same time that the NATO issue faded. We can follow the change in these critical issues over the years between 1987 and 1998, when the Danish government shifted from centre-right to centre-left in a succession of steps involving shifting alliances with small centrist parties. The net result has been a change in the ideological base of political alienation, roughly from a location on the traditional left to the non-material new right. What is common to the three issues of EU, NATO, and immigration is that they open a value-charged conflict between 'cosmopolitans' and different types of 'isolationists' on the right or left; that the cosmopolitans dominate government policy; and, consequently, that alienation spreads among the isolationists. This is a matter of political choices rather than a natural order of things. With a different orientation of Danish politics, political alienation might well have surged on the opposite side, that is, among the cosmopolitans. In fact, signs of alienation are also found within small issue publics demanding an even more cosmopolitan line of policy than is taken by Danish governments.

#### REFERENCES

- Aardal, B. 1999. *Velgere i 90-årene*. Oslo: NKS-Forlaget.
- Abramson, P. 1983. *Political Attitudes in America*. San Francisco: Freeman.
- Adorno, Theodore et al. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper.
- Almond, G. & Verba, S. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, C. J. & Guillory, C. A. 1997. 'Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems', *American Political Science Review* 91(1), 66–81.
- Barnes, S. H. & Kaase, M., eds. 1979. *Political Action*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Borre, O. 1995a. 'Scope-of-Government Beliefs and Political Support', in Borre, O. & Scarbrough, E., eds. *The Scope of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Borre, O. 1995b. 'Old and New Politics in Denmark', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 18(3), 187–205.
- Borre, O. 1997. 'Economic Voting in Danish Electoral Surveys 1987–94', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 20, 347–65.
- Borre, O. & Goul Andersen, J. 1997. *Voting and Political Attitudes in Denmark. A Study of the 1994 Election*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Brody, R. A. & Sniderman, P. M. 1977. 'From Life Space to Polling Place: The Relevance of Personal Concerns for Voting Behavior', *British Journal of Political Science* 7, 337–60.
- Crozier, M., Huntington, S. & Watanuki, J. 1975. *The Crisis of Democracy*. New York: New York University Press.

- Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Easton, D. 1957. 'An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems', *World Politics* 9, 383-400.
- Easton, D. 1965. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley.
- Eysenck, H. J. 1954. *The Psychology of Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Fuchs, D., Guidorossi, G. & Svensson, P. 1995. 'Support for the Democratic System', in Klingemann, H.-D. & Fuchs, D., eds. *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gaasholt, Ø. & Togeby, L. 1995. *I syv sind*. Århus: Politica.
- Gabriel, O. W. 1995. 'Political Efficacy and Trust', in van Deth, J. & Scarbrough, E., eds. *The Impact of Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goul Andersen, J. 1992. *Vi og Vore Politikere*. Copenhagen: Spektrum.
- Holmberg, S. 1999. 'Down and Down We Go: Political Trust in Sweden', in Norris, P., ed., *Critical Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huseby, B. M. 1999. 'Government Economic Performance and Political Support', in Narud, H.-M. & Aalberg, T., eds. *Challenges to Representative Democracy*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Huseby, B. M. 2000. *Government Performance and Political Support*. Norway: NTNU.
- Inglehart, R. 1977. *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Klingemann, H.-D. & Fuchs, D., eds. 1995. *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lipset, S. M. 1959. *Political Man*. London: Heinemann.
- Listhaug, O. 1995. 'The Dynamics of Trust in Politicians', in Klingemann, H.-D. & Fuchs, D., eds. *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. 1948. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. New York: International Publishers.
- McAllister, J. 1999. 'The Economic Performance of Governments', in Norris, P., ed., *Critical Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, A. H. 1974. 'Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964-1970', *American Political Science Review* 68, 951-72.
- Miller, A. H. & Listhaug, O. 1990. 'Political Parties and Confidence in Government: A Comparison of Norway, Sweden and the United States', *British Journal of Political Science* 29, 357-86.
- Nannestad, P. 1999. *Solidaritetsens pris*. Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- Nielsen, H. J. 1995. *Generel Skepsis og Konkret Tillid*. Copenhagen: Institute of Political Science.
- Nielsen, H. J. 1999. 'Tilliden til politikerne', in Andersen, J., Borre, O., Goul Andersen, J. & Nielsen, H. J., eds. *Følgere med omtanke*. Århus: Systeme.
- Norris, P., ed. 1999a. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Norris, P. 1999b. 'Institutional Explanations for Political Support', in Norris, P., ed., *Critical Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Petersson, O. 1977. *Väljarna och valet 1976*. Stockholm: LiberFörlag.
- Rose, L. E. & Pettersen, P. A. 1999. 'Confidence in Politicians and Institutions: Comparing National and Local Levels', in Narud, H.-M. & Aalberg, T., eds. *Challenges to Representative Democracy*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Stokes, D. E. 1963. 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', *American Political Science Review* 57, 368-77.
- Stouffer, S. A. 1955. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. New York: Doubleday.
- Svensson, P. 1996. *Demokratiets Krise?* Århus: Politica.
- Svensson, P. & Togeby, L. 1992. 'Post-Industrialism and New Social and Political Classes', in Gundelach, P. & Siune, K., eds. *From Voters to Participants*. Århus: Politica.
- Thomassen, J. 1990. 'Economic Crisis, Dissatisfaction, and Protest', in Jennings, M. K. & van Deth, J. W., eds. *Continuities in Political Action*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Toka, G. 1995. 'Political Support in East-Central Europe', in Klingemann, H.-D. & Fuchs, D., eds. *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.